ISSUE BRIEFING BOOK 2020-2022
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INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to present Connecticut Voices for Children’s Issue Briefing Book 2020-2022. We have provided versions of this document to state legislators and thought-leaders throughout the 25 years of our organization’s history. Given our new, strategic aim toward economic justice and these unprecedented times, we have refreshed the document so that Connecticut policymakers have shared knowledge around the research and recommendations that are fundamental to family economic security, with the hope of advancing shared action.

In Connecticut, we are currently experiencing the convergence of a health crisis, an economic recession due to that crisis, and a contentious and long-overdue conversation on race. Historically invisible communities are now visible, and their challenges have been brought to the public policy discourse. At Connecticut Voices for Children, we see this time of strife and upheaval as an opportunity to join together and take the bold actions necessary to tackle the structural foundations that create racial, income and wealth inequalities in our state.

COVID-19 has revealed and exacerbated structural and systemic inequities that disproportionately harm Connecticut’s communities of color. As of late June, Black and Latinx individuals have died at higher age-adjusted rates than white individuals in Connecticut. While the effects of COVID-19 on communities’ health are still emerging, present data shows that the death rate for our state’s Black population is 250% higher than whites, and the death rate of the Latinx population is 67% higher than for the white population.

Black and Latinx workers in the state are disproportionately on the frontlines during this pandemic and have simultaneously experienced higher rates of unemployment than white workers, both of which are directly correlated to the health outcomes we are seeing. However, government-sponsored segregation and the systemic prevention of wealth accumulation have also played a role. The results of these inequities have been devastatingly epic.

Although the state has developed some of the nation’s leading education and health systems, family and community economic disparities threaten to undermine progress and affect parents’ ability to support their children. Economic inequality has increased substantially over the last four decades in Connecticut, and these income and wealth inequalities negatively impact children from working- and middle-income families, causing additional harm to children of color. Without corrective policies, the COVID-19 recession will only worsen Connecticut’s inequalities; thus, the state needs to act now.
In this *Issue Briefing Book 2020-2022*, Connecticut Voices for Children identifies research-based policies that will put Connecticut on the road to an equitable recovery. We urge policymakers to seize this moment and address racial and socio-economic barriers that deny opportunities to *all* our children and families. Included in this “book” are data relevant to the:

- emerging public health issues and the structural issues causing disproportionate harm to the health of communities of color;
- family economic security issues of affordable housing, criminal justice and keeping families together, as well as fair employment;
- undergirding fiscal and economic issues, and the import of maintaining spending throughout the recession as well as creating a progressive tax system; and
- federal issues that can help support the state’s equitable recovery.

In order to help with the digestion of the *Issue Briefing Book 2020-2022*, please note that the aforementioned bulleted umbrella issues start with a full-page graphic that includes white-lettered headers highlighted in blue, and most end with additional enclosures. (Additional enclosures are only included in the full document). Some of the umbrella issues have sections (e.g. family economic security includes housing, justice, and employment) and within some of these sections are parts (e.g. housing is split into two parts: affordable housing and evictions), which are also indicated by a full-page graphic (marking which issue/section/part you are currently viewing). Each issue/section/part is designed so it can be read as a standalone; however, the more you roll the parts together, the more comprehensive it is.

As a reading tip, the bolded blue-lettered sub-headers within each issue/section/part, read together, tell a story about that issue/section/part. Additionally, and for your convenience, we have linked everything in the table of contents entitled, “What’s Inside?” (if you are reading this electronically). So, if you would like to peruse a specific issue/section/part/enclosure without scrolling through the whole document, simply click on the line of your choice.

Lastly, a note about the development and design of the *Issue Briefing Book 2020-2022*. We, at Connecticut Voices for Children, are not in this work alone and know that our work is only strengthened by collaboration and partnership. It is our privilege to be in community with so many amazing organizations and individuals, a handful of whom are included in the “Acknowledgments” page (at the end of the document). While this list is not an exhaustive list of our partners, our intention is to lift-up the work of others. We are so grateful to everyone for their time and talent—thank you!

**Connecticut Voices for Children envisions a thriving and equitable state where all children achieve their full potential.** We are a research-based advocacy organization (aka “think and do” tank) that utilizes high-quality analysis, strategic partnerships, and policy development to ensure that all of Connecticut’s children have a voice in state and national policy discussions. We believe that our state’s social and economic well-being depends upon the dismantling of policies that criminalize and perpetuate poverty, and advancing inclusive growth policies that ensures pathways to opportunity for all of our children and families.
The COVID-19 pandemic is having a disparate impact on people of color

The world currently faces a public health emergency known as the COVID-19 pandemic, and as of late June, Connecticut has one of the nation’s highest mortality rates, ranking third among states in deaths per capita. Nationally, COVID-19 is disproportionately impacting Black, Latinx, and indigenous communities. In Connecticut, Black and Latinx individuals have died at higher age-adjusted rates than white individuals. While the effects of COVID-19 on communities’ health are still emerging, present data shows that the death rate for our state’s Black population is 250% higher than whites, and the death rate of the Latinx population is 67% higher than for the white population.

COVID-19 harming our communities of color is not an accident, but rather a predictable (though preventable) outcome. It results from the convergence of other long-standing inequities disenfranchised communities experience—from their heightened prevalence of various diseases that place them at greater risk of serious illness if infected by the virus, to their lower-paying (but deemed “essential”) jobs that increase exposure to the virus, to their inequitable access to the quality healthcare necessary to avert death. In turn, these outcomes arise from the multiple structural inequities that have long disadvantaged communities of color in Connecticut. To avoid COVID-19’s further deepening of these inequities, each of these factors must—and can—be addressed.

Racial segregation and inequitable access to resources are associated with an increase in chronic health conditions and can separate communities from the support that they need to prepare and recover from this crisis

Socioeconomic deprivations are strongly associated with developing chronic health conditions and separating communities from the resources that they need to prepare and recover from a crisis. Indeed, public health experts have found that social and economic conditions are the most powerful indicators of who will survive the pandemic. In 2011, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention created the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI), a tool that measures population groups’ resilience when confronted by a disaster. Factors that impact a person’s social vulnerability include socioeconomic status, household composition and disability, minority status and language, and housing type and transportation. Good public policy can help decrease social vulnerability, but current public policy contributes to Black, Latinx, and indigenous people in Connecticut generally having high social vulnerability.

