



# Welcome.



**Connecticut  
Small Business  
Summit**

**Tuesday, June 13th, 8 am-2 pm**  
Sheraton Hartford South Hotel  
100 Capital Blvd, Rocky Hill, CT

# Welcome to the first CT Small Business Summit!

Your attendance today is very much appreciated as we have come together to strengthen our state's small business community.

Presented by

access   
health CT<sup>®</sup>  
small business

 METRO ★ HARTFORD  
**ALLIANCE**

Welcome to the inaugural Connecticut Small Business Summit!  
We are so pleased you could join us today and we hope this is the first of many similar events to come.

Small businesses make up 99.4% of all Connecticut businesses and employ 48.2% of all Connecticut employees (source: U.S. Small Business Office of Advocacy). Those numbers show just how critically important these businesses are to the success of our state, and Access Health CT Small Business is here to serve as a resource and provide support however we can.

Today is all about YOU – the small business owners, entrepreneurs and employees who make up Connecticut’s small business community. Our goal today is to offer you an array of opportunities to discuss current trends and challenges small businesses face daily – and most importantly, ways to address them.

We are thrilled to welcome our two keynote speakers, Governor Ned Lamont and Founder and CEO of The Statement Group, Gina Luari, who will speak about her remarkable career as a young entrepreneur in the hospitality field.

We thank MetroHartford Alliance for supporting this event and thank all our panelists and partners for the impactful insights they will share today.

Thank you for attending the first Connecticut Small Business Summit!



Sincerely,

James Michel

Chief Executive Officer, Access Health CT

# Agenda

8:00-8:30 am

## Check-in

Ballroom foyer  
Registration, Breakfast & Networking

8:30-9:10 am

## Morning Greetings

Main ballroom  
Welcome Message—Host, Steven Hernandez, Esq.  
Opening Remarks

- Ned Lamont, Governor of the State of Connecticut

### Speakers

- Sean Scanlon, Connecticut State Comptroller
- Michelle Gilman, Commissioner of the Connecticut State Department of Administrative Services

9:10-9:20 am

## Break

9:20-10:05 am

## Panel Breakout Session

Breakout Room A

### Understanding the numbers—balance sheet management for small businesses.

Want to better understand your numbers? With a focus on small business balance sheet management, this session covers cash flow, budgeting, tax planning, forecasting, raising capital, financing, controlling overhead, and more.

#### Moderator:

- Dr. Fred McKinney, Co-founder, BJM Solutions

#### Panelists:

- Brenden Healy, Partner Head of Tax Services, Whittlesey
- Gregory Gould, SVP, Mgr. of Govt. Guaranteed Lending, Webster Bank
- Gregory Lewis, Advisor, CT Small Business Development Center

## OR

Breakout Room B

### Walking the walk and talking the talk—marketing and community impact.

How do you measure your brand's success? Looking to create more community impact or build genuine relationships? This brand management panel covers all this and more, including current trends, social media, engaging with your customers, and other marketing topics.

#### Moderator:

- Steven Semaya, Associate Director, CT Small Business Development Center

#### Panelists:

- Jon Aidukonis, Director of Integrated Marketing, The Hartford
- Kara Mitchell, Principal, Client Service, Mintz+Hoke
- Marian Andoh-Clarke, Director of Small Business Development, Hartford Chamber of Commerce
- Matthew Sousa, VP of Operations, Parkville Market

10:05-10:15 am

## Break

10:15-11:00 am

## Panel Breakout Session

Breakout Room A

### Don't leave money on the table—tax credits, grants, and government programs.

The bottom line of any business is the bottom line. This panel discusses gaining access to capital through tax credits, grants, and other government programs to help make sure you're not leaving money on the table.

Moderator:

- Moraima Gutierrez, Deputy District Director, Small Business Administration CT

Panelists:

- Janet Johnson, Waterbury Business Advisor, CT Women's Business Development Council
- Meg Yetishefsky, Program Manager, Department of Administrative Services
- Sheila Hummel, Business Development Program Manager, Department of Economic & Community Development/CT Small Business Boost Fund

**OR**

Breakout Room B

### Taking care of business, and employees—health and wellness management.

Health issues and burnout among employees can bring a business to its knees. This panel focuses on employee wellness management, HR trends, work/life balance, and more, to better balance health and wellness for your workforce.

Moderator:

- Thomas daCunha, AVP HR Business Partner, Liberty Bank; Board Member HRACC

Panelists:

- Allyson Powell, Program Director, UConn Health Employee Assistance Program
- Andi Campbell, President, WellSpark
- Cesar Cortes, Owner, Cortes Benefits

11:00-11:15 am

## Break

11:15-12:45 pm

## Executive Luncheon & Keynote Speaker

Main ballroom

Lunch served

Host Remarks—Steven Hernandez, Esq.

