



Testimony in Support of S.B.795: An Act Concerning A Two-Generational School  
Readiness and Workforce Development Plan  
Hartford Foundation for Public Giving  
Human Services Committee  
February 10, 2015

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Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and Distinguished Members of the Human Services Committee,

**The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Supports S.B. 795: An Act Concerning A Two-Generational School Readiness and Workforce Development Plan**, with modification as explained below. The bill requires the implementation of a two-generational school readiness and workforce development plan.

The Hartford Foundation is the community foundation for the 29-town greater Hartford region with the mission to put philanthropy into action to create lasting solutions that result in vibrant communities within our region. Richard Sussman, the Foundation's Director of Early Childhood Investments, is a member of the statewide Two-Generational Policy Workgroup created under Public Act 14-217 adopted by the 2014 Connecticut General Assembly and signed into law by Gov. Dannel Malloy.

**Two-generation models recognize that the well-being and life success of parents and children are interdependent.** For more than two decades, the Foundation has invested significantly in programs that promote a whole family approach, demonstrating that **children thrive in thriving families.** Our new strategic work builds upon this deep knowledge and experience. We seek to advance systemic solutions and partnerships, including collaboration with the public sector, which address the root causes of the educational inequities facing the children and their families in our region and ensure that these children, especially those most disadvantaged, are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten and prepared to succeed when they graduate from high school. **Through our previous and current work we have learned that there is a need to increase shared planning, coordination and funding within and across the systems responsible for learning, health, family support and workforce readiness.** We believe this holistic, systems-oriented approach will create an enduring impact on our region's families today – as well as the generations that follow.

**New strategies are needed to achieve the promise of the two-generation approach for large numbers of children and their families.** The Hartford Foundation has seeded several successful two-generation programs including Child First, the Nurturing Families Network and Help Me Grow. These investments, many which now receive state funded support, improved children's cognitive and socio-emotional skills, increased parenting skills and the ability of parents to meet their child's basic needs and decreased child abuse and neglect. The Hartford Foundation also was instrumental in the creation of Hartford Community Schools that integrate early childhood learning, parent education and family support services at the school, system and policy levels. In addition, we made a major investment in improving adult literacy in the region.<sup>1</sup> This included investments and public-private partnerships to support contextualized learning, the concept of teaching literacy skills as they apply to the

10 Columbus Boulevard, 8th Floor  
Hartford, CT 06106

<sup>1</sup> OECD (2013), *Time for the U.S. to Reskill?: What the Survey of Adult Skills Says*, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264204904-en>

job demands of a particular industry, as an effective strategy to accelerate a student's path from education to employment.

**Going forward, philanthropy and the public sector must learn from our current investments and the research in children and families to create a new Connecticut framework that addresses the intergenerational barriers to educational and economic success. The Two-Generational Policy Workgroup created under Public Act 14-217 has produced an extensive report with recommendations to guide this effort. To continue this work, the Hartford Foundation supports S.B. 795 and suggests the following changes:**

- **The legislation should reference the best practices and recommendations for two-generational plans highlighted in the report by the Two-Generational Policy Workgroup. The two-generational plans should be required to demonstrate alignment with the national and state research and policy recommendations in this report.**
- **The bill should reflect language provided in H.B. 5823, An Act Implementing A State-Wide Coordinated Two-Generational Model, to require state agencies to create pilot two-generational models that reflect the strategies outlined in S.B. 795, including improving access to early learning programs, adult education and job training, colocation of child and adult service providers, and coordination of existing public and private entities and organizations that serve low-income families.**
- **The bill should be amended to require ongoing work by the existing Two-Generational Policy Workgroup to support interagency implementation of a two-generational plan.**
- **The legislation should be changed to require data on the efficacy of two-generational programs for children and adults and on the systems change that enables two-generational models to develop and endure such as cross sector two-generational professional development and redesigned or new infrastructure (policy, funding and staff) that support connections between programs.**
- **The legislation should require that data on adults and children should reflect data on the communities where children and families live, not just where they participate in programs or attend school. Where available, this can provide an analysis of the interrelatedness of child and parent outcomes.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.