



PEDRO E. SEGARRA
MAYOR

Thank you to the students of Kinsella School, Martin Luther King School, High School Inc., and Bulkeley High School. I am honored also to welcome the Connecticut Girl Scouts and thank them for leading us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

I also want to thank Imam Ansari, Rabbi Berman, Dr. Best and my own pastor Dr. Horstmann for their collective invocation. We may be defined by our differences, but we are bound by our common threads, and I am grateful to each of you for so eloquently reminding us of that.

To my family and friends: Your support from the day I took office has allowed me to get by and get through. To the staff of the City of Hartford, I applaud your commitment to our residents and your willingness to work hard and take Hartford where it can and should be.

And of course, to my partner in every aspect of life, Charlie. You see me at my worst and bring out my best. I thank you for walking with me, for clearing the path and making sure I don't get lost.

To my fellow elected city officials: This is the start of a four-year odyssey. We gave of ourselves for the past several months during the campaign, but this is where the real work begins. We have taken an oath to uphold the laws of this City and State, and in that, we have a great responsibility. Our oath is a promise to the people who live in Hartford, who work in Hartford, who believe in Hartford. We have a right to honor their faith in us, and to put their interests before our own. I look forward to working with each of you to deliver on our promise to move Hartford forward in a common interest and not an individual pursuit.

To the people of Hartford: This evening, and the next four years are about you. We have had our share of sunshine and storms, of triumphs and trials. Through every challenge, we have emerged and we will continue to do that. But I am hoping that we will rise again, not because we have fallen, but because we have decided to take

ownership of our city. We will reclaim our greatness as Connecticut's Capital City because we are taking responsibility for our path and striving to make this Capital a city that all of Connecticut can be proud of.

We will accept the challenge of making Hartford a city where responsiveness, improvement, alignment and collaboration are the driving factors behind every decision we make, every initiative we launch and every dollar we spend.

We will take ownership of responsiveness: Customer service should not be something our residents are surprised to receive. Our systems and processes should be driven by data, not political whim. If your street is being plagued by vagrancy and crime, we will show you what we're doing to correct the problem. If your business is in need of assistance, we will have clear information on how we can help. If the park in your neighborhood is in disrepair, we will tell you when and how we will fix it.

We will take ownership of improving our City: We have launched a Livable and Sustainable City Initiative that will target properties throughout Hartford. From Main Street to Palm Street to South Marshall Street to Garden Street, we are targeting blight and working with crucial partners such as Northside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance, Habitat for Humanity, Christian Activities Council and our own Housing Department to create homeownership opportunities and rebuild neighborhoods. We have four dynamic people joining our staff who will be responsible for scanning every street in our city, targeting problems and deploying remedies.

Recreating our City is a process, one that we have already begun. We are taking down buildings that send a message that we are downtrodden: Capitol West and the HB Davis Building. We have invested in the revitalization of our neighborhoods: take a tour of Asylum Hill where our Housing Department has worked with partners to make significant changes in Hartford's housing stock. We are committing to placemaking initiatives such as iQuilt, which epitomizes what Hartford has to do if it is going to set an example for the rest of the state. It is a testament to what can happen when entities with differing interests find common ground and work toward a unified goal.

We will ensure our services are aligned: So many entities in Hartford provide education services; our libraries, higher learning institutions, early childhood centers, even our senior centers. By ensuring a continuum in our educational offerings, we can and will improve the lives of Hartford's families. You're never

too old to learn, and I am committed to making sure that no matter where someone is in life, they have the opportunity to broaden their horizons.

We will, I repeat, we will collaborate: We have so many entities providing the same services to the same constituents. Hartford is known for providing social services to the needy and it is a reputation we embrace. But piecemeal approaches to addressing society's issues are not sustainable for our City. More than half of Hartford's property is tax exempt; as a result, the burden falls on our homeowners and businesses to make up the difference. We must support those organizations, entities and groups that indicate a willingness to partner with others. It is in the best interest of our neighborhoods, and it is the key to our future.

We have the raw materials to rebuild this City, and we know the challenges we face with regard to education, public safety and job creation. We have laid the foundation in those areas. Now is the time to stand together, strengthen our relationships and build on that foundation so we can take Hartford to the next level. We cannot focus on one neighborhood over another or one community over another. These issues belong to all of us, and it is only by working together that we will address them.

