



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
GOVERNOR DANIEL P. MALLOY

GOV. MALLOY: RETAIL AND SERVICE ENTREPRENEURS ARE JOB CREATORS

Berlin, Mansfield, Meriden, Stamford and Westport Small Businesses Receive Grants

(HARTFORD, CT) – Governor Dannel P. Malloy today announced that five Connecticut small businesses located in Berlin, Mansfield, Meriden, Stamford and Westport have qualified for assistance through the state’s Small Business Express Program (EXP). The program was created as a part of the bipartisan jobs bill passed during last year’s jobs special session to encourage business expansion and job growth.

“The jobs created by retail and service companies are often the product of hardworking and determined self-employed entrepreneurs,” Governor Malloy said. “The Small Business Express Program is proving very responsive to this important sector of our economy, one that has tremendous potential for job growth and retention.”

In total, EXP will provide \$100 million to help the state’s small businesses hire more employees and fund capital investments. The program, administered by the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), offers loans and matching grants to Connecticut companies with fewer than 50 employees at the time of application.

The businesses announced today are:

- **The Music People!, Inc.** of Berlin will retain 48 jobs and anticipates hiring for eight positions as the company extends its 32-year track record as a worldwide leader in the pro-audio field. The largest supplier of music stands and accessories in the United States, The Music People!, Inc. has a globally recognized brand and exports its products to 39 countries. The company is receiving a job creation matching grant, equaling its investment of \$90,275, for information technology, training, and marketing.

“I’m delighted that this longtime and successful Berlin business is receiving a state grant,” said State Senator Terry Gerratana (D-New Britain, Berlin and Farmington). “This is exactly the type of business we had in mind when we passed the jobs bill in October – and we hope to build on that success this year by doubling the size of the companies that are eligible for such state assistance.”

“This job creation matching grant of \$90,275 is great news for both The Music People!, Inc. and Berlin,” said State Representative Joseph Aresimowicz (D-Berlin, Southington). “There is no more important challenge facing us than job retention and job creation in Connecticut. The matching grant helps the company retain 48 jobs and anticipates the hiring for eight positions, an investment that makes sense and recognizes the great track record of this Berlin-based company.”

- **Stamford Insurance Group, Inc. (SIG)** is investing \$100,000 and was awarded a \$100,000 matching grant in support of its plans to expand. The agency, entering its third decade, has locations in Stamford, Cheshire, East Windsor and Groton, serving clients both in Connecticut and in surrounding states. Funds will be used for computer and phone systems, staff training, and marketing. SIG will retain 20 jobs.

“The jobs bill we passed in October was intended for just this kind of business activity. With the assistance of this matching grant, the Stamford Insurance Group will be able to support 20 jobs to help our economy rebound. This is smart assistance for business, and good policy for putting Connecticut’s workforce back on the job,” said State Senator Carlo Leone (D-Stamford, Darien).

“Stamford Insurance Group has been a respected member of Stamford’s business community for decades and is great fit for our new Small Business Express program,” said State Representative Gerald Fox, III (D-Stamford). “The state is committed to encouraging economic growth through small business assistance and I am happy to see a local company taking advantage of these resources.”

“The governor and the legislature are working hand-in-hand to create and retain as many jobs as possible in Connecticut, and these grants are further evidence of that,” said State Senator Gary D. LeBeau (D-East Hartford), who is Senate Chairman of the Commerce Committee. “The Small Business Express Program is enormously popular with Connecticut industry and it will only get better when we expand the program to companies with up to 100 employees.”

- **State Wide Insurance, LLC** of Meriden is investing \$87,335 to purchase computer equipment and software, and provide training for two retained staff and a new hire. The company is receiving a job incentive loan of \$65,000.

“The growth of our small businesses is key to our economic recovery,” said House Speaker Christopher G. Donovan (D-Meriden). “The Express program works with firms like State Wide that are willing to invest their own funds in job growth programs. That creates a win-win-win proposition – for State Wide, the state, and most importantly for individuals who will be hired for new jobs.”

“It is critical to support small businesses if we want them to be successful,” said State Representative Cathy Abercrombie (D-Meriden, Berlin). “I congratulate State Wide Insurance on receiving this funding and thank Governor Malloy for his commitment to Connecticut’s small businesses.”

- **Dog Lane Café** of Mansfield is investing \$496,550 and will receive a job creation matching grant of \$100,000 for fit out of its space and start-up operations. The business will be part of the new Storrs Center Project, a mixed-use town center and main street corridor near the University of Connecticut campus. The company will retain eight jobs and create 10 more.

“When the legislature passed the jobs bill last October, we created the Small Business Express Program to help businesses grow and create jobs,” said State Representative Gregory Haddad (D-Mansfield, Chaplin). “Connecticut-owned and operated small businesses like Dog Lane Café, a new eatery from the same folks who own Eastern Connecticut’s Vanilla Bean Café, are exactly the kind ventures that we should be supporting because they hire locally and are rooted in our community.”

“The Dog Lane Café and the Storrs Center Project are a perfect example of smart growth investments we need to be making in Connecticut,” said Senate President Donald E. Williams, Jr. (D-Brooklyn). “It will not only pay off in the short-term with construction jobs but in the long-term job retention and creation.”

- **Catherine Cleare Interiors, LLC** of Westport is receiving a job incentive loan of \$63,000 that, combined with \$57,500 of company funds, will be used for marketing and staff training. The interior design company will retain one position and add a new one.

State Senator Toni Boucher (R-Wilton) said, “Small businesses represent over 75% of Connecticut’s job market and are the engine of our economy. It is good to see the state focus on this critical sector and offering programs to small companies that are willing to put skin in the game. As a small business owner for many years, I understand that when making an investment one must consider all the risks involved. In this economy, stability is one of the most important factors in the survival of a business.”

For more information on EXP or to apply for the program, visit the Small Business Express Program web page or contact Michelle Lugo at DECD at 860-270-8052 or Michelle.Lugo@ct.gov.

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