**MAYOR BRONIN DELIVERS STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**

**HARTFORD, CONN (March 12, 2018) –**Today Mayor Bronin delivered his third **State** **of** **the** **City**address at Hartford **City** Hall. Mayor Bronin’s full prepared remarks are below.

***Introduction***

*Council President Thames, members****of******the****Court****of****Common Council, Treasurer Cloud, Town Clerk Bazzano, members****of****our delegation to****the****General Assembly:  Good evening.  It’s an honor to serve with you.*

*To****the****citizens****of****our great****city****, it’s a privilege to serve you as your Mayor.*

*To our businesses, small and large, to our community based organizations, to our faith leaders, thank you for your commitment to Hartford.*

*To all our****city****employees, who have done more with much less, who’ve stayed focused on your mission amidst tremendous uncertainty, and who have partnered with us to put our****city****on a better path, thank you for all that you do.*

*And let me just say as an aside – our DPW team is right now getting ready for yet another snow storm, just a couple****of****days after they did an outstanding job cleaning up from****the****last nor’easter in time for****the****St. Patrick’s Day parade.  So let’s give them a hand.*

*I am grateful for many blessings, but more than anything, I am grateful to have Sara as my wife and partner, and for our three kids — our oldest here tonight.  I love you.*

***Building a stable foundation***

*Two years ago, I stood before you in this chamber and reported that we faced a fiscal emergency unprecedented in our****city****’s history.*

*Over****the****past two years, we’ve faced that crisis honestly and transparently, with confidence in our future and without fear****of****difficult choices.*

*We made deep but necessary reductions, cutting nearly 20%****of****spending on non-public safety departments; consequential cuts that mattered to our****city****.*

*We asked our unions to help us find substantial savings and make structural changes for****the****long-term, and many****of****them have.*

*We asked our corporate partners, philanthropic foundations, and our community as a whole to step up and fill****the****gaps as****the******city****pulled back, and many****of****them did.*

*We prepared for all possibilities.  We had a serious public discussion****of****all our options, including bankruptcy.  Because, as I said here two years ago, “****the****deepest cuts,****the****most painful concessions,****the****elimination****of****services, and even****the****most generous help from partners in Hartford — all****of****that will only get us part****of******the****way toward closing****the****gap in****the****years ahead.”*

*And as I said here last year, “until we’ve built a new partnership with****the******State******of****Connecticut and other stakeholders, we cannot yet take any option off****the****table.”*

*That’s why, last September, we wrote together to****the****leadership****of****our****State****and laid out****the****three options before them as they debated****the******State****budget:*

*One, to provide a short-term infusion****of****cash, kicking****the****can and leaving us facing****the****same crisis next year or****the****year after — an option that we opposed above all else.*

*Two, do nothing, and grant us permission to file bankruptcy.*

*Or three, join us in building a new partnership, recognizing that our fiscal challenge is rooted in****the****very structure****of****our****city****— a****city****small to start with, with more than half****of****its property tax-exempt; a****city****built on****the****tax base****of****a suburb.*

*We proposed a new partnership, recognizing that Connecticut’s competitiveness and strength depends on having strong and vibrant****cities****, including****the****Capital****City****.*

*Together,****the******City****Council,****the****Treasurer, our outstanding****state****legislative delegation, and our small but mighty budget and finance team built****the****case — and earned****the****confidence — that made that new partnership possible.*

*As part****of****that new partnership, we embraced accountability.  We supported****the****creation****of****a Municipal Accountability Review Board.  We are confident in our budgeting, and our books are open.*

*Today, we are engaged in discussions with****the******State****Treasurer and****the****Secretary****of******the****Office****of****Policy and Management about****the****terms****of****an agreement to deal with****the****otherwise insurmountable debt burden that we inherited.*

*While not yet done, I believe that we will soon be able to do what no administration in many, many years could do: look our residents and taxpayers in****the****eyes and say that we can project stable, balanced budgets – not for one year, but for years to come.*

*Budget stability does not mean that****the****pressure is off, or that****the****hard choices are all behind us.  We must continue to look for savings and efficiencies day after day, month after month, year after year.*

