



State of Connecticut  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Commission on Children



**Testimony before the Human Services Committee on Proposed H.B. No. 5823  
Submitted by Elaine Zimmerman, Executive Director  
Connecticut Commission on Children  
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Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and Members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Elaine Zimmerman. I am the Executive Director of the CT Commission on Children. I had the privilege of chairing the Two Generational Working Group, a group of leaders from child, family, workforce, philanthropy and housing that convened every other week for six months on a research based plan for the legislature on two generational strategies in response to Section 198 of PA 14-297.

I am here to speak on behalf of Proposed Bill 5823. Two generational policy and programs offer efficiencies. For many years, largely due to isolated thinking and separate funding streams for children and adult programs, policies affecting children and their parents have been funded as discrete and separate from each other. We rarely tend to the family as the unit. Yet efficacy informs us that working with two at once, on a similar goal, may offer significant sustainable gains, may be more family -friendly to the low-income and time- poor family, and may offer ways to work across silos for sustainable outcomes.

A two-generational model approach does not seek to create something new and costly. Rather, the goal is to simplify service delivery, prune unnecessary practices and braid together resources for intentional parent child impact. Two generational programs and policies have the following components in common:

- The family is the unit. Data is collected on both the child and the parent, to see how the whole family fares.
- Services are co-located, braided together or part of a focused referral process in partnership with other agencies.
- The focus is on learning, work and family strength, for both mothers and fathers. Components often include family support, access to quality infant and preschool

settings, hybrid models of work and education, leading to an employment path with a reasonable wage.

- Operation is based on service effectiveness and resource efficiency for the family. Supports and services integrated across service domains and sectors.
- Peer to peer learning is maximized. Families share resources in a strengths-based context with other families.
- Dignity and authentic commitment to diversity are common denominators.
- The family is valued over standard protocols. What a family needs is bundled together, rather than expecting the family to go from one service to another.

How does two-generational programming work? Adult programming may be added to child services. Child programming is added to adult services. Adult and child programming might be combined in intentional hub sites. This might include a program at a college, a housing program or at a family resource center. Literacy might be taught at adult education with a quality child care center on location, including peer to peer parenting education classes. Father groups with a focus on supports, job pathways, and parenting could occur at an adult ed or a family hub site.

Proposed Bill 5823 creates two-generational demonstration models to test approaches that offer parent child coordination, co-location, professional development, braided program linkages for child and parent, communication and shared outcome analysis.

There are foundations interested in partnering in this work. Similarly, national interest through the Aspen Institute, the Casey Foundation, and the Ray Marshall Center is strong. NGA and NCSL are interested in creating a learning community among the five states working on two generational practice. This includes Connecticut with Colorado, Utah, Texas, Minnesota, and Washington. What this work takes is coordination, intentional practice, cross sector collaboration, and evaluation.

I would like to recommend a few additions to 5823 and submit them with my testimony together with the formal report:

1. Add the State Department of Education, the Office of Early Childhood, the Departments of Housing and Corrections as like partners. Surely the Second Chance initiative is a two-generational strategy.

2. Specify partnership with philanthropy since foundations are willing to partner and funds are hard to find.
3. Select communities that are ready by having a) collective impact strategies, b) a cradle to career policy, c) readiness for systems reform, or d) a successful two-generational model that should be grown to scale.
4. Support a workforce liaison to administer and guide two-generation strategy and build connections between partner programs and employers who are essential to its success. A workforce intermediary would have contacts between the various workforce development programs and early childhood initiatives and would get feedback from the private sector to assure program meets local economic needs.
5. Develop two-generational co-training opportunities for leadership and staff members across agencies in workforce, human services and early childhood.
6. Establish a four-year state target for a percentage of existing programs to reflect significant two-generational programming, with cross-agency support. Direct specific state partner agencies to: a) provide incentives for RFPs reflecting two-generation approaches; b) set aside a percentage in current grants, serving children and adults, to begin offering incentives for two-generational transition; c) set aside a percentage in current and future grants to foster cross-agency two-generational initiatives; d) Identify health; housing; transportation; labor; infant-toddler care, pre-k through elementary education, including special education; adult education and social services as priority agencies for two-generational initial development and engagement.
7. Create a no-wrong door approach that encourages agencies to connect families with needed programs. Implement a simplified, single eligibility determination process that helps the family across areas of need and learning.
8. Incentivize adult education to develop a cross-generation strategy in towns with the greatest low-literacy adults. This could include literacy assessments of young adult students to facilitate classes with best practice adult literacy models as well as preschool center/adult-education center collaboration for care and coordinated programming; writing for children, storytelling skill/arts; monitoring student progress e.g. Watch Me Grow.

