

TESTIMONY SUPPORTING
HB-6841: AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A UNIVERSAL BASIC
INCOME PILOT PROGRAM;
HB-6899: AN ACT CONCERNING EARLY EDUCATOR PAY EQUITY;
HB-6900: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY
CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND PERINATAL DEPRESSION SCREENING TOOLS
AND DATA SHARING SYSTEMS; AND
HB-6903: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PILOT PROGRAM TO DISSEMINATE
INFORMATION CONCERNING CHILD CARE SERVICES, EARLY INTERVENTION
PROGRAMS AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS TO
PATIENTS RECEIVING PRENATAL CARE.

Committee on Children
February 13, 2025
Presented By: Kathleen Callahan, MSW

Dear Honorable Chairpersons Maher and Paris, Ranking Members Martin and Dauphinais, Vice Chairs Cohen and Welander, and all other Members of the Committee on Children of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Kathleen Callahan, a resident of Stratford, and the Director of Policy and Civic Engagement for the Connecticut Cradle to Career Coalition, a network of five StriveTogether partnerships committed to improving economic mobility for Connecticut's youth and families—Bridgeport Prospers, Danbury Collective, Norwalk ACTS, Stamford Cradle to Career, and Waterbury Bridge to Success. I am submitting testimony on behalf of the Coalition supporting four bills before you today.

Our advocacy focuses on economic, educational, and health equity, addressing systemic barriers that impact children, youth, families, and communities. We push for policies that strengthen early childhood education and improve pathways to economic mobility.

HB-6841

Our Coalition supports the establishment of a universal basic income (UBI) pilot program and the formation of a working group to study its statewide implementation. Economic stability is fundamental to family well-being, and UBI has proven to be an effective tool for reducing



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poverty and fostering economic mobility, with ongoing research and data collection looking into improvements in health outcomes.¹

Connecticut already has successful guaranteed income programs,²³⁴⁵ demonstrating the positive impact of direct cash assistance on families' ability to meet basic needs, pursue education, and secure stable employment. A well-designed UBI program, particularly with an income disregard to address benefits cliffs, ensures that families do not face unintended financial penalties as they move toward economic independence.

UBI aligns with our long-term policy strategy, including efforts to establish a permanent, fully refundable child tax credit—an essential form of direct financial support that provides stability for families. By implementing this pilot and studying a statewide model, Connecticut can take a critical step toward ensuring all families have the resources they need to thrive.

We **urge the Committee to support this initiative** as a pathway to greater economic security and opportunity for residents across the state and **pass HB-6841 out of committee**.

HB-6899

The Coalition advocates for legislative solutions that recognize the critical importance of early childhood development, from prenatal stages through age five, and the transformative role of education in shaping economic and social mobility.

We support a grant program to ensure fair compensation for early childhood educators, recognizing their vital role in child development and economic mobility. Many passionate educators leave the field due to low wages, forcing centers to replace trained staff and disrupting care. Workforce stability is crucial, as consistent, well-supported educators foster

¹ County Health Rankings. (2025). *Universal basic income*. Retrieved from <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/strategies-and-solutions/what-works-for-health/strategies/universal-basic-income>.

² City of New Haven. (2023, March 28). *City of New Haven, 4-CT, and Project M.O.R.E. Launch Guaranteed Income Pilot Program for Individuals Returning from Incarceration, among the First of its Kind in the Country*. Retrieved from https://www.newhavenindependent.org/article/elm_city_reentry_pilot.

³ Hur, J. (2024, October 14). *How unrestricted cash aid is transforming violence intervention in Connecticut*. Retrieved from <https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2024/10/13/how-unrestricted-cash-aid-is-transforming-violence-intervention-in-connecticut/>.

⁴ Bridge Project. Retrieved February 13, 2025, from <https://bridgeproject.org/>.

⁵ Fairfield County's Community Foundation. (2024, November 8). *The Changemaker Fund*. Retrieved from <https://fccfoundation.org/the-changemaker-fund/>.



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nurturing early relationships. Investing in fair pay will strengthen retention, improve quality, and provide infants and toddlers with the stability they need to thrive.

We call upon the Committee to **support early educator pay equity**.

HB-6900

Our Statewide C2C Data Infrastructure Plan aims to streamline measurement across Connecticut communities through a shared system, enhancing coordination with state partners. Developmental screening data—whether from Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ/ASQ-SE) or Sparkler—are not consistently shared across programs, even when the same child is being screened multiple times.

Additionally, the 2024 Healthcare Cabinet Report from the Office of the State Comptroller Office⁶ emphasizes cross-sector data sharing as vital for system improvements and policy decisions. Clarifying privacy regulations like HIPAA and FERPA will help expand responsible data collaboration. By aligning data strategies, Connecticut can ensure equitable resource distribution, real-time insights for advocacy and policymaking, and stronger support systems for children and families.

Our Coalition supports HB-6900 and urges the Committee to include consideration of a common child identifier as part of its recommendations, aligning with the Coalition’s commitment to data-driven decision-making to improve child and family outcomes. Data-sharing challenges continue to limit Connecticut’s ability to track and support early childhood development effectively. A statewide child identifier, modeled after Minnesota’s MARSS⁷⁸, would enable seamless tracking of developmental screenings, referrals, and interventions, ensuring children receive necessary services. By bridging early childhood and K-12 systems, it would provide insights into the long-term impact of early interventions while enhancing cross-sector collaboration among healthcare, social services, and education.

⁶ Office of the State Comptroller. (2024, February). *2024 Healthcare Cabinet Report*. Retrieved from https://osc.ct.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/HealthcareCabinetReport_v8.pdf.

⁷ Minnesota Department of Education (2025). *MARSS Student Accounting*. Retrieved from <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/schfin/MARSS>.

⁸ University of Minnesota. (2005). *Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare: Minn-LInK*. Retrieved from <https://cascw.umn.edu/research/minn-link>.



HB-6903

The Coalition supports this pilot program as it advances equitable access to early childhood resources. Providing expectant parents with clear, localized information on child care, early intervention, and financial assistance strengthens early childhood systems and reduces access gaps.

We view this as a scalable model for statewide expansion and recommend tracking enrollment outcomes while **also assessing outreach effectiveness through hospital feedback on non-enrolling families**. Given the child care challenges in our communities, strong partnerships with hospitals, child care providers, and community organizations—who often break through barriers—are essential to ensuring families receive culturally responsive, easy-to-navigate support.

We call upon the Committee to **support this equitable early childhood resource pilot program**.

Thank you for your efforts on behalf of Connecticut's children and families. With respect and gratitude for your service and consideration,

Kathleen Callahan
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The Connecticut Cradle to Career Coalition is a statewide collaborative uniting five StriveTogether partnerships serving 125,000 children across Bridgeport, Danbury, Norwalk, Stamford, and Waterbury. Through a collective impact approach and with fifteen community-based working groups and over 440 partner organizations, we work to advance policies and systems that ensure all children and families in Connecticut have access to equitable opportunities from early childhood through career success.



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