

Public Health Committee

Public Testimony of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)
*H.B. 6666: An Act Concerning The Department Of Public Health's Recommendations
Regarding Various Revisions To The Public Health Statutes.*

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March 29, 2021

The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is a statewide, nonprofit organization that advocates for and empowers women and girls in Connecticut, especially those who are underserved or marginalized. For forty-seven years, CWEALF has been a leading advocate in the development of policy solutions that enhance women's economic security and increase gender equity in our state.

CWEALF serves as the advocacy partner to Secure Jobs Connecticut, a multi-year program funded by the Melville Charitable Trust and additional philanthropic partners. Secure Jobs aims to increase the income of families exiting homelessness by connecting them to the education, training, and support they need to secure and maintain stable employment. The majority of parents enrolled in Secure Jobs are people of color, and 87% of Secure Jobs households in the program's pilot were female-headed.

CWEALF encourages the Committee to support *H.B. 6666: An Act Concerning The Department Of Public Health's Recommendations Regarding Various Revisions To The Public Health Statutes*. Specifically, we support the revision in Sec. 70 Section 7-36 which waives the fee for a certified copy of a birth certificate and State Identity Card for youth and young adults who are experiencing homelessness.

In order to obtain a state ID, a birth certificate is needed; however, homeless youth may have never had access to these documents or they were lost while navigating places to stay. State IDs are necessary for securing employment, getting a driver's license, applying to college, and receiving benefits such as SNAP and HUSKY. Waiving the fee for a certified copy of state documents removes one significant barrier for youth to achieve self-sufficiency and rise out of homelessness.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought upon new and prevalent issues in the lives of youth experiencing homelessness. One of those concerns is the access to healthcare and education. We must do everything we can to improve circumstances so that youth can obtain economic security and receive the services they need.

House Bill No. 6666 will ensure youth experiencing homelessness do not have to choose between a hot meal and their right to access their birth certificate. We urge the Committee

to pass H.B. 6666 to ensure that all Connecticut youth have the opportunity to secure a job, education, food, healthcare, and more.