9. Create a state inter-agency workgroup to a) align policies for low-income children and their parents, b) address barriers to two-generation service provision, c) find opportunities to bring child and adult service programs together through strategic financing (e.g. blending and braiding funding) and incentives for coordination; d) arrange for development of a service manual for two-generational policy and program development and conversion; e) design and implement a state and community learning collaborative of programs that braid two-generational intent in early care, adult learning, literacy, housing, pathways to work, ELL, transportation, health and mental health.

Thank you.

## **“AAC Implementing A Statewide Coordinated Two-Generational Model”**

1. (a) That title 17b of the general statutes be amended to require the Commissioner of Social Services, in consultation with the Commissioners of Labor, Social Services, Education, Early Childhood, Housing and Correction, to create pilot two-generational model programs that promote long-term economic success for low-income families. Such programs may include, but not be limited to: (1) Related support services, (2) an opportunity for parents to acquire advanced technical skills to increase employability and sustainable employment, (3) intensified and targeted sector and workforce training and education, (4) colocation of children and adult services, (5) cross-sector professional development, (6) programmatic linkages for child and parent, (7) proven models of success for workforce readiness, to include adults reintegrating from jail or prison, and (8) data on the efficacy of the program for children and adults.

(b) A cross sector learning community will be created of the pilots selected to develop sustainable two generational models. Those eligible for such an approach may be ready communities with: 1) collective impact strategies, 2) a cradle to career policy, 3) a proven readiness for systems reform, or 4) a model two generational program to go to further scale.

2. A public-private partnership with state and national philanthropy shall be established to co-design, finance, implement, and evaluate the two generational pilots. Planning shall include low- level, mid-level and high –level strategies, and best practice models for replication through an intentional, coordinated, and phase-in strategy.
3. A workforce intermediary shall administer and guide two generational strategy and policy and build connections between partner programs and employers who are essential to its outcomes. This workforce intermediary shall track workforce development programs and policy implementation, and early childhood programs and policy implementation. The intermediary will also solicit and maintain on-going private sector input on addressing local workforce demands.
4. CT shall develop two generational co-training opportunities for leadership and staff members across sector in human services, workforce, and early childhood. The training will include focus on the family as a unit, whole-family expertise, programmatic and managerial support for asset-based two generational approaches and the development of family economic stability plans.
5. CT shall establish a four year target for a percentage of existing programs to reflect significant two generational programming, with cross-agency support, to improve family economic stability. To reach this target, the state may provide incentives for agencies to develop two generational approaches focused on learning, school, and workforce success; and establish set-asides in current child-serving and adult-serving grants to promote two generational transition planning and cross agency initiatives. Requests for federal waivers may be developed, as necessary and possible, to meet this goal.

6. CT shall maximize a no-wrong door approach for families to access needed programs. This shall include a simplified, unified eligibility determination process that helps the family across areas of need and learning.
7. CT shall incentivize learning for low-literacy adults by providing resources for adult education to develop cross-generation education plans in the municipalities with the highest number of low-literacy adults. This may include adult literacy assessments and best practice adult literacy instruction models, as well as collaboration between preschool and adult education centers.
8. A state two generational workgroup shall be established to a) align policies for low-income children and their parents, b) address barriers to two generation service provision, c) find opportunities to bring child and adult service programs together through strategic financing including blended and braided funding and incentives for coordination, and d) design and implement a state and community learning collaborative of programs that integrate a two generational model in early care, adult learning, literacy, housing, pathways to work, English language learning, transportation, health and mental health. This workgroup shall report to the Co-Chairs of the Appropriations Committee.