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Testimony in support of SB 795: AN ACT CONCERNING A TWO-GENERATIONAL SCHOOL READINESS AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

Good Afternoon Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and Members of the Committee,

My name is Elizabeth Fraser; I am a policy analyst at the Connecticut Association for Human Services. CAHS works to reduce poverty and promote economic success through both policy and program work.

I am here today in support of SB 795: *AN ACT CONCERNING A TWO-GENERATIONAL SCHOOL READINESS AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN.*

Testimony on HB 5823, heard before this committee on Feb 5, provided compelling reasons why a two-generation approach to family economic success is a smart approach and wise investment.

SB 795 begins to address the paradigm shift in systems, policies and programs that will need to occur for coordinated and targeted two generation pilot programs to be successfully instituted. It captures the necessity for policy makers, state agencies and communities to think in terms of family need, instead of status quo.

For a two generation strategies to be successful, existing barriers to family success, (such as: multiple applications, Connecticut TANF regulations, Care for Kids Block Grant strategies), will need to be supplanted with a collaborative and integrated methodology. We need to encourage a different way of doing business, one that aligns the existing systems, policies, regulations and programs towards common purpose, with family at the core.

The elements of SB 795 are designed to encourage this approach:

Partnerships with both state and national philanthropic bodies to enable state-wide replication and implementation of the plan: Nationally, there is much interest in two- generation learning models that have the potential to provide solutions to intergenerational poverty and family economic success. Connecticut is one of a handful of states on the forefront of this work. With a state commitment to a comprehensive two- generation initiative, Connecticut is in good position to leverage both state and national grant opportunities. These resources could be used toward the planning and development of a replicable program structure and a consistent means of assessment and evaluation across programs and systems. This approach makes sense. With a difficult budget looming and heavy workloads across state agencies, philanthropic collaborations could provide direction, guidance and the means for the development of a strong statewide model. State funds could be reserved for actual program grants.

Creation of an Interagency Work Group: The development of an innovative and progressive two generation family economic success model will need input from multiple perspectives. We suggest that to be most effective this group should include partners from across state agencies, non-profit representation and philanthropic sponsors. In particular, it should include participants that have managed or have been involved with, successful two generation programs.

Use Existing Community Resources: To be most efficient, two-generation program development should utilize and build on existing services using a collective impact approach. The development of a structured yet flexible framework will enable each community to have a unique model based on community resources, infrastructure and program availability. Community organizations and providers are in the best position to know which existing services are available and willing to become part of a coordinated two-generation program. They are also aware of potential gaps in services that could be provided for with additional resources. Throughout Connecticut there are many strong collaborative community partnerships that are in the position to convene partners and facilitate the coordination of two-generation program models. (Graustein Memorial Fund Discovery Collaboratives, United Way Partnerships, Cradle to Career Communities) and they should play a large role in their design and implementation.

Whenever possible, colocation of parent education/training and quality early care and education programs makes sense. It allows for parents and children to be connected, not just physically but programmatically. Service delivery is easier to access, the parent child connection is more intentional, and parents can be involved daily in the quality early care programs and children see their parents in a learning environment.

Within flexible, community centered models, we believe in a consistent and intensive assessment and evaluation process. There should be standard performance indicators, assessment measures and evaluations. For the best indication of success and need for improvements, an independent program evaluator should evaluate each program annually. Again, in this climate of budget deficits, we want to make sure that funds are used appropriately and programs are achieving solid results towards family economic success.