Connecticut is highly segregated on socioeconomic and racial lines. These patterns of racial and economic inequality isolate communities of color into neighborhoods with inadequate resources. People of color are concentrated in areas that have high poverty, exposure to environmental toxins, and lack transportation; people of color have higher rates of housing insecurity, higher unemployment rates, poor access to healthy foods as well as discriminatory diagnostics and institutional barriers to health care all resulting from government-sponsored segregation and rapidly growing income inequality.
Social and economic inequities result in health inequities that increase morbidity and mortality risk from COVID-19

The structural and social determinants of health and health inequity are strongly associated with the pre-existing conditions that contribute to the increased morbidity and mortality from COVID-19 among low-income and disenfranchised families. Chronic homelessness significantly lowers a person’s expected age at death by about 20 to 25 years. Continuous emotional and physical trauma further increase a person’s mortality rate. Racial discrimination can also cause negative physical and mental health consequences, which impact COVID-19 outcomes. Furthermore, educational gaps and disproportionate school disciplinary practices damage health from childhood through adulthood.

While 40 percent of Americans overall live with diabetes, hypertension, asthma, and other diseases that increase vulnerability to COVID-19, their prevalence is starkly higher among Black and Latinx populations. Black individuals have higher rates of diabetes that is associated with higher poverty rates, inequitable education, and living conditions that do not promote health, which all impact their susceptibility to communicable and chronic diseases. These factors also differentially impact one’s behavioral “choices;” poor nutrition, for example, is often a function of one’s inadequate income coupled with food insecurity and living in “food deserts” devoid of affordable healthy foods. Among Latinx residents in Connecticut, the rate of diabetes is nearly three times higher than among white residents, and Black residents are more than twice as likely to die from diabetes than white residents.

Black residents also are almost three times as likely as white residents to die of asthma. In Connecticut, Black children and teens are nearly 5½ times more likely to go to the emergency department because of asthma than their white counterparts, and Latinx children and teens are 4½ times as likely to go, due to greater exposure to environmental toxins. Black adults are most likely to have hypertension, a condition strongly associated with exposure to explicit and implicit racism.

People of color also are disproportionately our “essential workers” so are placed at greater risk of exposure to the virus, yet are not consistently given the personal protective equipment necessary to block viral transmission

Despite the shutdown of multiple businesses during this pandemic, millions of workers still provided services categorized as “essential,” including those working in health care, food and agriculture, industrial, commercial, and residential facilities, and the services industry. Essential workers are experiencing higher rates of infection and death due to COVID-19 for two central reasons. First, they are concentrated in jobs where they may be exposed to the virus. Yet they have often not been provided the personal protective equipment (PPE) necessary to block transmission despite evidence that health care workers who consistently wear PPE have lower rates of contracting the illness despite the proximity and prolonged exposures. Second, essential workers are disproportionately people of color, for whom susceptibility to infection is heightened because of their higher prevalence of pre-existing health conditions associated with COVID-19.

Black and Latinx people make up the majority of essential workers in food and agriculture and industrial, commercial, residential facilities and services. A Brookings analysis of frontline workers found that frontline workers—workers who are critical for protecting the safety of human life—earn lower wages and are more likely to be people of color than national averages. Moreover, there are substantial racial and ethnic disparities in access to medical leave, with Latinx workers having the lowest rates of paid-leave access across groups.
Racial discrimination has long been a barrier to opportunity, and people of color are segregated into employment with unsafe conditions. Additionally, people of color are less likely to secure employment in high paying jobs than their white counterparts because of the historical and current inequities in our education system, which impact the educational attainment necessary for success in our labor market.

Figure 1 shows that 41 percent of white employees are employed in management, professional, and related occupations compared to 31 percent of Black employees, and 22 percent of Latinx employees.\(^{20}\)

**Emerging Issues: Public Health Figure 1.** Black and Latinx workers are more likely to be employed in lower-wage professions than white workers.

Given that Black and Latinx people are more likely to be in lower-wage essential occupations with proximity to others who have contracted COVID-19, and have less access to adequate testing and healthcare, our state’s income and wealth inequality may exacerbate the impact of COVID-19.\(^{21}\) Further, in Connecticut, people of color primarily live in urban areas (and often in multi-generational households) where there is more significant crowding as compared to white households. These conditions further increase the likelihood of COVID-19 spreading from infected workers to their families and people in their communities.

**Gaps in health insurance coverage and inequities in health care lead to worse health outcomes, including among persons with COVID-19**

As noted earlier, Connecticut’s most vulnerable communities, particularly low-income families and people of color, are more likely to be exposed to adverse social determinants of health—such as food insecurity, limited access to transportation, and housing instability—which make managing their chronic health conditions and gaining access to preventive care difficult.
Without mitigating action, COVID-19 will deepen Connecticut’s already existing inequalities

The measures that our government has needed to take in order to try to curtail transmission of the virus and reduce the pandemic’s impact are, ironically and tragically, deepening some of Connecticut’s already existing inequalities. For example, the closure of schools has had a disparate impact on our K-12 population’s education with children in our low-income school districts unable to participate in schooling due to lack of access to the technology essential to online learning—the “digital divide.” Education is a strong predictor of health outcomes, but during our school closures, one out of every four students in Connecticut did not participate in remote learning or could only do so minimally. Frontline workers are some of the lowest-paid workers in the country, and coronavirus responses have made these pay disparities more significant. Congress has limited Unemployment Insurance to individuals forced into unemployment through downsizing and business closures. Thus, frontline workers must choose between risking their own lives and their families’ lives by continuing to work or leaving work with few savings and no economic safety net to avert hunger and possible homelessness during a time of high unemployment.
**The time to act is NOW**

Racialized exploitation and capital accumulation has long been a fundamental cause of health inequities. Poverty and poor health are inextricably tied; socioeconomic status is a primary factor predictive of a person’s health outcomes. Reducing poverty, dismantling racist policies and practices, creating communities of opportunity, and removing social barriers in access to care will help to mitigate current racial and ethnic disparities in health.

