



**Public Comment before the Commerce & Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committees  
Joint Public Comment on Jobs Initiatives**

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**CONSIDER AN URBAN JOBS AGENDA**

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Thank you, members of the committee, for hearing my testimony. My name is Liz Dupont-Diehl and I am the Policy Director for the Connecticut Association for Human Services, or CAHS. CAHS has worked for decades to empower families and to advocate for policies to end poverty and promote income equality and economic self-sufficiency for all residents. As you know CAHS helped build support for an Earned Income Tax Credit, to level the playing field for working families and eliminate the gap between the cost of living and what low-wage workers earn. We offer financial literacy training and SNAP and other benefits outreach and Volunteer Income Tax Preparation throughout the state. We are also the Connecticut partners in the national Kids Count data project, tracking child poverty town by town in Connecticut against national benchmarks.

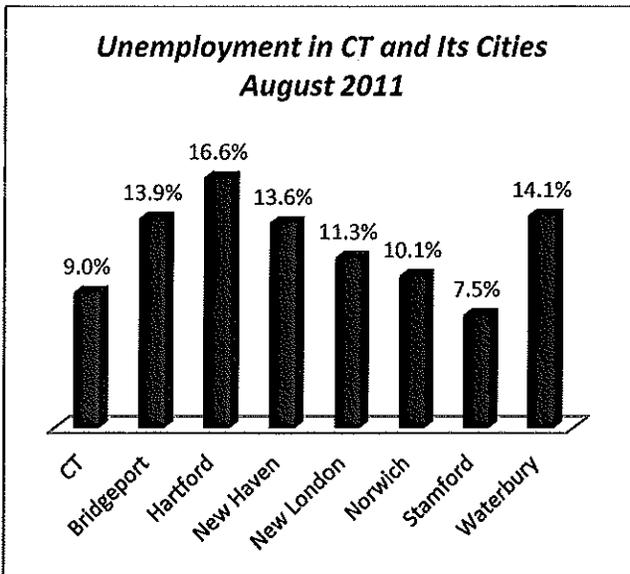
In Connecticut, poverty and low opportunity have long been concentrated in our cities. While Connecticut has some of the best schools in the country, we also have among the largest achievement gaps between poor and wealthy, white and minority and urban and suburban children. The Connecticut Fair Housing Center recently reminded us with its "opportunity map" that Connecticut is a place where a child's success in life can be reasonably predicted by where he or she is born and is raised. High-poverty communities have a negative impact and "deeply affect children's opportunities to learn and grow." Connecticut has a number of places, mostly in our cities, where individuals and families are in concentrated poverty and face significant challenges.

So while we all work through the Great Recession, residents of our cities struggle also with the cumulative effect of decades of inequality and lack of opportunity .

CAHS has studied job loss in cities, and our latest research paper has startling conclusions that demand policy solutions.

Between 1990 and 2010, the cities of Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, New London, Norwich, Stamford and Waterbury between them LOST 90,000 jobs- 19.6 percent of their total jobs. In that same time frame the state as a whole lost 1.4% of its jobs. In that same time most cities showed gains in their working age population: Only Hartford showed a decrease, of 7.5%, while all others showed an increase in the number of workers, from 1.9% in new London to 11.7% in Stamford.

This substantial loss of jobs is a driver of high urban unemployment. While the statewide rate is now 9%, Hartford is at 16.6% -- and other cities are also disproportionately higher: Bridgeport is 13.9, New Haven 13.6.



We can look at the fact that some 20% of our state's population comes from the cities; that healthy cities have the potential to be drivers of regional economic and cultural vitality; the fact that a shattering proportion of our urban students don't graduate from high school, or who graduate but then lack the skills to succeed in the current economy – and, as we have seen, who graduate into a community where there are few jobs and limited opportunities.

We do not debate the urgency to fix Connecticut's economy in a sound way that will allow small and large businesses to hire workers and thrive. But clearly the state also has an overwhelming interest and obligation to leverage public investments to ensure we invest in the human and community infrastructure of our cities.

CAHS's Jobs Policy Platform suggests a number of ways that can realign and prioritize urban job growth with little or no budgetary impact.

- The state Department of Labor has successfully trained and placed hundreds of urban residents with Jobs Funnels; these should be expanded to include other high-growth industries such as health care, and standardized in high-need areas including cities.
- Publicly-funded projects should require bidders to include urban residents as a significant portion of their workforce.
- Improve and better align developmental education with the K-12, adult education and post-secondary educational systems.

The remainder of our jobs platform and Job Loss research paper are available on CAHS's web site.

Thank you for your time and consideration.