



## CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER PROTECTION

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MICHELLE H. SEAGULL | COMMISSIONER

### Testimony of Michelle Seagull Commissioner of Consumer Protection

#### Appropriations Committee February 18, 2021

Senator Osten, Senator Miner, Representative Walker, Representative France and Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee, good morning, I am Michelle Seagull, Commissioner of the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP). Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Governor Lamont's proposed budget for our agency for the upcoming biennium.

DCP issues over 264,000 licenses, registrations and permits annually, bringing significant revenue into the State's coffers. In the last fiscal year, agency revenues to the General Fund totaled \$52,311,947 and revenues to the Transportation Fund totaled \$1,561,680. By comparison, our General Fund operating expenses were \$13,463,384. Additionally, DCP's Gaming Division has oversight responsibility for the Connecticut Lottery Corporation and the casinos, which contributed over \$540,738,864 million to the State last fiscal year.

Since Fiscal Year Ending 2011, DCP's staffing levels have decreased from 252 full time equivalents to 222 in FYE 2020. At the same time, DCP took on significant new responsibilities including the medical marijuana program, the board of accountancy, oversight of the cottage food industry, hemp manufacturing, and expansion of the prescription monitoring program and other initiatives to combat the opioid epidemic.

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When the State's economic reality shifted a decade ago, DCP, like every other state agency was challenged to do more with less. We began to modernize and streamline the work of the agency and started to update the online licensing system. Our efforts provided cost-savings and efficiencies for our agency and made possible last year's new challenge of continuing operations during a global pandemic. When COVID-19 sent most of our employees home to telework, the people and businesses that work with DCP were still able get the credentials they needed and in a faster and more convenient way, while the agency continued doing its job safely and without an interruption in service.

Governor Lamont's proposed budget for the next biennium provides DCP with the resources necessary to take on another new and substantial responsibility, the regulation of adult recreational cannabis. This budget proposal would allow DCP to hire over 60 full time employees and make other important expenditures to ensure a fair and safe marketplace for consumers and businesses alike in a newly legalized industry.

The Department will also continue to work to provide essential, core services in the most efficient, cost-effective way for the industries we already regulate. We will remain vigilant in focusing our resources on work that protects public health and safety and prevents significant economic harm to consumers and businesses through education, compliance and enforcement as well as improved processes.

We look forward to continuing our work with the Governor, our sister agencies and all of you here in the Legislative Branch to achieve these goals.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you this morning. I am proud of the hard work of DCP's employees and happy to answer any questions you may have.