Hence, to achieve health equity, we have to work toward racial and economic justice. Connecticut must address the structural issues causing disproportionate harm to the health of low-income families and people of color during this pandemic. If corrective action is not taken, this harm will deepen and continue to persist in the generations to come. While there are many steps that can be taken to reduce current harm, the following are key.

**Connecticut should declare racism to be a public health crisis**

Racism fuels the racially-disparate social determinants of health. The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black, Latinx, and indigenous communities arises from long-standing structural inequities that continuously disadvantage Connecticut’s communities of color.

The foundation of racial inequality is racist policy and practice. Thus, the state must take corrective action to replace policies and practices that produce and perpetuate inequalities with those that ensure health equity. To eliminate racialized health disparities, we cannot ignore the multifaceted ways racism is a societal epidemic. Anti-racist health policies should eradicate racism by dismantling racist systems, structures, and practices.

Connecticut Voices for Children supports proposals outlined by Health Equity Solutions, including a declaration by our policymakers that racism is a public health emergency due to the impact of systemic racism on people’s health. Acknowledging that racism is a public health crisis will help the state to focus on the racial and ethnic disparities that exist and embed the goal of achieving health equity in state and local policymaking. In addition to the required fiscal statement, all proposed legislation should include a health equity impact statement.

**Continuous eligibility for HUSKY (Medicaid/CHIP) is a crucial strategy for reducing the number of uninsured Connecticut residents**

It is critical to provide health coverage, especially during a health crisis like COVID-19, to protect public health. Insured individuals will be more likely to seek testing and treatment and other needed care because they are not burdened by financial constraints or laborious paperwork processes to remain eligible for coverage. Continuous eligibility will allow state agencies that operate with reduced capacity to focus their efforts on enrolling people who lose their jobs and job-based coverage during our economic crisis. Simplifying administrative processes mitigates the risk that income-eligible enrollees will lose health coverage because of a complicated renewal process or slow processing of documents. Several states, such as Montana and New York, provide 12-month continuous eligibility for Medicaid and CHIP. Connecticut should implement this practice to increase coverage rates in Connecticut, as well as extend coverage to undocumented immigrants, and simultaneously advance health equity through improved access.
Universal access to reliable, high-quality early child care is essential to our economy and can prevent the future onset of adult disease and disability

The fragility, yet critical importance of our early child care programs, has been sharply illuminated by the COVID-19 pandemic. A robust early childhood system is necessary for our economy; child care is imperative to allow for essential workers to attend their jobs. Child care providers whose previously-enrolled children now remain with parents who can work remotely currently face economic disaster as well.

High quality early child care is an important tool to alleviate poverty, improve children’s development, and protect against the future onset of adult disease and disability. High quality early child care programs provide a strong foundation for children’s health and well-being and have strong links to the other social determinants of health such as education. While early childhood is the most critical developmental stage, children from low-income families often endure negative early childhood experiences, social conditions, and environmental factors that adversely impact their health. Further, the biological effects of adverse early childhood experiences are associated with conditions such as heart disease, which increases the susceptibility and death rate from COVID-19 and other infectious diseases on communities of color.

Universal early child care can reduce the disadvantage children of color face, and provide opportunities for educational success, securing gainful employment in the future, increased income, and positive health outcomes. Research shows that taxpayers save money because participants of high-quality early child care programs have higher incomes and less need for educational and government services including for health care as adults. These programs should provide parenting and caregiver support, child care, nutrition, education, social protection, and healthcare. Indeed, societies that have the lowest levels of health inequality in the world invest in early childhood development regardless of socioeconomic status.

Connecticut needs to address the social determinants of health and health inequity—beyond early child care—across sectors

Connecticut should develop communities of opportunity to minimize the impact of racism on the social determinants of health, which lead to disparate outcomes for people of color, such as providing secure housing and healthy neighborhood conditions. The Issue Briefing Book 2020-2022 provides recommendations that tackle policies in various sectors that influence health equity, such as:

- **Investing in affordable housing and preventing additional evictions**
- **Centering youth in everything we do by keeping families together and moving towards decarceration of correctional facilities to protect all communities**
- **Ensuring the wages of essential workers are raised to reflect the value of their work for society**

For more detailed information on these policies, please visit the Family and Economic Security section of this book.
Additional enclosures to learn about health equity in Connecticut:

- Connecticut Voices for Children’s report on ‘Pathways to Continuous Coverage of Medicaid in Connecticut.’ Retaining eligible children and adults in HUSKY Health, Connecticut’s Medicaid, and CHIP programs are crucial for reducing the number of uninsured Connecticut residents and increasing efficiency within state agencies. In partnership with Health Equity Solutions, CT Voices provides recommendations on how the state can ensure that residents experience fewer gaps in coverage.

- A Health Equity Solutions one-pager regarding a state statute that declares racism as a public health emergency due to the impact of systemic racism on people’s health.

- A Connecticut Health Foundation policy brief that advocates for the state to (1) make testing accessible to those who need it; (2) take advantage of the skills of community health workers; (3) provide supports for people who need to isolate; and (4) provide clear communication and report more race and ethnicity data.
PATHWAYS
TO CONTINUOUS COVERAGE OF MEDICAID IN CONNECTICUT

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ISSUE BRIEFING BOOK: EMERGING ISSUES - PUBLIC HEALTH, ENCLOSURE

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INTRODUCTION

Retaining eligible children and adults in HUSKY Health, Connecticut’s Medicaid and CHIP programs, is a key strategy for reducing the number of uninsured Connecticut residents and increasing efficiency within state agencies. One known obstacle to retaining eligible enrollees is various bureaucratic obstacles at the point of annual renewal. However, a concrete understanding of the causes of gaps in coverage for Connecticut’s HUSKY enrollees remains elusive. This paper seeks to evaluate the likely causes of temporary coverage loss for HUSKY members and then proposes options to ensure that fewer individuals experience these gaps in coverage.