*Capital investments made with****city****funds will be limited to essential infrastructure only.  And those capital investments we must make will be funded through operating funds, not new borrowing.*

*Our budgets will be tough and tight.  But we’re used to that.  And by committing to continue****the****discipline with which we’ve budgeted over****the****last two years, we will lay a foundation that future administrations, future councils, and future generations can build on.*

***Moving from stability to strength***

*Moving beyond stability to true long-term strength depends on our ability to grow and attract investment in****the****years ahead.*

*That’s why, two years ago, we resolved that even as we battled crisis, we would not allow our****city****or our time in office to be defined by crisis.*

*This time last year****the****ballpark had yet to open.  Today, we can look back at forty-one sellouts for****the****Yard Goats.  Hundreds****of****Hartford residents worked each game day, Hartford families found affordable entertainment, and tens****of****thousands****of****families from around****the****region rediscovered their Capital****City****.*

*This year,****the****UCONN Hartford campus opened its doors to thousands****of****students.*

*Private investors brought****the****historic Goodwin Hotel back to life.*

***The****blighted Capewell factory is now a vibrant residential community along****the****Charter Oak mile.*

*A new building is going up on Arch Street, 370 Asylum Street is under construction, and****the****renovation****of****two buildings vacant for decades on Pearl Street is underway.*

*Connecticut Children’s Hospital will be moving four hundred employees onto Columbus Boulevard, and United Bank moved two hundred employees to****the****heart****of****downtown.*

*In Blue Hills, Bowles Park is being rebuilt, just next door to where****the****new Weaver High School is going up.*

*We secured funding for****the****demolition****of****Westbrook Village, clearing****the****way for redevelopment there.*

***The****Albany Avenue streetscape project will soon begin, after decades on****the****shelf.*

*On Homestead Avenue,****the****demolition process for two large, abandoned factories has begun —****the****first step toward putting job-creating enterprise back on that critical corridor.*

*In Frog Hollow,****the****old Hartford Office Supply building has been renovated — bringing with it private investment in residential buildings and small businesses across****the****street.*

*There’s a creative, entrepreneurial community growing on Bartholomew Avenue, where we are finishing****the****design****of****a grant-funded streetscape project.*

*Looking to****the****future, we’ve selected a preferred developer to work with us on****the****development****of****that long-empty parcel at****the****corner****of****Park and Main;*

*We’ve received a proposal from an experienced, capable developer for****the****development****of******the****parcels around****the****ballpark at Downtown North;*

*And we are working to see whether it’s possible for us to negotiate a deal that brings Dillon Stadium back as a community asset, and brings professional soccer to Hartford;*

*We will pursue those opportunities carefully, deliberately, and in partnership with****the****community — mindful****of******the****mistakes****of******the****past, but optimistic about****the****potential opportunities those projects present.*

***Of****course, economic development doesn’t just mean big projects.  It also means building up our neighborhoods by fighting blight, block by block.*

*Our blight team has worked with NRZs and our 311 team to identify two hundred priority properties.  Nearly one hundred****of****those properties now have work in progress.*

*And our efforts at economic development aren’t limited to buildings.*

*Two years ago, I said that “we will help build a****city****that fosters innovation, incubation and entrepreneurship.”*

*Last summer, five major insurance companies joined together with****the******City****, with CTNext, and with Startup Bootcamp to launch****the****Hartford InsurTech accelerator — to do****the****work****of****identifying, investing in, and mentoring tech startups that can change****the****game in****the****insurance industry.*

*Our insurance companies have been doing that work for years, but they've been doing it in Silicon Valley.  Now they're doing it here, co-located with Upward Hartford, an amazing co-working and incubator space on Church Street.  And they’ve already recruited****the****first cohort****of****ten young tech companies.*

*Just a few months ago, Stanley Black & Decker announced that they, too, would make Hartford****the****center****of****their innovation efforts — with an advanced manufacturing center****of****excellence and an accelerator on Constitution Plaza, in partnership with TechStars.*

*Together, those two innovation centers will bring dozens****of****startups to Hartford.*

