



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE SOCIAL EQUITY COUNCIL
Reinvestment and Workforce Committee
AUGUST 26, 2026 SPECIAL MEETING
1:00 P.M. VIA ZOOM**

1) Call to Order, Welcome, and Attendance

Chair Ojala Naeem called the special meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. and conducted roll call. A quorum was present.

Members Present:

Ojala Naeem (Chair)

Kyle Abercrombie

Corrie Betts

Andréa Comer

Greg Davis

Avery Gaddis

Andréa Hawkins

Melvin Medina

Shirley Skyers-Thomas

Grace Suh, sitting for Kelli Vallieres

Michael Jefferson

Charles Venator-Santiago

Members Not Present:

Kevin Walton

A quorum was confirmed

2) Approval of April 15, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Chair Naeem asked for a motion to approve the April 15, 2026 meeting minutes.

Motion: Corrie Betts

Second: Michael Jefferson

Discussion: None

In Favor: All

Opposed: None

Abstentions: Grace Suh, for Kelli Vallieres

Motion passed unanimously.

3) Update on Community Reinvestment

Chair Naeem made brief remarks around the work and process for the R2 Program.

Executive Director Brandon L. McGee thanked the council members and supporting staff for all the work put into this initiative. A special thanks was given to Mari Collazo Cruz for her leadership on redesigning and scaling the policies and procedures around the R2 program.

Mari Collazo Cruz explained the task of the Council today is to review the final roster for each of the regions, totaling 173 entities to be funded via \$10,750,000 a year for the next three years. The Council approved the grant managers in December 2025 and worked closely with the program managers from each grant manager to finalize the Notice of Funding and the rubric criteria to be used by each of the grant managers to ensure a uniform process across all regions for all applicants.

Program Priorities:

- Economic development
- Reentry initiatives
- Youth initiatives

Program Criteria:

- Entity's Statement of Need
- Project sustainability
- Program goals
- Resources to carry out the proposed projects
- Existing programs or services that these entities provide
- Project feasibility for shovel-ready projects

The grant managers received 337 applications with some regions receiving more applications than others. In the interest of equity and to maximize funding, DIA regions were evaluated and

selected by the highest populations living in poverty, primarily Bridgeport, Hartford, and New Haven that had the highest demand. The funds will support things like workforce development projects, entrepreneurship, work for reentry population, as well as youth programs. Totalling \$10,752,500 annually, \$3.4m will go to Economic Development, \$2.5m to Reentry Initiatives, and \$4.8m to Youth Initiatives.

Attorney Nichelle Mullins reviewed provisions related to conflicts of interest pursuant to the Connecticut General Statutes and the SEC Bylaws. As part of the conflict review, members were asked to identify if they need to recuse from any vote due to an actual or potential conflict. The following members identified the regions from which they intended to recuse/abstain from voting:

Melvin Media- Waterbury
Avery Gaddis- Hartford and Waterbury
Andréa Comer- New Haven and Waterbury
Andréa Hawkins- Hartford
Grace Suh- recused herself from the voting process
Charles Venator- Hartford
Shirley Skyers-Thomas- Bridgeport
Corrie Betts- recused himself from the voting process
Ojala Naeem- Hartford

4) Approval of Recommended Entities for Community Reinvestment Grants

Bridgeport Region

Motion: “To approve roster of recommended grantees, amounts and purpose for the Bridgeport Region, and move to full Council for final approval” Avery Gaddis

Seconds: Kyle Abercrombie

Discussion: None

In Favor: All

Opposed: None

Recusals/Abstentions:

Corrie Betts

Andréa Comer

Grace Suh for Kelli Vallieres

Shirley Skyers-Thomas

Motion: Passed

Danbury Region

Motion: “To approve roster of recommended grantees, amounts and purpose for the Danbury Region, and move to full Council for final approval”-Melvin Medina

Seconds: Andréa Comer

Discussion: None
In Favor: All
Opposed: None
Recusals/Abstentions:
Corrie Betts
Grace Suh for Kelli Vallieres
Greg Davis
Motion: Passed

Hartford/East Hartford Region

Motion: "To approve roster of recommended grantees, amounts and purpose for the Hartford, East Hartford Region, and move to full Council for final approval"- Greg Davis

Seconds: Kyle Abercrombie

Discussion: None
In Favor: All
Opposed: None
Recusals/Abstentions:
Ojala Naeem
Corrie Betts
Avery Gaddis
Andréa Hawkins
Grace Suh for Kelli Vallieres
Charles Venator
Motion: Passed

Meriden Region

Motion: "To approve roster of recommended grantees, amounts and purpose for the Meriden Region, and move to full Council for final approval" - Michael Jefferson

Seconds: Andréa Comer
Discussion: None
In Favor: All
Opposed: None
Recusals/Abstentions:
Corrie Betts
Greg Davis
Grace Suh for Kelli Vallieres
Motion: Passed

New Britain Region

Motion: “To approve roster of recommended grantees, amounts and purpose for the New Britain Region, and move to full Council for final approval” - Andréa Comer

Seconds: Kyle Abercrombie

Discussion: None

In Favor: All

Opposed: None

Recusals/Abstentions:

Corrie Betts

Grace Suh for Kelli Vallieres

Greg Davis

Motion: Passed

New Haven/East Haven/West Haven Region

Motion: “To approve roster of recommended grantees, amounts and purpose for the New Haven, East Haven, and West Haven Region, and move to full Council for final approval” -

Avery Gaddis

Seconds: Kyle Abercrombie

Discussion: None

In Favor: All

Opposed: None

Recusals/Abstentions:

Corrie Betts

Michael Jefferson

Andréa Comer

Grace Suh for Kelli Vallieres

Motion: Passed

New London/Norwich/Windham Region

Motion: “To approve roster of recommended grantees, amounts and purpose for the New London, Norwich, and Windham Region, and move to full Council for final approval” - Andréa

Hawkins

Seconds: Michael Jefferson

Discussion: None

In Favor: All

Opposed: None

Recusals/Abstentions:

Corrie Betts

Grace Suh for Kelli Vallieres

Motion: Passed

Norwalk Region

Motion: “To approve roster of recommended grantees, amounts and purpose for the Norwalk Region, and move to full Council for final approval” - Michael Jefferson

Seconds: Andréa Hawkins

Discussion: None

In Favor: All

Opposed: None

Recusals/Abstentions:

Corrie Betts

Grace Suh for Kelli Vallieres

Greg Davis

Motion: Passed

Stamford Region

Motion: “To approve roster of recommended grantees, amounts and purpose for the Stamford Region, and move to full Council for final approval” - Michael Jefferson

Seconds: Andréa Hawkins

Discussion: None

In Favor: All

Opposed: None

Recusals/Abstentions:

Corrie Betts

Grace Suh for Kelli Vallieres

Greg Davis

Motion: Passed

Waterbury Region

Motion: “To approve roster of recommended grantees, amounts and purpose for the Waterbury Region, and move to full Council for final approval” - Kyle Abercrombie

Seconds: Michael Jefferson

Discussion: None

In Favor: All

Opposed: None

Recusals/Abstentions:

Corrie Betts

Avery Gaddis

Melvin Medina

Grace Suh for Kelli Vallieres

Andréa Comer
Greg Davis
Andréa Hawkins
Motion: Passed

5) Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn: Avery Gaddis

Second: Kyle Abercrombie

There being no further business, the special meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 1:46 p.m.