To assess the causes of gaps in HUSKY coverage, Connecticut Voices for Children (Connecticut Voices) partnered with Health Equity Solutions with support from the Advancing Strategies to Align Programs (ASAP) project—led by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP)—to conduct focus groups on challenges faced by HUSKY enrollees and individuals providing assistance when navigating the enrollment and renewal processes.

BACKGROUND

Addressing gaps in health insurance coverage could reduce disparities in insurance coverage rates in Connecticut and simultaneously advance health equity through improved access. Barriers that make it difficult to maintain HUSKY coverage impose high costs on Connecticut’s most vulnerable residents, and particularly on low-income families and people of color, who are disproportionately insured through HUSKY. These barriers make it difficult for eligible recipients of state aid to receive the assistance for which they qualify. By the same token, there is little to no evidence that burdensome renewal mechanisms, such as requiring frequent submission of paperwork, are necessary to or effective at screening out applicants who are ineligible for such assistance. Rather, cumbersome processes may lead eligible HUSKY enrollees to lose coverage.

Gaps in coverage are associated with discontinuity of care—meaning patients may not receive continuous care for chronic medical conditions, such as major depression or diabetes. Additionally, coverage gaps reduce ambulatory care, increase emergency room use, raise health care costs for both hospitals and the community, and lead to worse patient outcomes. The HUSKY program’s income eligibility rules, which are based on federal Medicaid and CHIP rules, mean that these challenges are borne exclusively by low-income residents, and disproportionately people of color. Both residents with low income and people of color are more likely to be exposed to adverse social determinants of health—such as food insecurity, limited access to transportation, and housing instability—which make managing chronic health conditions and access to preventive care challenging.

While the Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS) has not released the complete data needed to evaluate coverage gaps for several years, a 2016 study by Connecticut Voices found 23.4 percent of children in HUSKY A and B lost coverage at least once within one calendar year. These children were likely still eligible when they lost coverage. Further, comments made at the Council on Medical Assistance Program Oversight (MAPOC) indicated as many as 20 percent of a representative subset of the Medicaid population—both adults and children—were disenrolled and then re-enrolled within 60 days. Additional research has shown that non-disabled adults under the age of 65 have even lower levels of continuous coverage. Roughly 40-80% of children disenrolled from HUSKY A (Medicaid) each month are disenrolled due to “failure to comply” with renewal procedures, suggesting administrative barriers. DSS has made efforts to limit gaps in coverage for enrollees in the Patient Centered Medical Home Plus (PCMH+) program by notifying their primary care provider when the renewal date is approaching. Additional steps could remove barriers for all enrollees (not just those enrolled in PCMH+) without adding to the primary care provider’s long list of obligations. One promising avenue for filling these coverage gaps is removing bureaucratic obstacles for re-enrollment. The national Covering Kids and Families (CKF) initiative found that procedural problems, such as frequent renewals and complicated and confusing renewal processes, commonly interfere with retention.
Methods

This paper analyzes data from three focus groups held in September 2019 in New Haven, Hartford, and Bridgeport. The New Haven focus group consisted of HUSKY members, while those in Hartford and Bridgeport consisted of certified application counselors (CACs), community health workers (CHWs), and facility-based patient advocates. We asked each group to identify positive and negative experiences with HUSKY eligibility systems and to offer recommendations for addressing barriers to retaining eligible HUSKY members. We transcribed each focus group discussion with Trint, a digital transcription service. We then coded discussions using Dedoose, a web application for coding, managing, and analyzing qualitative data. From this, we determined overarching themes within the coded data.

Results

The focus groups primarily consisted of CACs and CHWs (50 percent) and HUSKY members or family members of HUSKY enrollees (20 percent). A more detailed breakdown of focus group participants’ roles is listed in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title Provided</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certified Application Counselor</td>
<td>25 percent</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Health Worker</td>
<td>25 percent</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUSKY member</td>
<td>17.5 percent</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial counselor</td>
<td>12.5 percent</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care advocate</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td>5 percent</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Children and Families Caseworker</td>
<td>2.5 percent</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family of HUSKY member</td>
<td>2.5 percent</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants’ experience with HUSKY programs ranged from ten or more years (37.5 percent) to one year or less (15 percent).

Focus group discussions centered on the process of enrolling in and renewing HUSKY health coverage. Most participants praised the role HUSKY plays in their lives or their clients’ lives overall, and indicated that wait times for the call centers had decreased in recent months. Both application counselors and HUSKY enrollees expressed concerns about the challenges they face when using the Access Health CT and DSS call centers, visiting the DSS office in person, and navigating communication between agencies and information technology (IT) systems.

The following themes arose most frequently during the focus group discussions: call center procedure (15 percent), call center accuracy (13 percent), in-person navigation (9 percent), and interaction between agencies (9 percent). Other themes, such as notification letters, resolution of application problems, and verification process, appeared less than four percent of the time. When looking at top themes, while in person navigation only appeared 9 percent overall, the theme was disproportionately mentioned as a concern in the New Haven focus group which consisted of HUSKY enrollees.
Call center accuracy presented significant challenges, particularly for certified application counselors (CACs). Several CACs referenced receiving incorrect or conflicting information from call center staff, particularly from the Access Health CT call center. For example, one CAC explained, “We try not to ever call the call center because of the lack of knowledge the reps have.” Call center procedure related to authorization to speak on behalf of a client was also a common frustration. Echoed by other focus group participants, one CAC noted, “We collect [the client’s] information before we call in, so why do they keep making the process longer [by requiring the client to speak]? So to me, it’s very time-consuming when you’re calling in. So, why can’t we give the information? It will take five minutes to get through the call.”

Focus group participants commented on the process of visiting DSS offices in-person. While experiences varied, several presented concerns with the experience. Finding transportation to and from the DSS office presents an initial barrier, as do accommodations for elderly and disabled people who may find waiting in line uncomfortable and taxing. One enrollee noted, “At one point I waited for 8 hours…I can’t stand for long.” In addition, focus group participants found the experience to be time-consuming and stressful. Another enrollee noted, “In Manchester and Hartford, they come out and call your name and have you come in. You go up to the desk and tell them what you need. They will tell you to have a seat. You can ask how long you’re going to wait, because sometimes you’re there a couple hours and other times you’re there all day.”

