

Austin Burke  
Confirmation Testimony  
Senate Community, Economic & Recreational Development Committee  
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Thank you, Senator Earll, Senator Fontana, and members of the committee. It's good to be here today to talk about my nomination by the Governor to be the next secretary of the Department of Community and Economic Development. I would like to discuss what we hope to accomplish in the remaining seven months.

I have been working in community and economic development in northeastern Pennsylvania for the past 35 years. During 30 of those years, I have been the president of the Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce. As such, I have been involved in Scranton and regional economic and community development efforts. We have worked hard with business and community leaders, and state and local officials to improve the lives and well being of our people.

The programs we implemented responded to community needs. We reclaimed thousands of acres of mine-scarred land for productive reuse; we brought jobs and investment downtown; we trained our workforce; we educated and provided financing to our small businesses. Our programs helped Scranton and northeastern Pennsylvania attract projects that have created thousands of jobs and family sustaining career opportunities for our citizens.

For 20 years, I've served on the board of the International Economic Development Council where I've had the opportunity to witness diverse approaches to economic and

community development. Of all of those efforts, I can say that the economic stimulus programs enacted by you and the Rendell administration have been the most comprehensive and effective I have seen.

Over the past eight years, the administration and the legislature have worked to invest more than \$3.2 billion into Pennsylvania companies and Pennsylvania communities. These investments have meant great things for our people and the communities' they live in; they have created thousands of jobs, given Pennsylvania a more diverse – and therefore more competitive – economic base, and revitalized and transformed many of our local towns and communities.

I participated with you as a member of the Commonwealth Financing Authority and the Ben Franklin Technology Development Authority. I know that these investments have prepared us for future growth.

We have more work to do, but we are turning a corner in Pennsylvania. We continue to add jobs and our economy is faring better than many of our neighboring states. But in order to keep that pace and not slow our progress, we must continue to make worthwhile investments in projects that need our assistance now. There are projects now in the pipeline; business owners and executives who are ready to grow – and add jobs – today. These projects will help put our people back to work and speed up our recovery.

For the remainder of the administration, my priority will be to get these types of projects to the finish-line; to continue to invest in projects, companies, entrepreneurs and communities that make Pennsylvania work.

We need resources to make this happen. The Governor has proposed, and the House has approved, a tight – but fair – DCED budget for 2010-2011. Most of our program line items are either at or below what was approved in the current fiscal year with the exception of increases to a few key economic development programs. Increases to programs such as the opportunity grants, customized job training, infrastructure development and infrastructure and facilities improvement are essential to foster new, private investment and to jumpstart our state for job-generating growth as we exit the recession.

There is one last element that will be a priority of my department over the next seven months – cooperation. In order to be as productive as possible, we need to continue to foster partnerships and communication among our offices, lawmakers, communities and investors who are all committed to continuing our recovery.

I am truly excited and humbled to take on this new opportunity to serve my home state. I sincerely believe that we can do great things in these next seven months by working together to make smart investments into projects that will strengthen Pennsylvania now and into the future. I hope that you agree. Your support for my confirmation as the secretary of the Department of Community and Economic Development will empower my commitment to this state's fiscal health and my service to the citizens of Pennsylvania.