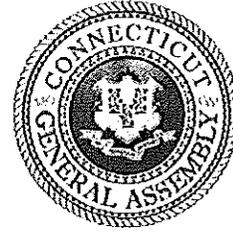




State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Commission on Children

**Testimony before the Human Services Committee on Proposed S.B. No. 795
Submitted by Elaine Zimmerman, Executive Director
Connecticut Commission on Children
February 10, 2015**

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 dedicated to child, family, workforce, philanthropy and housing who convened every other week for six months to design a plan for the legislature on two-generational strategy in response to Section 198 of PA 14-297.

I am here to speak on behalf of Proposed Bill 795, An Act Concerning a Two-Generational School Readiness and Workforce Development Plan. This links education and economic success in targeted communities. It requires strategies to help both parent and child access necessary services, including adult education, job training, and early learning, and co-located child and adult service providers. The family is the unit, rather than separate services for adult and for child. Philanthropy is brought in as a partner for implementation and replication. There is an interagency group to oversee.

With fewer resources in state government for families, a two for one strategy strikes a chord. The goal of two-generational policy is family economic stability through quality learning for the child, pathways to work for the parent and related support services. Bureaucracy is scaled back and parent and child are in the front row of service.

Two-generational policy offers simple math and strong values – if the family is treated as a unit there is more targeted support, the likelihood of improved coordination and synchronous activity for the benefit of the family. Quality workforce development services are tied with quality childhood education in an intentional and carefully wrought strategy.

Low-income families have not lifted up and out of the Great Recession in Connecticut. Eighty thousand children under the age of five live in low-income households. Of these households, 60

percent have no parent working full-time, year-round. Fully 80 percent of the parents in these households have no post-high school degree. Fifteen percent of Connecticut families with children have a head of household without a high school diploma.

Two-generational policy is a poverty reduction strategy. It is focused, intentional and disallows habit or bureaucracy to guide intervention. The focus is targeted and efficient to help both parent and child with specific opportunities, assessments and pathways for success in school and workforce. Parents support each other, families are treated with dignity.

This is critical given that there is a direct correlation between parent education, parent literacy and child success.

Components of a two-generational strategy, as defined by the Ray Marshall Institute, include, quality early childhood education, sectoral job training, postsecondary education, workforce intermediaries, wrap-around family support services, adult education and English as a Second Language, career coaching, peer community-building, financial education and transportation assistance.

The public is ready for this efficiency. In fact, recent polling demonstrates that two-generational programming is seen as common sense. There is a strong call for simplification, bundling of resources and policies to make access and understanding easier for the family. A recent poll performed by Lake Research Partners revealed that 89 percent favor a two-generation approach to bring people out of poverty.

I would like to recommend a few additions to Proposed Bill 795.

1. Further define the targeted communities that might be selected for two-generational programming to include low-income communities that have a) collective impact strategies, b) a cradle-to-career policy, c) readiness for systems reform, d) a successful two-generational model that should be grown to scale, and e) a second chance framework.

2. Add to the functions of the interagency work group the tasks of: a) policy alignment for low-income children and their parents, b) tackling barriers to two-generation service provision, c) finding opportunities to bring child and adult service programs together through strategic financing (e.g. blending and braiding funding) and/or incentives for coordination; d) development of a service manual for two-generational policy and program development and conversion; e) design and implementation of a state and community learning collaborative of the towns selected and national and state philanthropic partners to learn from one another

about co-location, shared training, public information, evaluation, and optimal two-generational referral mechanisms within early care, adult learning, literacy, housing, pathways to work, ELL, transportation, health and mental health.

Combined, Senate Bill 795 and House Bill 5823 bring important critical points and offer up a platform and beginning system for efficacy and improved outcomes for school and workforce success.

Thank you.