

Testimony to the Appropriations Committee
February 19, 2016

Sue Murphy
Vice President, Liberty Bank
1190 Silas Deane Highway
Wethersfield, CT 06109

In Support of the Connecticut Commission on Children

I am writing on behalf of Liberty Bank to express support for the Connecticut Commission on Children.

The Liberty Bank Foundation has had the privilege of working with the Commission on a number of projects affecting families and children in our state. As a longtime investor in parent leadership and engagement programs, including Parent Leadership Training Institute, Parents Seeking Educational Excellence, and People Empowering People, our foundation partnered with the Commission in 2011 to re-activate these programs following their defunding by the state in 2009. We are proud to have provided over \$196,000 in funding to these programs in 12 communities throughout our service area, and we continue to partner with the Commission in expanding to new towns.

Today, we are working with the Commission and its partners, the Connecticut Center for School Change and the UConn Extension Service, to develop a comprehensive evaluation system for all three programs. SERC has already made an investment in this work, and I expect that private dollars (including some from our foundation) will underwrite more of it. Our goals are not only to obtain a longitudinal assessment of the impact of these programs that will inform their ongoing development, but also to ensure their future sustainability by making the case for support to large national funders. If we are successful in diversifying the revenue stream for these programs, that will naturally reduce their dependence on state funding. The Commission has been an essential and central partner in this endeavor.

The Commission was also central to the launch of the WorkPath Fund in 2013, along with the Workforce Alliance, the Liberty Bank Foundation, and an array of other partners. Over the past three years, more than \$300,000 in private funding has been raised for WorkPath, removing barriers to employment for hundreds of parents around the state. None of this would have occurred without the Commission's dogged efforts to find a way around every obstacle that we encountered in developing WorkPath—and there were many.

Most recently, a representative of our foundation participated in the development of the state's Two Generation policy, which was passed by the legislature last year. Elaine Zimmerman, executive director of the Commission on Children, led the charge on this work, convening a stakeholder group that comprised experts from across all sectors.

I want to emphasize the importance of the Commission's ability to convene and lead multisector partnerships. This is a new and evolving model of leadership, and bears little resemblance to the hierarchical model that many of us are accustomed to. It requires the ability to balance the interests of not only individuals, but institutions that are gathered around the table; to discover and defend common ground; to achieve alignment and agreement on goals; to accept that there will be conflict, and commit to resolving it; and to keep everyone's "eyes on the prize."

Elaine Zimmerman and the Commission on Children are providing that leadership. They are a precious resource that needs to be preserved. Liberty Bank and its foundation look forward to continuing our partnership with the Commission on Children on the projects noted above, and many others throughout the years to come.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony, and for your service to our state.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sue Murphy
Vice President, Liberty Bank