



Bridgeport Alliance for Young Children
 With operational support from
 William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF PROPOSED BILL #5328
 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING A STATE-WIDE COORDINATED TWO- GENERATIONAL MODEL.**

Good afternoon: My name is June G. Malone, Ph.D. I am the Coordinator for the Bridgeport Alliance for Young Children and the Birth to 8 Director for the United Way of Coastal Fairfield County. I am an early childhood professional with more than 25 years of experience working with children and their families who live in poverty. I am testifying today in support of proposed bill #5328.

Bridgeport, with a population of approximately 144,355 residents is the poorest city in the State of Connecticut. Thousands of children, 88% of which are black and Hispanic, live in poverty, in unsafe neighborhoods, with high unemployment, and attend failing schools. More than a third of the adults do not have a high school diploma, and more than half of the children live with two parents who are both in the workplace yet are unable to sustain their families economically. Over the past four years, the City has experienced unemployment rates as high as 14% (March, 2011). The city's most current unemployment rate of 8.8% (December, 2014), is 54% higher than that of the State (5.7%). Bridgeport ranks lowest in per capita income in the region, (\$19,802) and ranks number one in population density of the 169 Connecticut municipalities. The city is located in the eastern part of the most affluent county of the State – Fairfield County, where the median household income is more than \$81,268. Bridgeport's median household is \$41,047.

Plain and simple, too many of Bridgeport's families are living below or near poverty because too many of Bridgeport's adults lack education. According to the most recent available (2012-2013) Strategic School Profile for the Bridgeport Public Schools, 35% of adults are without a high school diploma. And those who DO have a high school diploma do not have the skills needed for continuing education or securing employment that pays a living wage. A whopping 64% of Bridgeport's 10th grade students placed at Basic or Below Basic on the State's test of Math skills in 2013, and 62% placed at Basic or Below in Reading, meaning they can perform no more than the most simple and concrete literacy or math skills. Fewer than 9% achieved goal in Reading and 11.3% achieved goal in math.

Variable	District	State
Students not fluent in English	13.4%	3.6%
Students identified as gifted or talented	0.5%	5.2%
Students with Disabilities	12.1%	10.7%
Total Minority race/ethnicity	91.6%	
% Reaching Health Standard on 4 tests	28%	51%
<i>% 10th Grade Students Meeting State Goal on 2013 CAPT</i>		
Reading Across the Disciplines	8.6%	48.5%
Writing Across the Disciplines	20.7%	62.1
Mathematics	11.3%	52.4

These adults will contribute less to the state's taxes and will rely more on public assistance and safety net programs, will be more likely to become part of the prison population, and will not have the skills necessary to support their own children's acquisition of academic skills, perpetuating the cycle of inter-generational poverty. According to a detailed review of the evidence conducted by The Brookings Institution, 42 percent of children who grew up in households in the bottom quintile of the income distribution ended up in the bottom quintile themselves as adults. (Isaacs, Sawhill, & Haskins, 2008).

Investment in 2-generation learning is not another entitlement program. It is an anti-poverty program that could yield tangible results not only for families but for their communities and the state they live in. Two-generation programs build human capital across generations. There is mounting evidence that increasing a mothers' education improves her children's outcomes in both health and education (Bjorklund & Salvanes, 2011) meaning that not only will the mother be a stronger wage earner and less dependent on the tax payer, but so will her children. A 2010 study showed that maternal literacy skills are the single most important factor in closing the achievement gap (Sastry & Pebley, 2010) and is the mechanism driving the linkages between maternal education and child outcomes (Carneiro, Meghir, & Parey, 2007; Magnuson, 2007). A rich and supportive home learning environment helps children succeed in school which in turn, helps them earn a living wage.

In short, the best anti-poverty program is an education, not just for children but for the parents of those children who could earn higher wages, be a tax payer rather than a tax burden, pursue higher education and support their own child's educational attainment, and end the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

Submitted by:

June G. Malone, Ph.D.
Bridgeport Alliance for Young Children/Coordinator