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**Testimony before the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee
Submitted by Jude Carroll, Director, Connecticut KIDS COUNT Project
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Good morning, Senator Kissel, Representative Mushinsky, and members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee. My name is Jude Carroll; I am the Director of the Connecticut KIDS COUNT Project of the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS). CAHS is a 100-year-old statewide nonprofit organization that works to end poverty and to engage, equip, and empower all families in Connecticut to build a secure future.

I am here today to testify on the bills that have been raised to align postsecondary education and employment. I have directed my comments to each individual bill.

S.B. No. 266: An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Program Review and Investigations Committee Concerning Transferring Adult Education Programs to the Community-Technical College System. The original recommendation from the PRI report referred exclusively to adult education programs administered by the technical high school system. What would be the benefit of transferring specific adult education programs to the community colleges? Would the community colleges develop bridge programs between adult education, college-level courses, and certification for specific careers? The language of the bill is unclear and needs clarification.

I would like to refer you to CAHS' 2009 report *Connecticut's Challenge: Preparing Our Workforce. . . Strengthening Our Community Colleges*. The report notes that Connecticut has established a bridge program between 17 of the 70 local adult education programs and community colleges, funded by the federal Program Improvement Projects administered by the Connecticut State Department of Education. The intent of the bridge programs is to create a smooth transition as students move from adult education to community college. We suggest that the programs be examined to determine how these agreements are working and if they should be replicated. Locating adult education classes in community colleges for those interested in technical careers and providing a career pathway for them could potentially create a shorter route to employment, thus helping students and employers.

S.B. No. 268: An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Program Review and Investigations Committee Establishing a Pilot Program to Reward Institutions of Higher Education that are Meeting Established Goals. CAHS supports Senate Bill 268. This bill would replicate the Student Achievement Initiative created in Washington State as an incentive for community colleges to improve student success and increase the number of students attaining certification or a two-year degree. Under this initiative, Washington-state community colleges compete with themselves and the criteria for success are established in four work-related areas, including: (1) improving student preparation for college-level studies, (2) increasing the number of students who complete a year of college credit, (3)

increasing the number of students who complete college-level math, and (4) increasing the number of students completing certificates, degrees, and apprenticeship programs.

Again, the details of the bill need to be developed. What are the criteria for the awards? Would there be stipulation about how the funding would be allocated at the college level? A good use of the funding would be to increase academic and non-academic counseling for part- and full-time students. While Connecticut is experiencing an extreme budget deficit, a pilot of this nature is the type of counter-cyclic program that could provide the state with information about how to best support student retention.

H.B. No. 5164: An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Program Review and Investigations Committee Concerning the Alignment of Postsecondary Education and Employment in the Green Industry.

HB 5164 lays the ground work for the development of a robust system of career ladders in the newly emerging green industry. As noted in the PRI report, many green jobs do not require an associate's or bachelor's degree. However, entry-level jobs pay little and should be the starting point rather than the end point for both workers and those who seek their services.

We would like the Committee to consider two additions. First, Section 5 should be expanded to require the Departments of Higher Education and Education to include a catalogue of the types of courses offered by private companies and organizations in order for there to be a more thorough understanding of public and private offerings. In addition, Section 6 should be expanded to include Connecticut's Community College system, so that linkages can be made between two and four-year degree programs.

H.B. No. 5165: An Act Concerning High School Graduation Requirements.

CAHS supports the specification of academic subjects required to obtain a high school diploma. We also support a minimum number of adult education classes that count toward graduation. Unfortunately, we do not feel the bill goes far enough to establish the academic goals students must reach to succeed in college. Alignment of postsecondary education and employment will only be successful when high school students are able to move into college-level courses without the need for remedial education.

H.B. No. 5349: An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Program Review and Investigations Committee Concerning a Strategic Plan and Coordination for Alignment of Postsecondary Education and Employment.

CAHS supports the concept of HB 5349—that is increasing postsecondary student retention and success, addressing the challenges facing the delivery of higher education, and developing a strategic plan for Connecticut's postsecondary public institutions. We applaud you for including adult and non-traditional students, incumbent workers, immigrants and former inmates—those who need college education to improve their earning capacity yet may need additional supports to reach their academic goals.

However, we feel that as the bill is written, the goals the Committee has laid out may not be achieved.

First, assessing the current higher education system and posing solutions for the barriers that stand in the way of greater student attainment can't be completed without the participation of the Departments of

Education and Higher Education and the administrators of our public postsecondary institutions. While conducting the planning process without the two departments and college administrators might eliminate resistance to change, it also would limit the flow of information about what administrators know works and what has been tried and does not. In addition, participation of these entities would provide fertile ground for a deep examination of barriers and solutions. Creating a master plan for higher education will be a daunting task that will need all stakeholders—those who understand the larger goals of the process as well as those who currently carry out the administration of primary, secondary, and postsecondary education.

Second, creating a more centralized governance process for the state's community college system to resolve the problems described in the PRI report will require systems change that should be directed by the colleges' administrators. This process started with the *Achieving the Dream* project and is continuing. Connecticut's participation in *Achieving the Dream* has resulted in an expanded data system, innovation in the delivery of developmental education, and analysis of student demographics and performance data to improve retention and other aspects of student success. The development of a strategic plan must take into account administrative, academic, and other changes that are currently being implemented.

Third, if this effort is to be effective and provide real solutions to the alignment of postsecondary education with the economic needs of the state, the timeline for delivering the plan is far too short. Realistically, substantive research, analysis, and the development of real implementation strategies could take well more than one year to complete.

Recreating systems as complex as preschool through college will not happen overnight. We applaud the Committee for taking on this huge task, but as we have seen with other efforts at reform, a realistic vision of the change process is just as important to success as the desire for transformation itself.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

