

## **Appropriations Subcommittee - Conservation & Development Agencies, Support of Cradle to Career funding through H.B. No. 6439**

February 18, 2021

Honorable co-chairs Hartley and Gibson, and members of the Conservation and Development subcommittee,

We applaud the Governor for restoring \$100,000 to the Department of Labor budget in support of Connecticut's four 'cradle-to-career' communities.

This important funding supports community and resident leaders in Bridgeport, Norwalk, Stamford, and Waterbury working to advance evidence-based strategies that support student and family success and economic mobility, with a focus on Black and brown youth and those from lower income families.

These four communities are members of the national StriveTogether network and follow the same collective impact approach that is rooted in the belief that no single organization or entity alone can create large-scale, lasting social change on its own. The challenges our children and youth experience are bigger than any one sector can address, and we have proven that we can achieve more by working together than in silos. We operate using the same theory of action to convene cross-sector partners to adopt common goals, use data to drive decision making, and engage those most negatively impacted by current systems in determining what is best for their communities.

We represent the backbone structures of these cross-sector partnerships that are working to close opportunity gaps. Our work is truly cradle to career - encompassing early childhood, k-12, and college & workforce readiness. We work to strengthen the connections & transitions between systems along that continuum.

Each of our communities can highlight numerous successes. In Norwalk this includes:

- Building an early childhood system that is being looked at as a national model that includes a city-wide approach for developmental screenings of children birth to 5 in preparation for kindergarten
- Partnering with the school district, city, and numerous community-based organizations to provide critically needed data support including:
  - Analyzing student data to optimize the distribution of food during COVID to ensure mobile food sites were within walking distance to low-income students

- Developing a disaggregated school improvement plan dashboard to capture demographic, assessment, and testing data by school to inform decision making
- Creating a disproportionality and equity dashboard highlighting under- and over-representation of subgroups in discipline, special education, and academically talented categories
- Resource mapping and providing resource portals for families of children for out of school time and behavioral health services

Our collective impact approach has never been more important. When the pandemic hit, we were fortunate to have these existing structures that allowed us to hit the ground running with our partnerships with municipalities, school systems, health departments, community-based organizations, philanthropy and more. However, the pandemic has created even further disparities in educational and health outcomes for low-income families and children of color. Our ability to continue to leverage these key partnerships and build unified strategies in our cities will be critical in the recovery as we work to reduce redundancies and create efficiencies, using data to inform our decisions.

The funding from the State is a recognition of the importance and need for the type of work we do to align systems to meet difficult challenges. Furthermore, it is critically important in helping us attract additional public and private investment in our communities. We are thankful to have legislators who understand the importance of our work and the need for this funding, especially as we work to rebuild more equitable post-COVID communities.

Sincerely,

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Cosigned by:

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