*If someone had predicted two years ago that, in****the****space****of****just a few months, Startupbootcamp and TechStars — global brands in innovation — would have a presence in Hartford, in partnership with our major local employers, few would have believed it.*

*And as those accelerators identify startups from around****the****world and bring them to Hartford, ReSET is supporting and promoting****the****growth****of****local social enterprise.*

*Another team is working to launch****the****largest maker space in New England at 960 Main.*

*We piloted a CDBG micro-grant program with small businesses in Parkville, and we’re preparing a similar micro-grant program for small businesses throughout our****City****.*

*Hartford was once a center****of****industrial innovation, and it will be again.  We will continue our efforts both to retain and to recruit businesses big and small to our*

***city****— and to build****the****partnerships that make that possible.  So stay tuned.*

***Staying focused on a core mission: public safety***

*As important as our economic development efforts are, our most important mission is our most basic mission — public safety.*

*No police department and no fire department in****the******State****does what our men and women do.  No fire department in****the******state****responds to more calls for service.  No police department helps more people, or has a deeper commitment to transparency, accountability, and community engagement.*

*Please join me in thanking them and our emergency services team for****the****incredible work that they do.*

*As many****of****our police and firefighters have reached retirement age and moved on from****city****service over****the****last two years, we’ve recruited aggressively.*

*We’ve recruited more than one hundred twenty firefighters – a Herculean effort by our H.R. team – including forty-five who began****the****academy this morning.*

*We funded many****of****those hires with****the****second largest federal “SAFER” grant in****the****country, $11 million over three years — won through****the****great work****of****our Fire Department and terrific grants team.*

*Faced with a staffing shortfall in our police department, we’ve recruited nearly fifty officers, with another class starting soon.*

*I’m proud to say that, in both police and fire, we’ve recruited****the****most diverse classes ever hired by****the******City******of****Hartford. Because we know it’s important that our public safety departments reflect****the****diversity****of******the******city****they serve.*

*As we’ve worked to build up our police department, we’ve also worked to expand****the****tools they have at their disposal.*

*Today, we’re expanding our citywide network****of****cameras as well as****the****analytic capabilities at our Capital****City****Command Center – to help our detectives move quickly to solve violent crimes that in years past might have gone unsolved.*

***Expanding opportunity***

*We also know that public safety isn’t just about how many men and women we have in uniform, or what tools we give them to work with. Because****the****best public safety policy is a job.*

*From day one, we’ve focused on creating opportunities for our young people – and especially those young people who don’t right now see a path to****the****life they hope to live.*

*One core element****of****that effort has been****the****Hartford Youth Service Corps.*

*Last year, more than two hundred Corps members did more than eighty-five thousand hours****of****paid work, serving our community – building playgrounds, clearing trails, shoveling snow for their elderly or disabled neighbors.*

*To date, we’ve secured $5 million in private funding to build****the****Youth Service Corps, and we now have more than two hundred fifty young people serving as Corps members.*

*Beyond****the****Youth Service Corps, Hartford is fortunate to have outstanding partners working with our young people, from****the****YMCA to****the****Boys and Girls Clubs to****the****Village for Families and Children — and a great team in our Department****of****Families, Children, Youth and Recreation.*

*But all too often,****the****organizations that work with our young people don’t work closely enough with each other.*

*Through****the****Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative, we’ve brought dozens****of****organizations together around one table.*

*Learning from****the****success****of******the****Coordinated Access Network in reducing chronic homelessness in Greater Hartford, we’re building a way for those organizations to share information, so that young people don’t fall through****the****cracks.*

*I am as proud****of******the****Youth Service Corps and****the****Opportunity Youth Collaborative as I am****of****anything we’ve done in****the****last two years together, because those efforts are about helping young men and women find a reason to be hopeful about their future.*

***Of****course, hope shouldn’t just be for our youth.  As a****State****, we’ve taken big steps to correct decades****of****misguided criminal justice policies with vast racial disparities.*

*At****the****local level,****the****most important thing we can do to make a second chance society a reality is to help returning citizens successfully re-enter our community.*

