



**Testimony On H.B. 6864 – An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium  
Ending June Thirtieth, 2027, and Making Appropriations Therefor**

Appropriations Conservation & Development Subcommittee  
February 26, 2025

Mendi Blue Paca  
President & CEO, Fairfield County's Community Foundation

Senator Osten, Representative Walter, Senator Hartley, Senator Kushner, Representative Exum, Representative Paris, Senator Somers, Representative Nuccio, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Fairfield County's Community Foundation respectfully requests that the Appropriations Committee **restore funding for the Connecticut Youth Employment Funding from \$5 million to \$10 million regarding H.B. 6864: An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2027 and making Appropriations Therefor.**

The Community Foundation serves the 23 towns and cities in Fairfield County. We work closely with community organizations, nonprofits, businesses, and philanthropists to address challenges and identify opportunities to create a Fairfield County where everyone has an equitable opportunity to thrive. Informed by three decades of partnering with and serving our community, we have awarded over \$400 million in grants to nonprofits in Fairfield County and beyond.

A key focus of our work is supporting young people. Each year, we grant over \$1 million to organizations that help youth and young adults in Fairfield County graduate from high school and prepare for post-secondary education or employment. We invest in programs that provide essential wraparound supports, leading to strong educational and career outcomes.

The Connecticut 119K Commission—tasked with reducing the number of young people disconnected from education and the workforce—recommended an annual investment of \$25 million for the Connecticut Youth Employment Program to effectively serve more youth and eliminate waitlists. Restoring funding to \$10 million is an essential step toward that goal. The program aligns with the Governor's Office of Workforce Strategy and plays a crucial role in addressing youth unemployment.

Administered by Connecticut's five Regional Workforce Development Boards, the Connecticut Youth Employment Program connects at-risk and disconnected youth with local employers, providing them with opportunities to earn up to \$1,800 in wages while gaining valuable job experience.

The demand for this program is clear. In 2024 alone, more than 10,000 youth applied, yet with existing funding, only 4,100 at-risk and disconnected youth were served. Expanding funding would provide more young people with meaningful job opportunities that set them on a path toward long-term success.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of restoring funding for the Connecticut Youth Employment Program. We appreciate the committee's commitment to making critical budgetary

decisions that can help build a bright future for Connecticut's young people.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Liz Hoagland, Director of Education and Workforce Development, [lhoagland@fccfoundation.org](mailto:lhoagland@fccfoundation.org) or 203-750-3208.

Sincerely,

Mendi Blue Paca  
President & CEO