



**To: Rep. Toni Walker, Co-Chair, Appropriations Committee
Sen. Cathy Osten, Co-Chair, Appropriations Committee**

**From: Althea Marshall Brooks, Executive Director, Waterbury Bridge to Success
(member CT Cradle to Career Network/ CTC2C)**

Date: February 26, 2021

RE: Funding support for Connecticut Cradle to Career Partnerships

Greetings Honorable Co-Chairs, Representative Toni Walker and Senator Cathy Osten. On behalf of the CT Cradle to Career Network, I solicit your support for the retention of our funding in the DOL Budget for \$100,000 across the four sites. The **Connecticut Cradle to Career Coalition** includes [Bridgeport Prospers](#), [Norwalk ACTS](#), [Stamford Cradle to Career](#) and (Waterbury) [Bridge to Success](#). Our four Cradle to Career Initiatives, collectively and collaboratively, address issues important for child and family success in one of the most economically and racially segregated states in the country. Despite these challenges magnified by COVID, our communities have built a strong foundation and made meaningful progress using disaggregated data and cross-sector leadership, centered with resident voice and racial equity. Presently, there is an opportunity to build on this strong Network of infrastructure and highly aligned partners to advance local and state investment and policy efforts.

Growing Momentum

Over the last two years, we have developed an effective working partnership between our four communities, as evidenced by a regional C2C Conference in November 2019 and a joint legislative forum at the Connecticut State Capitol in February 2020. More recently, with Strive Together support, we have been growing our intercity policy capacity and efforts by:

- Raising awareness of our work with state and local municipal legislators and elected officials and aligning efforts.
- Developing a shared policy agenda with an emphasis on race equity, closing the opportunity gap, and trauma responsive communities.
- Managing strategies to advance shared policy interests in collaboration with other statewide partners.
- Positioning the Partnership to influence Cares ACT and secure state funding for local C2C infrastructure.
- Supporting individual partnerships, as needed, for specific pieces of lobbying on legislation or policies that impact local work.
- Providing critical and efficient access to credible, local leadership and grassroots organizations for state-wide coalitions.

In addition, bolstering Connecticut's collective impact organizations is a service to efforts like the 'reimagining the childcare system' process of the State of CT Office of Early Childhood (OEC). This process is supported by Third Sector and the Governor's Workforce Council (GWC). These state-level entities benefit from the wisdom and work of cross-sector local leadership and engagement with diverse residents within a collective impact framework as practiced in our four communities. Our local, well-developed partnerships and data capabilities are essential assets to help test and implement state level policies and initiatives.

The CT c2c Partnership has shared interests and alignment with a number of OEC and GWC strategies including:

- **Equity and Access** strategies that seek to address systemic racism and persistent barriers that undermine access to sustainable work and training arrangements, as well as to healthcare and educational opportunities. The



foremost barriers facing Connecticut's lower-paid workforce include childcare, transportation, benefits cliffs, and access to behavioral health services. Many of these barriers disproportionately affect Black, brown and other underserved populations that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis.

For example, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the crisis in access and affordability in Connecticut's early childhood education (ECE) system. A strong ECE system: a) supports children through important developmental stages and increases school readiness; b) keeps parents attached to the labor force; c) increases employer access to qualified workers; and d) leads to increased tax revenues and a reduction of public benefits for the state in the future.

- **Accountability and Data-Driven Management** strategies use technology to increase accessibility, transparency, and accountability. They allow us to better understand program outcomes and the return on our investment in training and supportive services. Look at disaggregated data calls out disparities, leads to innovation to help close opportunity gap

Partnership Goals

State Level

We support efforts to advance a multi-phase plan to expand access, improve affordability, and increase quality of the ECE system so that all 0–5-year-olds enter kindergarten with the social, emotional, and academic skills necessary to thrive. A reimaged ECE system will more effectively serve families and align government, private sector, and philanthropic funding to scale and sustain viable business models for providers. Note that a more equitable system is more than childcare. It must address and provide wrap-around supports for families, housing, food, and the other issues that constrain health and economic well-being.

Our strategies include:

- We intend to inform and influence the **redesign of early childhood education system** by using our four local infrastructures, community engagement mechanisms, and competitive advantages (data, community engagement, attention to racial equity, systems change focus, school system partnerships) to learn, pilot solutions, and build the public will necessary to promote systems-level change.

For example, in Bridgeport we are building a nationally recognized comprehensive prenatal-three-year-old continuum of care that includes family childcare, parental supports, universal home visiting system, doula care, maternal mental health supports, increased developmental screening, and evidenced-based innovative pediatric interventions

- **Mapping local resource flow of public and private dollars in CT early childhood system** for the four cradle-to-career communities and building local capacity to organize funders to identify gaps and invest in opportunities. In Waterbury, Bridge to Success has facilitated the Mayor's Early Childhood Cabinet – a stakeholder group of providers, practitioners, parents, philanthropic leaders, and local elected officials – that serves to address the needs of the early childhood population and its families to decrease the inequities in childcare access, provision, and interventions by leveraging and coordinating public and private dollars to improve developmental outcomes for children 0-8.
- Bridge to Success in partnership with the Mayor's Early Childhood Cabinet were selected as one of 8 cities, nationally, to participate in the National League of Cities City Leadership for Building an Early Learning Nation.



The NLC's initiative aids local officials to develop and strengthen community plans including services and funding to ensure that young children grow up safe, health and ready to learn.

- **Engaging community and resident voice.** In Stamford, our local school system partners with us to help coordinate with the local 0-5 system and to provide essential data infrastructure and analysis through family surveys.

Thanks in advance for your support and consideration. If you have any additional questions, please contact me at director@waterburybridgetosuccess.org or 203-507-5790.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Althea Marshall Brooks".

Althea Marshall Brooks
Executive Director