



SB 311 - An Act Concerning Disconnected Youth

Education Committee

March 4, 2026

Mendi Blue Paca

President & CEO, Fairfield County's Community Foundation

Representative Jennifer Leeper, Senator Douglas McCrory, Representative Lezlye Zupkus, Senator Eric Berthel, and esteemed Connecticut General Assembly members of the Education Committee, [Fairfield County's Community Foundation](#) is grateful for this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of **SB 311 - An Act Concerning Disconnected Youth**.

Fairfield County's Community Foundation serves twenty-three towns and cities, collaborating with organizations, businesses, and philanthropists to foster a fair and just community where all residents can thrive. Informed by three decades of partnering with and serving our community, we have awarded over \$420 million in grants to nonprofits in Fairfield County and beyond.

The Foundation has a long-standing commitment to supporting young people in Fairfield County, investing more than \$1 million annually in organizations that help youth and young adults graduate from high school and prepare for post-secondary education or employment.

According to a recent report from P20 WIN "As of the 2024-25 school year, approximately 108,140 of Connecticut's 612,826 young people aged 14 to 26 were disconnected or at-risk of disconnection." This represents a significant portion – close to 20% - of our state's emerging workforce.

Additionally, the 2023 report commissioned by Fairfield County's Business Collaborative for Education Equity, [Building Tomorrow's Workforce: Equitable Education and Career Pathways for Opportunity Youth in Fairfield County](#), found a strong need for more coordinated and collaborative wraparound supports for young people facing barriers to pursuing education and career goals. These supports include things like access to childcare, stipends, transportation, food, housing, and mental health services. Until these holistic needs are addressed, under-resourced young people will continue to face challenges in maintaining capacity to pursue and complete education and career training.

This bill will allow for continued strong data sharing between P20 WIN and essential local nonprofit organizations, while also providing much-needed resources to support disconnected young people and help them achieve long term educational and career stability. By investing in this emerging workforce, Connecticut not only strengthens its future labor pipeline, but also contributes to the state's long-term economic health.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Liz Hoagland, Sr. Director of Education and Workforce Development, lhoagland@fccfoundation.org or 203-750-3208.

Sincerely,

Mendi Blue Paca
President & CEO