Participants also reported challenges related to computer system interactions. Multiple systems collect and verify eligibility information, including a shared enrollee-facing portal called HIX for enrollment and renewal in HUSKY A, B, D, and the state health insurance exchange. DSS also maintains a self-service portal called ConneCT, for HUSKY C and other social services programs. Finally, DSS maintains a comprehensive eligibility and enrollment database called ImpaCT, which is not consumer-facing. Individuals enrolled in either HUSKY A, B, or D and another social service program must navigate both HIX and ConneCT. HIX makes eligibility determinations for HUSKY A, B, and D in real-time, and information is later transferred to ImpaCT. Information sharing among systems is in one direction only. ImpaCT cannot send data to HIX or ConneCT. This creates challenges for enrollees who may have to navigate two self-service portals that may not have the same stored information. ImpaCT is an internal data management system and is not accessible to enrollees or most application support personnel. For example, many CACs and enrollees noted that after seeing a positive enrollment notice online, individuals might “receive a letter stating they’re no longer eligible.” However, when calling DSS, the client may be told they are eligible. Because systems don’t share information quickly, bi-directionally, and without error, clients may receive confusing, inaccurate, and conflicting notices regarding their HUSKY status.

While data is not publicly available to evaluate why gaps in coverage exist for HUSKY enrollees, focus group conversations suggest that gaps may be due to the challenges faced by enrollees and application counselors in renewing HUSKY coverage. Further, calls and visits, which were found to be problematic, would likely be necessary less often if systems were easier to navigate and less confusing. Therefore, the recommendations that follow focus on ways to simplify the renewal process.
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Producing a more streamlined experience for enrollees, application assisters, and DSS caseworkers can reduce gaps in coverage and mitigate administrative challenges and expenses. The following recommendations are drawn from challenges noted by focus group participants and the solutions they suggested. If implemented, these recommendations could lead to greater continuity of coverage for HUSKY health enrollees.

IMPROVE DATA ANALYSIS AND INCREASE TRANSPARENCY

To assess the prevalence of gaps in coverage and evaluate efforts to reduce these gaps, it is necessary to track who is losing coverage, how many of the people losing coverage are likely still eligible, and why eligible members may be experiencing gaps in care. This analysis could be completed using data already collected and stored by the HUSKY eligibility systems. The State of Connecticut funded evaluation of gaps in coverage for children through the HUSKY Monitoring Project until 2015, indicating that such analysis is both possible and useful. Compilation and public release of the following data could help policymakers understand who is most affected by gaps in coverage and assess the likely impact of proposed policy solutions:

- Disenrollment reason: Analysis of disenrollment reason codes can clarify the proportion of HUSKY enrollees who disenroll due to changes in income rather than because the enrollee did not meet procedural or administrative requirements. This can help to differentiate between disenrollment because individuals are no longer eligible and disenrollment that could be due to administrative barriers at application or renewal.

- Reinstatement: We define reinstatement as any individuals disenrolled and then re-enrolled within 90 days. Reinstatements often represent administrative inefficiencies and result in costly gaps in coverage for HUSKY enrollees.

Having data on when and to whom reinstatement occurs can point to the most efficient changes to eliminate challenges in retaining coverage faced by HUSKY enrollees. Doing so could save DSS an estimated $400 to $600 in administrative costs per person per reinstatement—the cost of one person disenrolling and re-enrolling in Medicaid—by preventing unnecessary coverage loss.

These metrics could be added to the quarterly business analytics report shared with MAPOC. Reporting on both disenrollment and reinstatement should include demographic factors such as the program type, age groups, and race/ethnicity of impacted enrollees. Improved transparency would allow policymakers and stakeholders to track progress due to changes made to the enrollment and renewal process or that may result from policy changes at the federal level. Further, improved reporting would highlight the consequences of systems changes, whether positive or negative, and guide policymakers towards next steps.

A Note on Continuous Eligibility:
Connecticut health advocates, including Connecticut Voices, have repeatedly attempted to restore (since 2003) and expand continuous eligibility, which is defined as 12 months of continuous enrollment regardless of changes in income, household size, or other factors that could impact eligibility. As of 2019, 24 states have continuous eligibility for children in Medicaid, 26 states have continuous eligibility for children in CHIP, and just two states (Montana and New York) have continuous eligibility for adults. While enrollees are required to report changes in income as they occur, redeterminations and requests for verification documents occur only at the end of a 12-month enrollment period in Connecticut. In contrast, some other states conduct data matches and request verification documents from some households periodically throughout the 12-month enrollment period, increasing the impact of continuous eligibility and the administrative burden on the state. We have not included continuous eligibility in the recommendations here because it would likely have limited impact in Connecticut.
UPDATE TECHNOLOGY TO STREAMLINE MEDICAID RENEWAL

Streamline Eligibility Determinations at Renewal

Connecticut has made strides in increasing the rates of auto-renewal for some HUSKY Health programs. The January 2020 HUSKY Health Business Analytics Dashboard estimated that on average from June of 2018 to January of 2020 65.25 percent of HUSKY A, B, and D enrollees were automatically renewed per month. Additional steps could streamline Medicaid renewals through updates and changes to IT systems. One promising change would be to utilize eligibility determinations from other means-tested social services for renewal (and enrollment) in Medicaid. This would minimize the stress enrollees in the focus groups felt surrounding renewals; in particular, it would address confusion when documents submitted to verify eligibility for one program are requested again soon after to determine eligibility for another. Some participants assumed that there was no need to resubmit verification documents a few weeks or months later for a different benefit program since multiple social services are administered by DSS and documents had been submitted to one DSS portal or office. As currently structured, such information is not linked across programs for an individual.

Simplifying administrative processes in this way mitigates the risk that income-eligible enrollees will lose Medicaid coverage because of a complicated renewal process or slow processing of documents. An option to apply this alignment for children’s renewals (called Express Lane Eligibility in some circumstances) would allow the state to align eligibility determinations across programs, such as SNAP (formerly Food Stamps) and cash assistance programs like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) to verify family income, household size, or citizenship status. In addition, this option allows the use of income data from other programs even if the method for calculating income differs between the two programs.