*That’s why we’ve worked with Community Partners in Action to plan****the****creation****of****a Reentry Welcome Center.  I’m proud to announce that, with generous support from****the****Hartford Foundation for Public Giving,****the****Center will open in****City****Hall this year.*

***The****Center will give one hundred fifty returning citizens****the****support they need as they rebuild their lives.*

*Like****the****Youth Service Corps,****the****reentry center could serve ten times as many and still leave needs unmet.  But we hope to build a model that can grow in****the****future.*

*As we work to give second chances to those who’ve made mistakes, there’s so much more we need to do to give our children better chances to begin with.*

*Last fall, Bloomberg Philanthropies asked****cities****to come up with creative solutions to their most pressing problems.  Our team decided to focus on****the****difficult issue****of****childhood trauma linked to gun violence.*

*In****the****wake****of****heartbreaking tragedies like we saw down in Parkland, there’s often discussion****ofthe****importance****of****wrapping those kids and those families in services and support.****The****violence our community experiences is****of****a different character than those mass shootings.  But lives are lost too often in our****city****– and that violence is no less devastating, and no less traumatic.*

*All too often, those who witness gun violence in our community — including our youngest kids — do not get****the****acknowledgment,****the****support,****the****comfort or counseling they need.*

*Our proposal, Alleviating Child Trauma in Our Neighborhoods or ACTION, earned us a spot as a finalist for****the****Bloomberg Mayor’s Challenge competition – one****of****thirty-five chosen, out****of****more than three hundred submissions.*

*We’ll be refining our proposal in****the****coming months.  But whether or not we win a grant to implement our idea, it’s an example****of****how we are confronting our challenges creatively and collaboratively, even during this time****of****fiscal constraint.*

***Responding to rising challenges***

*Fiscal challenges, police recruiting,****the****youth service corps, blight remediation, reentry, and public safety — these were all key areas we promised to focus on before we took****the****oath****of****office.*

*In recent months, we’ve had to respond to troubling trends, and unexpected tests.*

*As opioid and especially Fentanyl deaths have mounted around our****state****, our firefighters last year saved three hundred eighty-two lives through****the****administration****of****Narcan.*

*And as tragic vehicle fatalities jumped in recent months, our police department has used grants to step up enforcement.  We’re preparing to install more than one hundred new speed humps around****the******city****.  And we’ve engaged with our partners around****the****region and at****the******State****to respond together to****the****rising incidence****of****car thefts across town lines.*

*No new challenge has been larger than****the****devastation wrought by hurricanes Irma and Maria.*

*In****the****days after those storms, we all heard from countless residents, including members****of****our****City****Council, who could not reach loved ones.  No word on whether fathers, sisters, grandparents had survived****the****storm, or whether they had food or water.*

*Following those storms, thousands****of****individuals and families came to our****state****, many****of****them to Hartford.*

*Our federal government promised they would be there for Puerto Rico and every****state****affected by disaster “every day,” supporting families “throughout” our response and recovery.*

***The****federal government did not live up to that promise.  But our community stepped up.*

*Our Hartford delegation and our Council members joined with community groups and residents to gather supplies to meet****the****immediate needs.*

*Hartford Public Schools found books and supplies and coats for students, and welcomed nearly five hundred new students to our classrooms.*

***The****Capitol Region Education Council took****the****lead on setting up a relief center.*

*Our department****of****Health and Human Services is working side by side with incredible organizations like****the****Salvation Army, Catholic Charities and CRT to help make sure families stay connected to those agencies.*

*Many****of****those who have come to our****city****in****the****wake****of****those devastating storms still live in uncertainty about their future – their homes and their livelihoods.*

*We are proud to welcome our fellow citizens to our****city****, and we will continue to fight hard for****the****resources and support they need. This afternoon, I spoke to****the****Governor’s office and we have a clear and common commitment to ensuring that no family who loses FEMA shelter assistance in Hartford will be left without housing.*

***Leading locally***

***The****federal government’s abdication****of****responsibility when it comes to hurricane recovery isn’t an aberration.  It’s what we’ve come to expect****of****Presidential administration that prides itself on divisiveness, and denies****the****basic principle that we are stronger together.*

