



February 17, 2021

Honorable Chair Senator Hartley and Chair Rep. Gibson, and Appropriation Committee Members:

We applaud the Governor for **restoring \$100,000 to the Department of Labor budget in support of CT’s four ‘cradle-to-career’ initiatives in Norwalk, Bridgeport, Stamford, and Waterbury.** These communities represent more than 15% of the state’s population.

These projects improve outcomes for children and their families, especially those from community of color and with lower incomes. Each community is building upon and leveraging successful community-based strategies to create equitable pathways towards greater economic mobility.

Our four communities have adopted the framework and methodology of **Collective Impact** and have joined the nationally recognized, evidenced-based **StriveTogether Network**. Together, we are:

- more effectively lifting up and expanding what is working
- consistently re-appointing focus towards data and community input to drive decision-making
- empowering and building capacity in our communities, especially with our Black and brown neighbors

Based on our experience and evaluation of our work, the cradle-to-career approach promotes:

- Innovative and creative thinking and actions
- System-building that leads to aligned action
- Community and resident leadership
- Cost effective practice and greater efficiency

Our areas of focus include: Infant Health, Kindergarten Readiness, Third Grade Reading, High School Completion, Reduced Exposure to Violence and Trauma, Post-secondary Enrollment and Completion, and Youth Employment.

To increase and accelerate progress, continued state investment in the four ‘backbone’ organizations is essential. The role of the backbone organization is to build and fortify the local civic infrastructure through coordination and facilitation, data gathering and interpretation, and consistent communications. Other considerations:

- investing in the civic infrastructure of our places is a necessary and essential ingredient in COVID recovery, times that demand coordinated community leadership focused on shared interests
- bolstering this work is a service to important efforts like the **Governor’s Workforce Council** that benefit from the wisdom and power of organized cross-sector local leadership and engagement with diverse residents
- in the past, state funding has leveraged more than \$2 million from the private sector and philanthropy.

Thank you for supporting this budget item, and for your commitment to support CT’s children, families, and economy.

Sincerely,

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