Connecticut could link SNAP data to HUSKY eligibility redeterminations. HUSKY enrollment systems currently verify eligibility using information from the Department of Labor and Homeland Security. The income information verified for SNAP can be used to determine if an individual or household remains eligible for Medicaid.

To implement a similar option for adults as well as children, states have the ability, under Medicaid state plan authority, to use SNAP gross income to support Medicaid income eligibility determinations. While some SNAP-eligible adults have income in excess of the eligibility limit for Medicaid, a subset of SNAP participants are certain to have MAGI-based household income at or below the Medicaid threshold of 138 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) for adults without dependents ($16,643/year for an individual) or 160 percent FPL for parents ($25,513/year for a family of 2). Implementing streamlined eligibility determinations for both children and adults through a state plan amendment would allow for the greatest continuity in coverage and reduce the administrative burden on enrollees to submit documents multiple times and on state workers processing verification documents.
Develop User-Friendly Applications

In addition, Connecticut could redesign IT systems to improve user experience. HUSKY enrollees in the focus groups found the online processes challenging and time-consuming, expressing confusion about submitting documents and then receiving notification that documents had not been submitted. These concerns aren’t surprising. First, the state has two enrollee-facing portals. Enrollees may think they are correctly submitting documents in response to a renewal request, while inadvertently submitting information to one portal that is required in the other.

A recent 50-state analysis also identified Connecticut’s online applications for social services as particularly cumbersome due to multiple applications on different websites. Today, an application in one database may generate a notice that the applicant may be eligible for other social services, but applicants are required to fill out each application separately. This requires applicants to dedicate additional time to re-entering information rather than hosting enrollee’s information under a single account or client ID. This may further result in multiple client files for one person. 27 states allow applicants to fill out a single form for Medicaid, SNAP, and TANF, which is then shared across social service programs. Further, even though many low-income Americans rely on smartphones for internet access, the Connecticut Medicaid application is not mobile-friendly.

While Connecticut has a single system for Access Health CT marketplace plans and three of the four main HUSKY Health programs, applications for other social services, such as TANF and SNAP, use a separate system. An integrated application or a single login linking user information, available both on desktop computers and mobile phones, could improve the renewal (and application) experience for enrollees and reduce demands on caseworkers and call centers.

CONCLUSION

Connecticut recently implemented a new eligibility database and has made strides in increasing rates of autorenewal and simplifying the processing of paperwork. Yet, focus group participants identified a variety of challenges with the HUSKY enrollment and renewal processes. Improving user experience and system challenges could reduce gaps in coverage and increase administrative efficiency. Tracking the impact of changes to eligibility systems by reporting on gaps in coverage would ensure that solutions work across HUSKY programs and populations. For the most vulnerable Connecticut residents, improving these systems would be one step towards continuity of health insurance coverage and, as a result, access to regular health care.
REFERENCES

   Note: The analysis provided was specific to the Patient Centered Medical Home Plus (PCMH+) shared savings program and DSS staff noted that “churn” found in this population was similar to “churn” found across the HUSKY programs. In recent months, DSS has engaged primary care providers to help PCMH+ patients navigate the renewal process.
   Note: An effort to reduce gaps in coverage within the PCMH+ program recently went into effect. Primary care providers will be alerted when re-enrollment is about to occur.
12. Trint, web-based AI transcription software, https://trint.com
14. 8 participants did not reply to this question.
15. Determinations for HUSKY A, B, and D are based on modified, adjusted gross income (MAGI) while determinations for HUSKY C (Medicaid for low-income older residents and residents with disabilities) are more complex and handled separately.
21. While HUSKY uses and individuals modified adjusted gross income (MAGI), other programs may consider additional forms of income, such as child support or veterans’ benefits.
26. Income eligibility for HUSKY A, B, and D is based on modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) and individuals can apply for each via Access Health. HUSKY C is not MAGI-based and has a separate application system.
Racism is a Public Health Crisis: State Statute

Declaring racism to be a public health crisis or emergency offers a clear path to intentionally acknowledging and addressing disparities and inequities. Adopting legislation can motivate and authorize data analysis, policy analysis to prevent unintentional injustices, and implementation of policies and actions to dismantle or course-correct problematic systems. In other words, this is one way to hold ourselves accountable for addressing racism.

Why should Connecticut’s General Assembly take this action? Making a public declaration that racism is a public health crisis is the first step in intentionally embedding health equity in policymaking. This is a way to catalyze the cross-sector approaches necessary to move towards equity.

How is racism a public health emergency? As a result of the trauma inflicted by racism and the purposeful disinvestment in their social and economic well-being, people of color live with disproportionately higher cortisol levels, higher rates of chronic stress, higher rates chronic disease, lower infant birth rates, higher rates of COVID-19 infection and death and pay the ultimate price with their lives.

Included below are:

- Sample legislative language and
- 2 recent articles supporting the timeliness of this effort.

For more information, contact:
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Sample Legislative Language

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

The General Assembly recognizes that racism is public health crisis. The state further recognizes that equal enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is a human right. Therefore, the General Assembly commits to identifying clear goals and objectives that intentionally address and mitigate inequities in the health experienced by people of color in the state. This will include a commitment to dismantling and course-correcting problematic systems and providing periodic reports to the public to assess progress. In collaboration with the Commission on Equity and Opportunity, the General Assembly will examine existing statute, internal hiring and contracting processes, and future proposed legislation with an equity lens and will make resources available to this end.
Ohio county declares racism a public health crisis

Officials in Ohio have declared racism a public health crisis in the state's embattled Franklin County, where twice as many black people are hospitalized for COVID-19 than other races, despite being a minority of the population.

A public health declaration and resolution was passed on Tuesday by commissioners in Franklin County along with a 10-step plan to address racism in the health system, housing and education.

The resolution was a part of the 2019 Rise Together Blueprint effort to address poverty in Central Ohio that was first announced last year, well before the coronavirus struck.

'Racism has been a pandemic long before the current coronavirus pandemic,' Commissioner Kevin L. Boyce said in a statement.