*President Trump promised to invest in****cities****.  Instead, he’s proposed to slash Community Development Block Grant funds, housing funds, and food and heating assistance, which affect our most vulnerable families most.*

*He’s cut programs like teen pregnancy prevention funding, which helped Hartford reduce****the****teen birth rate by more than 40%.*

*With a leadership void in****the****White House, it is our responsibility at****the****local level to try to fill****the****gap, wherever we can.*

*President Trump’s agency heads have rolled back environmental protections and removed****the****words “climate change” from U.S. Government websites.  We adopted a comprehensive Climate Action Plan and set****the****goal****of****making Hartford a national leader in environmental responsibility.*

***The****Trump Administration worked to dismantle****the****Affordable Care Act and defund Planned Parenthood.   In Hartford, we promoted enrollment in****the****ACA, and cut****the****ribbon on a brand new Planned Parenthood on Albany Avenue.   It provides primary medical care, and yes, it protects a woman’s right to choose.*

*Together we passed a thoughtful ordinance that prevents crisis pregnancy centers from deceiving women after we learned they were “luring” – their words – women away from a reproductive health center.*

*Most divisive and destructive****of****all,****the****Trump Administration has sown fear in****cities****across****the****country by targeting immigrant communities and trying to force local law enforcement to break****the****relationships****of****trust that they’ve built with those they serve.*

*Italian immigrants, Irish immigrants, Jewish immigrants, Jamaican immigrants and immigrants from other West Indian and Caribbean islands, immigrants from Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia, migrants from****the****South or from Puerto Rico, and our proud LGBTQ community have all made Hartford stronger.*

*If****the****federal government wants to help take dangerous criminals off our streets, we’ll work with them.  But we won’t be silent when they go after someone who works a steady job and takes care****of****a sick parent.  We won’t be silent when they impersonate our police to detain our residents.  That doesn’t make us safer, it makes us weaker.*

*It makes us weaker when our national leadership makes our neighbors feel less than American, less than fully valued, less than fully protected because****of****who they are, who they love, how they identify, where they’re from, or how they look.*

*And it makes us weaker when our President legitimizes****the****most hateful, intolerant, and racist voices in our country.*

*As****the****federal government rejects****the****ideals to which our nation has always aspired, we’ll continue to be a welcoming****city****that finds beauty and strength in our diversity.*

***Conclusion***

*Our****city****is****the****cultural and economic heart****of****this region****of****more than a million people.  A great****city****, in a great****state****.  A****city****that’s faced challenges, as our****state****faces challenges.*

*Our mission is to make our****city****healthy and strong, and to ensure that all****of****our residents have a share in Hartford’s future.*

*We didn’t sign up for****the****easy job.  We signed up to get a great****city****back on track.*

*We’ve made hard choices and resisted quick fixes.  We’ve been honest about our challenges, and proud****of****our strengths.  We’ve governed without fear, and we’ve focused on****the****long term.*

*We don’t – we cannot – work alone.  We’ve worked together, in partnership with each other, and in partnership with so many passionate, dedicated individuals and organizations who love and work for and fight for this****city****.*

*Our NRZs, our churches, our non-profits.  Our partners in labor.  Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez and****the****Board****of****Education, who serve more than twenty thousand beautiful, brilliant children – and who’ve had****the****courage to make hard but necessary change.  Bridget Quinn-Carey and her incredible team at****the****Hartford Public Library.  Our****State****Reps and****State****Senators, and our federal delegation, all****of****whom work so hard on Hartford’s behalf.*

*And****the****hundreds – thousands –****of****residents who volunteer, who show up, who never claim credit.  They – you – are****the****true source****of****our****city****’s resilience and strength.*

*Our work isn’t done.****The****work****of****building and stewarding a****city****never is.*

*But I am proud to report to you, that while we have much work left to do together,****the******state******of****our****city****is better and stronger than it has been in a long, long time.  Our foundation is more sound, and our future is more certain.*

*And no matter what comes our way in****the****years ahead, we all know this: Hartford is a****city****that never gives up.  We never have, and we never will.*

*God bless you, and may God bless****the******City******of****Hartford.*