



Testimony of Ashley Zane  
Government Affairs Associate, CBIA  
Before the Appropriations Committee  
Hartford, CT  
March 26, 2021

**Testifying in support of:**

**SB 705: AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN OFFICE OF PANDEMIC AND PUBLIC HEALTH PREPAREDNESS.**

My name is Ashley Zane and I am a Government Affairs Associate for CBIA, the Connecticut Business and Industry Association. CBIA is Connecticut's largest business organization, with thousands of member companies, small and large, representing a diverse range of industries from across the state. Ninety-five percent of CBIA member companies have 100 or fewer employees.

I am here in support of SB 705, An Act Establishing an Office of Pandemic and Public Health Preparedness. The COVID-19 pandemic greatly impacted the business community and according to our 2020 Survey of Connecticut Businesses, 47% project a profitable year, 28% expect losses, and 25% say they will break even.

CBIA applauds the committee's leadership in section 1 which creates and requires the Office of Pandemic and Public Health Preparedness to establish and maintain an inventory of necessary equipment in the event of a pandemic, epidemic, or other public health emergency, including hand sanitizer, modes of transportation, personal protective equipment (PPE), and testing materials with accompanying protocol for how to access this reserve. The section also requires the Office to connect small businesses to local PPE providers. CBIA strongly supports facilitating the connection of PPE providers with small businesses since many of our member companies expressed issues accessing PPE during the pandemic but were deemed essential businesses.

A constant ask of the business community to state government is to implement policies that create predictability and stability. This bill creates a level of predictability during periods of great uncertainty and confusion by being proactive versus reactionary. For example, approximately 40% of our member companies experienced supply chain disruptions because of COVID-19 and are still not back to normal operation a year later. CBIA strongly supports the charge of the Office to create and develop policies designed to restore jobs at the conclusion of any pandemic or other public health emergency to limit the long-term impact and disruptions to the supply chain.

CBIA strongly recommends that the Office hold regular public hearings to solicit input from the business community when creating best practices and policies that affect their operations, workforce, and supply chains in a public health crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating to businesses but has also required this community to become innovative and active partners with state government. The business community is a wealth of knowledge when it comes to best practices and lessons learned regarding what strategies worked when securing supplies, ensuring workplace safety, techniques to reduce risk, and educating consumers.

In conclusion, CBIA supports this piece of legislation and urges the committee to pass SB 705.

