For immediate release

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**CCM, CBIA & CT AFL-CIO economic summit: report released on top summit findings**

175-plus CT leaders convened in mid-November in Westbrook for a first-ever economic summit -- organized by the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM), the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA) and the Connecticut AFL-CIO.

The three statewide organizations partnered for the first time to convene a unique *Connecticut summit meeting for key business, government, labor, education and social service leaders* to brainstorm on the best common pathways for Connecticut’s economic future. On Nov. 12 and Nov. 13, the Project B.E.S.T. (Bringing Every Stakeholder Together) Summit occurred – with a group of key policy leaders and stakeholders from every region of Connecticut.

The work of the summit’s participants resulted in the recommendation of over 20 key policy proposals for state leaders to consider. (See pages 2 and 3.)

“As one can see from the breadth and range of ideas presented, the summit achieved its first goal, but our work has only begun,” said Joe DeLong, CCM Executive Director. “We now have engaged with a subcommittee of interested stakeholders from the summit with whom we will actively work to advance these findings with state leaders in 2016.”

Other participating organizations for the summit included: Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS), Connecticut Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives (CACCE), University of Connecticut, Trinity College, Greater Bridgeport Regional Business Council, Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce, and Connecticut Association of Nonprofits. There was also extensive participation by executives from the regional councils of governments, the Connecticut community colleges and other key groups.

The summit was led by Kenya Rutland, principal of KJR Consulting, whose team worked with leaders in specific subgroup areas that best pertained to their interests and professional backgrounds.

A steering committee comprised of Connecticut municipal officials helped oversee the summit. Chairing the steering group was Rudy Marconi, First Selectman of Ridgefield. The other members of the committee were Michael Frieda, First Selectman of North Haven; Mark Boughton, Mayor of Danbury; Patricia Llodra, First Selectman of Newtown; Philip Schenck, Town Manager of Bloomfield; and Michael Tetreau, First Selectman of Fairfield.
The summit included a keynote address on the first evening by veteran Capitol journalist Keith Phaneuf of The Connecticut Mirror—a leading reporter on state budget issues for nearly 25 years. He was followed the next morning on the state of the Connecticut economy by Robert Triest, Vice President and Economist with The Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. Small group discussions followed these talks and produced a consensus on the key initiatives presented in the report findings today.

Here are highlights of key consensus findings presented in each arena:

**Taxes and Regulations**

-- Reform the process for the “implementer” bill for the state budget to bring back greater transparency and avoid unvetted state law.
-- Establish an advisory council across business, labor and municipalities to define, create and report on specific metrics that can assess the best pathways to grow jobs in Connecticut.
-- Create a truly sustainable business environment that attracts jobs, people, opportunity across all levels.
-- Establish and enforce the discipline needed for the State to live within its fiscal means.
-- Bridge the economic growth and income gap among counties in the State.

**Education and Workforce Development**

-- Create one coordinated voice to represent educational administrators, teachers, boards of education and other municipal officials, in order to best address, reduce unfunded state mandates.
-- Reformulate the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) Grant Program for towns and cities and local public schools to create a more transparent and equitable funding formula.
-- Enhance and expand the work of regional educational service centers to more extensively collaborate with boards of education, chamber of commerce and teachers.
-- Give priority to community-college affordability & strengthen their community college links to high school programs across the State.
-- Better recognize that public education is a direct investment in the Connecticut economy.

**Transportation and Infrastructure**

-- Establish and maintain a “lock box” to ensure adequate and sustained funding for necessary transportation projects.
-- Prioritize congestion relief when choosing transportation projects to pursue.
-- Apply a cost-benefit analysis, test for pursuing transportation improvements.
-- Ensure regional councils of government (COGs), local governments, and all stakeholders are at the table for all regional infrastructure projects.
-- Better engage the public and create a long-term master transportation plan.

**Regional Solutions**

-- Provide a clear and streamlined process for consolidation and closing of public schools with inadequate enrollment.
-- Provide towns with municipal-revenue diversification options.
-- Increase financial incentives for municipal service collaboration and provide predictable state financial support.
-- Leverage Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding to incentivize regional education cooperation.
-- Develop regional plans and one common set of regional boundaries based on many state studies already completed.

Quality of Life Matters
-- Use business incentives for workforce development (rather than the workforce doing it, business should provide the training).
-- Collaboration through communication is vital to enhance quality of life; enhance what is already good about Connecticut
-- Fund and clean Brownfields for development.
-- Renew and develop strategic affordable housing plans.
-- Focus on long-term state plan to limit state debt.
-- Reform Connecticut’s tax structure.

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