Among my top priorities is to continue the path laid by my predecessor towards improving educational outcomes for our children, and to give them the tools they need to contribute to the positive development of our city. I am excited by the energy and commitment of our Superintendent Christina Kishimoto, and I look forward to working with her and the Board of Education on continuing our reform efforts.

Last month, I had the honor of attending the NAACP luncheon, where I met civil rights activist Dick Gregory, whose efforts in the name of equality and justice helped shape the civil rights movement. I also met education commissioner Stephan Pryor, whose vision for education reform reflects the urgency this issue demands, as it is undoubtedly the civil rights issue of our time. He has a history of thinking outside the box and developing strategies to improve public education, including attracting philanthropic funding to support low-performing schools and implementing master teachers. I support our Governor's commitment to making education a top priority if our city and state is to succeed.

We must employ innovative approaches if we are to make sure our young people are adequately trained for jobs in Connecticut and beyond. I look to examples such as the third-grade reading promise at Burr School, a private-public collaboration

that commits to each student reading at grade level by the time they complete third grade. That milestone is critical, because it forever determines the future academic outcomes for these children. I am committed to establishing such partnerships in each school in Hartford and fulfilling the potential for every child in the city to succeed.

I will also seek support at the local, state, federal and philanthropic level to devote significant resources to early childhood education. It is fiscally irresponsible not to invest in our children, as we cannot afford the steep psychological, social and criminal justice cost of short-changing them. Through Dr. Jose Colon-Rivas, the Department of Children, Families and Recreation and our education partners, I will work to achieve the goal of providing access to quality early learning opportunities for every Hartford preschool child.

Equally important as providing a quality education for Hartford's young people is ensuring that those young people – and their neighbors – have jobs. We have no chance of eradicating the cyclical poverty that is stifling our city if we don't put people to work. That means growing our city while recognizing the need to reduce costs and increase efficiency in the face of limited resources. It will not be an easy task, and we cannot do it alone. But we can – and we must do it. We can create better partnerships to promote job opportunities. We can work more closely with our state and federal governments to secure resources and programs that put people back to work. We can be more vigilant in our communications with entities such as the MDC, our financial sector and our business partners of the importance of distributing resources to those inside the City. I also recognize that in order to promote job growth we have to re-create Hartford as a destination.

In order for people to come here and for residents to stay here, they must feel safe. On Sunday, we said goodbye to one of Hartford's native sons, Chief Daryl Roberts. He dedicated himself to the City where he was born and raised, overcoming challenges and defying the odds to lead the fine men and women of the Hartford Police Department. In so many ways, Chief Roberts is what this city is all about, and he proved to our young people that as long as they believed in themselves, anything was possible. I want to thank him for his leadership and his love of the city.

I also want to honor his belief in the city by continuing his vision for a police department that serves its citizens and builds relationships with its youth. Yes, a component of public safety is putting more police on the street. But it is crucial that those police also have a connection to the community, that they recognize the

importance of relationships – with residents, business owners, and nonprofit organizations. I had the opportunity to go skating with participants of the Police Activities League, which gives Hartford children a chance to interact with police officers in a meaningful and positive way. Through efforts like PAL, we are not only engaging our young people but we are infusing police officers into our community. Not every effort will have an immediate impact, but done thoughtfully, it will have a sustainable impact.

Hartford, for too long we have allowed ourselves to be defined by our challenges. Yes, we have much work to do, but we are not helpless. We are not hopeless. We have the strength, the resolve and the sheer will to dictate our right to be the Capital City. I am not saying it's easy – As a child who was at times homeless, who lost family and friends to the violence that often shows up when poverty is a factor, I understand how hard it can be. But we can overcome it. We can send a message to our children, our corporations, to developers and our suburban counterparts that contemporary challenges do not define our future. It does not because we will not let it.

Today is a new day, Hartford. Will you stand with me? Will you take ownership of our destiny? Will you take responsibility for our future? We can and we will reclaim Connecticut's Capital City.

I know I can count on you. And I know that together, we will create the Hartford we all deserve.

Thank you. God bless you. And God bless the City of Hartford.