CONNECTICUT VOICES FOR CHILDREN

NEWS RELEASE

January 21, 2015

33 Whitney Avenue
New Haven, CT 06510
Voice: 203-498-4240
Fax: 203-498-4242
www.ctvoices.org

Contact: Ellen Shemitz, Executive Director, (203) 498-4240 x108, eshemitz@ctvoices.org
Sharon Langer, Advocacy Director, (203) 498-4240 x121, slanger@ctvoices.org

Connecticut Voices for Children Announces 2015 Policy Agenda

Connecticut Voices for Children, a statewide research and advocacy organization dedicated to equitable opportunity for all children, announced the release of its 2015 policy agenda. The agenda seeks to promote healthy child development, high-quality education from cradle to career, and strong families.

The increasing diversity of Connecticut's children and families creates both an opportunity and challenge. We can meet that challenge by removing existing barriers to success that disproportionately burden low income children and children of color. The Agenda recognizes the fiscal challenges facing the state, but calls on policymakers to avoid cuts to state programs and services that protect the most vulnerable. Sharon Langer, Advocacy Director at Voices for Children, highlighted the importance of a long term vision, stating "By avoiding harmful budget cuts and by making smart investments today, we can set the stage for a healthier more prosperous tomorrow."

The agenda calls on policymakers to:

- Protect programs and services for children and families that may be threatened with budget cuts as policymakers attempt to close the state's budget deficit.

- Improve access to health care through support for federal legislation to extend funding of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which helps fund the state's HUSKY program; protection of eligibility and benefits for families in HUSKY; and efforts to ensure that all children have access to a full continuum of behavioral health services and supports.

- Improve access to high-quality educational opportunities by creating an integrated statewide system of early care and education, amending the state's child care subsidy program so that people do not suddenly lose their child care when their income increases, increasing compensation for early childhood educators, and improving the tracking of school discipline data to help reduce unnecessary exclusion of students from the classroom.

- Enable working families to better meet their basic needs by fully restoring the state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to 30 percent of the federal credit and by enacting a tax exemption

-- MORE --

for dependent family members targeted at moderate-income families and phasing out at higher incomes. Connecticut is one of only two states that do not adjust income tax to reflect the cost of raising children.

- Support young people in foster care in forming permanent relationships through legislation that ensures social workers have the time to meet the needs of children in their care, supports youth in their transition to adulthood, and prevents young people who leave foster care from becoming homeless. Without secure and stable relationships, youth who grow up in foster care have greater difficulty achieving positive life outcomes.

The complete agenda is on the CT Voices for Children website at http://www.ctvoices.org/advocacy/policy-agenda

-END-