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Larson, Small Business Development Center Announce Free Business Counseling for Hartford North End Business Owners

Hartford, CT- U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) announced today that free business counseling will be available for Hartford's North End small business owners. This counseling is in direct response to concerns expressed at a public meeting with Congressman Larson by business owners in Hartford's North End earlier this year.

Small business owners will be able to meet with a counselor from the SBDC to receive management and technical assistance that will help strengthen the sustainability and overall performance of their business. The program is offered in partnership with the Greater Hartford African American Alliance, ACA Foods, and funding support is provided in part by Bank of America.

"I hosted the small business meeting with a goal of working toward providing real solutions to concerns of local business owners. The need for business guidance and technical assistance was one of the most urgent needs I heard them speak about," **said Congressman Larson.** "This partnership solves that problem and will help these community businesses grow and prosper."

Earlier this year, Congressman Larson hosted a Small Business Summit at the Rajun Cajun Restaurant in Hartford with Jeanne Hulit, New England Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration, and representatives from local financial and lending institutions. In the months following the meeting, Congressman Larson's office worked closely with the SBDC and community partners to create an opportunity to provide one-on-one counseling services to business owners of Hartford's North End.

Congressman Larson added, **"In working with the Small Business Development Center and great partners, like the Greater Hartford African American Alliance and Yvon Alexandre of ACA Foods, we were able to provide an opportunity for North Hartford business owners to receive sound advice and helpful resources that will help strengthen their businesses."**

The Small Business Development Center is a collaborative with the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Connecticut State University System, and public and private partners throughout Connecticut.

"Small business is the key to the nation's economic recovery, and that is especially true here in Connecticut. With more than 80% of Connecticut's businesses defined as small, this partnership is critical. The Small Business Development Center's collaboration with key partners will provide much needed one-on-one counseling and technical assistance to the business community of Hartford's North End. Congressman Larson and the SBDC offer a potent partnership for business development," remarked CCSU President Jack Miller.

"I attended this public meeting; I heard the business owners loud and clear. This initiative responds to their immediate needs." stated Ginne-Rae Clay, State Director of the SBDC.

SBDC's business counselors are available to meet with business owners on Thursdays by appointment only at the Office of the Caribbean Trade Council in the ACA Foods Plaza on 3155 Main Street in Hartford. To set up an appointment, business owners should contact the Small Business Development Center at 860-832-0650.

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