'Our declaration today is important, but it’s not saying anything that hasn’t been apparent for a long time. COVID-19 has highlighted the health divide between black and white Ohioans, however, and I hope that it can be the catalyst we need to reform the whole health system so that it works for all of us equally,' he added.
Franklin County's Commission Board in Ohio declared racism a public health crisis on Tuesday. A doctor in Columbus pictured installing equipment to treat COVID-19 patients on April 17.

The resolution was a part of the 2019 Rise Together Blueprint effort to address poverty in Central Ohio that was first announced last year, well before the coronavirus struck. An aerial view of Columbus' capitol building, located in Franklin County, above.

While black residents make up just 23 percent of the population of 1.3 million in Franklin County, they are hospitalized at twice the rate of other demographic groups, according to the commissioner report.

Preliminary data from Ohio suggests they are dying at a disproportionately higher rate from the disease, according to the commissioners.

In mid-April 20 percent of all of Ohio’s coronavirus cases where African Americans – who make up just 12 percent of the population, according to the Columbus-Dispatch. Whites, by comparison, make up 79 percent of the state’s population but accounted for 52 percent of the COVID-19 cases, at that time.

In Ohio Franklin County has the highest number of COVID-19 cases with 4,793 infections, 607 hospitalizations and 200 deaths, as of Wednesday.

Overall in Ohio there are over 27,500 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and over 1,600 deaths.
Across the country black people are infected with COVID-19 and dying at a disproportionate rate.

An Amfar study based on data collected April 13 said disproportionately black counties account for 22 percent of all US counties and are home to 52 percent of nationwide coronavirus cases and 58 percent of COVID-19 deaths, according to the Washington Post.

Black people account for 13 percent of the country’s entire population.

The declaration comes after the Franklin County Board of Health passed a similar resolution last week on May 14 noting racism and segregation in Franklin County and Ohio has 'exacerbated a health divide resulting in Black Ohioans having lower life expectancy than White Ohioans.'

Black residents are more likely to die prematurely, meaning before the age of 75, compared to other races, the report said.

'Racism has been a pandemic long before the current coronavirus pandemic,' Commissioner Kevin L. Boyce said in a statement Tuesday.

They also have an infant mortality rate that is nearly three times higher than other races and are more likely to be overweight or obese and have adult onset diabetes, according to the Board of Health.

The declaration describes that internal and systemic forms of racism have led to 'persistent discrimination and disparate outcomes' between white people and people of color in the county.

Discrimination has affected people of color in housing, education, employment and criminal justice, and healthcare.

'Nothing is more important than the health and wellbeing of our residents,' Board of Commissioners President John O’Grady said in a statement.
In Franklin County twice as many black people are hospitalized for COVID-19 than other races, even though they account for just 23 percent of the population. Across the country black people are infected with COVID-19 and dying at a disproportionate rate. New York woman Sonia Joy pictured testing for coronavirus antibodies on May 14

'Our community’s success depends on all Franklin County residents being able to share in it, but right now we have a system that is resulting in different outcomes for people based on the color of their skin. That’s not acceptable.'

Board Commissioner Marilyn Brown said that the racism and discrimination seen today stems from centuries of systemic racism with roots in slavery and segregation that prevails today.

'Hundreds of years of systemic racism, from slavery to segregation, redlining to Jim Crow, and discrimination in housing, finance, and education, some of which persists today, have led to predictable inequities,' Commissioner Marilyn Brown said in a statement.
'We won’t solve these things overnight, but it’s important to start by recognizing them and beginning to work purposefully for change.'
The Franklin County Rise Together Blueprint report noted that the county’s African American residents also experience dramatically higher unemployment rates.

Overall the rate is 5.7 percent in the state, but it is 11.1 percent among African Americans. Similarly, they face a high poverty rate of 29.9 percent compared to the county’s general 16.7 percent unemployment rate.

To combat the public health crisis the agency approved of a $3,000 contract to train employees on racism and equity in public health.

A separate resolution will also implement a 'Health and Equity in All Policies Policy' to further address racism within the agency.
‘The direct result of racism’: Covid-19 lays bare how discrimination drives health disparities among Black people

https://www.statnews.com/2020/06/09/systemic-racism-black-health-disparities/?utm_campaign=KHN%3A%20Daily%20Policy%20Report&utm_medium=email&_hsmi=89202253&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-mu1vry1b5U0MDuneps_D1suiiNa8MoDiRIuoKxyJOJoUCN6gqQXh3mVSRCjge1XwdrDHV1VyuUH6TGAbspYXNXwsA&utm_content=89202253&utm_source=hs_email

Meghana Keshavan

Doctors, nurses, and medical professionals have joined countless others across the country to
The disparities have long been documented. Black people are more likely than white people to die from cancer. They are more likely to suffer from chronic pain, diabetes, and depression. Black children report higher levels of stress. Black mothers are more likely to die in childbirth.

Those findings are part of a mountain of research cataloguing the complex and widespread effects that racism has on the health — and the medical care — of Black people in the U.S. Those effects stretch back centuries and take different forms, from discriminatory diagnostics to institutional barriers to care, all of which affect a person’s health.

But while the problem has been studied for decades and improvements have been made, many disparities persist unchecked.

The demonstrations sparked by the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis have prompted a reckoning over racism and police brutality. But, among those in the medical communities, there have also been calls for urgent action to address the role that systemic racism plays in health disparities among Black people.

“Health disparities still exist because nothing has truly changed,” said Ashley McMullen, an assistant professor of internal medicine at University of California, San Francisco.

The Covid-19 pandemic has only made those disparities — and the structural discrimination they are rooted in — all the more apparent. Black Americans have been dying at about 2.4 times the rate of white Americans. As medical anthropologist Clarence Gravlee put it in Scientific American: “If Black people were dying at the same rate as white Americans, at least 13,000 mothers, fathers, daughters, sons and other loved ones would still be alive.”

“People of color right now are more likely to be infected, and we’re more likely to die. What we’re seeing here is the direct result of racism,” said Camara Phyllis Jones, an epidemiologist who recently served as president of the American Public Health Association. “That’s the thing that is slapping us in the face. Actually, it’s lashing us like whips.”

The systemic discrimination that has impacted Black health so inordinately dates back to the first ships carrying enslaved Africans that crossed the Atlantic. The colonial narrative of hierarchy and supremacy exists to this day, Jones said, and has translated, centuries later, into gaping health disparities.

