



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations

12 November, 2021

The Honorable Ned Lamont
Governor, State of Connecticut
Office of Governor
State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Governor Lamont:

We are writing in our respective capacities as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR) to request your support for two important initiatives in your upcoming FY 2023 Budget Adjustments. The first is \$450,000 to add essential staffing in the Intergovernmental Policy and Planning Division (IGPP) of OPM. The second is the allocation of \$700,000 from the State's American Rescue Plan funding for the University of Connecticut's Department of Public Policy to put in place an applied policy lab for metropolitan, regional and local government.

Since you appointed Brendan as chair in 2020, ACIR has focused on two phenomena taking place in Connecticut: 1) the increased efficiencies in local government that were the unintended result of COVID-19 protocols, and 2) the increased awareness of how our state's balkanized system of local governance is contributing to societal injustice by institutionalizing divisions among communities. In response, ACIR embarked on the Local Government of the Future ("LGF") Initiative, with the goal of re-imagining how local government should function in a more equitable, post-COVID world. It is our belief that we can gradually move Connecticut toward a more collaborative footprint, where differences between urban, suburban and rural communities become less stark.

As we have taken on these important tasks, ACIR is reminded of another phenomenon that has occurred over the past few decades, namely, the chronic underfunding of the IGPP at OPM. In our case, because ACIR is administratively placed within the IGPP, we are limited to a fraction of one staff person's time to assist us. And while that help is appreciated and ably provided, the lack of available staffing significantly hampers our work, leaving us to depend on our membership for conducting research, outreach and writing. The ACIR's experience is symptomatic of a larger staffing problem within the IGPP which, despite the breadth of experience and dedication of its people, underserves our towns and councils of government. Now more than ever, if we are to transform our system of local government, it is essential to restore at least a portion of the needed staffing the IGPP once had before attrition and budget cuts decimated its services.

12 November, 2021

Page 2

Separately, the proposed Applied Policy Lab at UCONN's Department of Public Policy would be a solutions center for key state issues where experts from local and regional governments, scholars and graduate students, civic, nonprofit and business leaders would work to actively design, pilot and scale-up solutions to public problems facing Connecticut towns and cities. While other states around us have already deployed this model within their public land grant institutions, Connecticut lacks this necessary resource. The lab would provide evidence-based applied policy analysis and a menu of recommendations to address public problems at the regional and local levels. The goal of the lab is to be largely self-funding within three years. ARPA funds are proposed as a means to jump start the lab - which could be used to explore any of the issues covered by your ARPA proposal and more.

Taken together, these requests fall squarely within the policy goals you established since before you took office. As members of your Shared Services transition team in 2018, we helped to oversee these recommendations which your administration accepted and welcomed. Now that you have successfully navigated our state through the pandemic toward a more secure future, we believe this is the time to bring these measures to fruition.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We would be pleased to provide details for each of these proposals, and we remain available to your staff.

Respectfully,



Brendan Sharkey, Chair



Lyle Wray, Vice-Chair