Partner Message

- Julio Concepcion, Executive Director of the Hartford Chamber of Commerce

Keynote Speaker

- Gina Luari, Founder and CEO, The Statement Group (The Place 2 Be, RAW\*)

Acknowledgements and Closing Remarks

12:45-2:00 pm

## Closing Session—Speed Networking Vendor Expo

Ballroom foyer

Speed networking with vendor partners and panelists



**Keynote Speaker**

**Ned Lamont**

**Governor of Connecticut**



**Ned Lamont was sworn into office as the 89th governor of Connecticut on January 9, 2019. He began his second term on January 4, 2023.**

Lamont got involved in public service shortly after college, founding a weekly newspaper in a town hit by the loss of its largest employer. Covering town meetings and the Board of Selectmen, he helped to bring voice and transparency to a community working to recover from job losses and reinvent itself. Later, as a member of both the Greenwich Board of Selectmen and the Board of Estimate and Taxation, Lamont worked in a bipartisan effort to safeguard a multimillion-dollar budget and deliver results for constituents. For four years, Lamont also served as Chairman of the State Investment Advisory Council, overseeing a multibillion-dollar state pension fund.

Lamont started his own company, taking on the large and established giants of the telecom industry. Under his vision and stewardship, the company grew to serve over 400 of America's largest college campuses and 1 million college students across the nation.

As a volunteer teacher, Lamont sought to give back to his community by volunteering at Harding High School in Bridgeport. In an effort to spark entrepreneurship, Lamont taught students about the inner-workings of small businesses, bringing in local businesspeople to share their own experiences, and helping to place students in local internships. Lamont is on the faculty of Central Connecticut State University as an adjunct professor of political science and philosophy, where he also helped to found a popular business start-up competition. In early 2009, he helped lead an initiative to bring together Connecticut leaders from across the business, nonprofit, and labor sectors to unite in a strategy to create new jobs in the state.

As a candidate for United States Senate in 2006, he stood up for his convictions and challenged the political establishment. Taking on long-time incumbent Joe Lieberman for the Democratic nomination for United States Senate, Lamont campaigned on the platform that wars in the Middle East were draining resources and attention that could be better focused on pressing domestic issues like the economy, education, and healthcare. As a private citizen, he fought for the issues in which he believes, serving on the boards of Mercy Corps and the Conservation Services Group, non-profits which seek to make a difference in the humanitarian and renewable energy fields, respectively.

Lamont was born on January 3, 1954, in Washington, D.C. to Camille Helene and Edward Miner Lamont. The eldest of three children, he attended Phillips Exeter Academy, and served as president of the student newspaper, The Exonian. After graduating Phillips Exeter in 1972, he earned a Bachelor of Arts in sociology from Harvard College in 1976 and a Master of Business Administration from the Yale School of Management in 1980.

Lamont married his wife Annie on September 10, 1983. They have three children: Emily, Lindsay, and Teddy.



**Keynote Speaker**

# **Gina Luari**

**Founder and CEO, The Statement Group  
(The Place 2 Be, RAW\*)**



**As Founder and CEO of The Statement Group, Gina Luari creates successful, marketable restaurant concepts – from menu to décor – married with an innovative system of processes and management that are continuing to propel her brands on their trajectory of growth. Having just opened The Statement Group’s new boutique concept, RAW\*, in addition to the five existing The Place 2 Be locations and her very own bubbly brand Bathwater Brut, Luari is proving her drive and belief in Connecticut as a viable hospitality hub.**



A young entrepreneur, Gina grew up in the restaurant industry here in the USA after she and her family fled a war-torn Albania quite literally in the middle of the night. It was while working at her parents' diner in Connecticut that Gina realized the demand for breakfast-style food, regardless of the time of day – an idea that would later become The Place 2 Be. She went on to complete her undergraduate studies in Business from Central Connecticut State University and later served as the Rocky Hill Chamber of Commerce's Executive Director before opening The Place 2 Be's first location in 2016.

After the success of The Place 2 Be's first restaurant in the South End of Hartford, Gina expanded to three more locations during the Covid-19 pandemic – Downtown Hartford; West Hartford; Springfield, MA (at the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame) – followed by New Haven (Yale campus), with Dallas having just been announced for 2023 as well, taking the growing brand cross-country.

In 2022, she launched The Statement Group – the singular female-only solely owned and led restaurant group in Connecticut. Counting The Place 2 Be and five more restaurant concepts as part of TSG, she is leading the restaurant group to eight openings in two and a half years.

Passionate about the guest experience and always with her eye on innovation and efficiency, she is all-in when it comes to forging the path forward and does not shy away from going against the grain if she firmly believes it will bring value to either the guest or the business.

Gina is the recipient of a number of recognitions and awards including: FSR's Rising Stars (40 Under 40), two-time Hartford Business Journal's Top 50 Power Players in CT, Hartford Business Journal's 40 Under 40, and Connecticut Magazine's 40 Under 40. She has been featured in numerous publications and television including Forbes, Inc. Magazine, FSR, NBC-CT, The Hartford Courant, MassLive, WFSB, WTNH, and FOX61 among others.



# Partners





# Good employees want health insurance.



# Good employers provide it.

Employees today view health insurance as a must-have benefit. Small businesses not offering health insurance can struggle with attracting and retaining quality employees. Access Health CT Small Business is here to help you find a quality, affordable health insurance solution that meets the needs of your employees, and your business.

Learn more or get a quote at  
[AccessHealthCTSmallBiz.com](https://AccessHealthCTSmallBiz.com)

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