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October 15, 2018

The Honorable Dannel P. Malloy
Governor of the State of Connecticut
State Capitol
Hartford, CT

Dear Governor Malloy,

I am writing to urge your support in my ongoing effort to incorporate the last few non-participating quasi-public agencies into OpenConnecticut, my office's open government initiative.

In order to establish greater fiscal responsibility, as well as public trust in government, my office launched OpenConnecticut four years ago. OpenConnecticut is an online portal that opens the state's books and allows all Connecticut residents to access and monitor the state's financial data, including checkbook-level payment information updated nightly. Since launching the site, Connecticut has improved its national financial transparency ranking and remains among the top five leading states in the nation for its commitment to open government.

Last year, I reached out to all of Connecticut's quasi-public agencies, seeking a voluntary commitment to provide checkbook-level data annually to be uploaded to OpenConnecticut. I am happy to report that virtually all of these agencies promptly agreed to partner with me in that effort. Stunningly, however, three agencies have either declined or have not even responded to my most recent and repeated follow-up requests to easily establish greater financial transparency.

Those three holdout quasi-public agencies are the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA), the Connecticut Port Authority and the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA). As you know, the majority of these agencies' boards of directors are made up of a combination of appointed agency commissioners and individuals appointed by you and, while having more flexibility than traditional public agencies, they have a responsibility to the public to be open and accountable for the business that they conduct.

As Governor, you have acknowledged the importance of open government through your public statements and your administration's own efforts to establish a statewide data portal. In light of this recognition, I request that you immediately direct that your appointees follow the lead of their colleagues and help establish greater financial transparency.

It is now considered best practice to provide checkbook level transparency data for quasi-public institutions on state transparency websites. Incorporating checkbook level financial data for all quasi-public agencies in OpenConnecticut will allow Connecticut to retain its position as a leader in government transparency efforts and will help to maintain the public's confidence in government operations.

By statute, quasi-public organizations are insulated from direct public oversight. Budgets are set independently by their boards and the boards consist of political appointments that are not held directly accountable by voters. Still, they were all formed to meet a public purpose and the efficiency with which they accomplish their stated purpose has significant ramifications on the general public.

The operations of quasi-public institutions should therefore be transparent. In recent years, several states across the country have moved to provide checkbook level financial data for quasi-public institutions on state transparency sites. Added transparency helps to improve public confidence in the operation of quasi-public agencies and can provide additional oversight to ensure organizations are operating in the public's best interest. Failure to provide public access to detailed financial data for all quasi-public agencies not only shows evidence of a contempt for taxpayers' right to know, but will erode our state's open government leadership ranking.

Please have someone contact Joshua Wojcik in my office at Joshua.wojcik@ct.gov or (860) 702-3389 with any questions or for assistance in facilitating the financial data transfer for OpenCheckbook. I thank you for your support and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Kevin Lembo
State Comptroller

cc: Suzanne M. Hopgood, Chairwoman, CRDA
Michael Freimuth, Executive Director, CRDA
Evonne M. Klein, Chairwoman, CHFA
Karl Kilduff, Executive Director, CHFA
Scott Bates, Dep. Secretary of the State and Chairman, Connecticut Port Authority
Evan Matthews, Executive Director, Connecticut Port Authority

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