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**South Carolina**  
**Department of Commerce**  
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*For Release: July 13, 2018*

## **Mayor Tecklenburg, Partners Announce Upcoming Panama City Trade Mission**

**Charleston, S.C.**—At a press conference earlier today, Charleston Mayor John Tecklenburg announced an upcoming Trade Mission to Panama City, Panama being coordinated by Charleston Sister Cities International in partnership with the South Carolina Department of Commerce and set for October 16-20, 2018.

Participants will have the opportunity to meet with Panama City's top municipal leaders and business community, engage in specifically designed business-to-business meetings, tour the Panama Canal, and visit historic Panama City, which will celebrate its 500th anniversary in 2019.

The mission is intended to serve as a platform to expand commercial activities, boost trade enterprises, increase imports and exports, grow jobs, facilitate business-to-business dialogue, and encourage business tourism opportunities between the two cities. Additionally, the exchange is designed to promote exploration, communication and cooperation between local development agencies, Chambers of Commerce, and tourism bodies.

The trade mission serves as the first exchange program to take place since the Sister City partnership agreement was signed by Mayor Tecklenburg and Panama City Mayor Jose Blandon Figueroa in 2016.

Mayor Tecklenburg said, "My hope in signing our Sister City agreement with Panama City was that it would help us foster civic, cultural, and educational development and business ties between our two port cities, and this inaugural exchange program is a great start."

South Carolina Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt said, "In a continued effort to grow our trade footprint, we are excited to partner with the Charleston Sister Cities International mission to Panama. It is no secret that a part of our state's success is within exporting. We look forward to assisting our small businesses with strategic direction to expand their global reach."

Charleston Regional Development Alliance President and CEO said David Ginn, "This announcement of the upcoming Charleston Sister Cities International and South Carolina Department of Commerce trade mission to Panama City is welcome news. Global trade and investment drive the three-county Charleston region's continued economic momentum, and are key components of the Charleston Metro FDI Plan, which outlines specific steps local business, civic, and government leaders can take to leverage exports and foreign direct investment to grow global engagement. From the Port of Charleston to the automotive industry to tourism, Charleston's industries are global in nature. Multinational companies employ large numbers of people and invest significantly in our region. Supporting FDI is as much about supporting the companies and people who are already here, as it is about recruiting new

investment and talent. International trade and investment helps local businesses create jobs, attract capital, and grow our economy.”

Charleston Sister Cities International President and CEO Neita Wiese said, "The economic and trade potential this initial Charleston Sister Cities International trade mission to Panama can provide to not only the Charleston Region, but to our entire state, is considerable. There are many South Carolina export opportunities to explore, ranging from the automotive industry to agricultural commodities and food products. We also encourage large manufactures to small business owners interested in the trade mission to participate in our August 10, 2018 Panama Export Seminar.”

To learn more about the Panama Trade Mission and related events, contact Neita Wiese at [scicharleston@gmail.com](mailto:scicharleston@gmail.com). The deadline to register to participate is September 1, 2018.

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