Today, Black people in the U.S. are more likely than white people to live in food deserts, with limited access to fresh fruit or vegetables. They are less likely to be able to access green spaces, and more likely to live in areas without clean water or air. Black children are more likely to grow up in high-poverty areas. Black adults are more frequently exposed to greater occupational hazards, often working in frontline jobs across many fields.

The list goes on. All of these factors shape health, and all are shaped by structural racism.
“The air you breathe, the food you eat, the visual representations of what your future could look like — all are distorted by structural racism.” Jessica Isom, psychiatrist and researcher

“The air you breathe, the food you eat, the visual representations of what your future could look like — all are distorted by structural racism,” said Jessica Isom, a community psychiatrist in Boston who studies health disparities in the Black community. “Other kids have internalized ideas of white supremacy — and that will have deep effects on a Black child’s psyche and body.”

And Black individuals often face baked-in barriers to accessing the resources that could help offset, even in part, the impacts of those effects, such as high-quality health care.

“The fact that the Black body experiences so much more harm, in so many ways, compared to other bodies — it really explains how racism continues to hurt people,” said Roberto Montenegro, a psychiatrist at Seattle Children’s Hospital who studies how perceived discrimination affects mental health.

Studies have shown that long-term discrimination can lead to a disruption in the stress hormone cortisol, leaving people with less biological energy and more fatigue, said Elizabeth Brondolo, a psychologist at St. John’s University who researches the issue. That type of chronic, sustained stress contributes to health conditions like diabetes, obesity, and depression. It can also take a significant toll on mental health.

“Everyone feels stress, but we forget how many more resources some people have to mitigate stress when they’re not a member of a discriminated group,” Brondolo said.

And structural social and economic disadvantages don’t account completely for health disparities, Montenegro said. One study compared childbirth outcomes of wealthy, educated Black women against white women with less income and education and found Black women have worse outcomes than white women with fewer resources.

“This is clear evidence that racism, and its biological and social impact, transcend a lot of the things we say we should work on — like education and income and poverty,” Montenegro said. “Black women experience racism; white women do not.”

The American Academy of Pediatrics last year published a policy statement on how racism is a core cause of health problems in children and adolescents. What wasn’t? Race itself. The paper drove home a crucial point: Racism, not race, affects health, and race shouldn’t be used to explain away disparities caused by racism.

“People think of race as a biological factor in health outcomes, when it is not,” said Jacqueline Dougé, medical director of the Howard County Health Department in Maryland and a co-author of that statement.

But that fact is not always carried over to medical education. In her coursework for medical school, Isom, the psychiatrist and health disparities researcher in Boston, said she was taught
about disease risk factors grouped by age, sex, and race. Students weren’t, however, taught about racism itself. It’s a gap in the curriculum that other researchers and students have pointed out before.

“There’s an explicit lack of mentioning that it’s racism, as opposed to race, that is the root cause of vulnerability to disease,” Isom said.

“We were taught that to be Black was a risk factor for these diseases, without any context — because they think the Black body is flawed,” she added.

McMullen, the UCSF internal medicine professor, said her medical education focused on the most well-known examples of racism and mistreatment in medicine — such as the Tuskegee syphilis experiments on Black men or the story of Henrietta Lacks’ cell line — but did not involve a deeper exploration of why such stark health disparities persist today.

The remnants of racist ideology, too, can be found in certain medical devices. Take the spirometer, a tool that measures lung capacity. There’s often a button on it that “corrects” for race. Black people are measured on a different rubric than white people, based on rationale that dates back to when physicians on plantations used the tool to unjustly rationalize why slaves were fit only for field labor. The same settings are still in use today.

“That button came from medical racism,” Isom said. It’s one of a number of medical tools — from algorithms used in hospital care to tests for kidney function — that have been inaccurately shaped by racism against Black people and that can harm their health.

“Racist practices of medicine lead to worse outcomes.”

Roberto Montenegro, psychiatrist and researcher, Seattle Children's Hospital

“Racist practices of medicine lead to worse outcomes,” Montenegro said.

For that to change, the entire health care field — from medical schools and professional societies to hospitals and medical device manufacturers — needs to work to unravel and address racism within the system.

“I think health care is protected from this broader discourse because the narrative is that we’re all heroes,” said McMullen, who is working on an audio documentary about the issue. “We don’t actually address that the structure being perpetuated in health care is the same dynamic that’s playing out in the criminal justice system.”

While the effect of racism on health is well-established, progress will take time — and has to occur on a societal level, Dougé said. That has to involve a wide range of actions, including improving wages and closing pay gaps, improving access to health insurance, and ensuring more diversity in the health care system so that practitioners can provide culturally competent care.
“There has to be a systemic change,” Dougé said, “because racism — not race — has a profound impact on our health outcomes.”
As state leaders work to address the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is clear that the virus is taking an especially heavy toll on people of color in Connecticut, particularly black residents, who are dying at a far higher rate than anyone else.1

An effective response to the pandemic must be designed to reach as many state residents as possible and tailored to the needs of those who are most vulnerable to the virus.

The following recommendations are aimed at ensuring that the response reaches those who are most at risk.

**MAKE TESTING ACCESSIBLE TO THOSE WHO NEED IT.**

Significantly increasing testing capacity will be key to the state’s ability to move forward and safely reopen. Yet ensuring that everyone who needs a test can get it will require strategies that take into account the barriers that many state residents – particularly people of color – face.

This includes making sure testing sites are accessible to those who don’t have cars – which is far more common among black and Hispanic state residents than their white counterparts.2 The state can also make testing more accessible by using community health centers as testing sites. Many are situated in communities of need, have developed rapport with the local neighborhood, and serve many uninsured patients.

Another strategy that could be employed now is creating standard criteria statewide about who should receive priority to be tested. This would ensure clarity for the public and health care providers, as well as enable the state to ensure that those at highest-risk receive priority for testing while capacity is limited. As an example, Michigan recently expanded testing criteria to any essential worker still reporting to work in person, with a doctor’s order.3 Patients with underlying conditions, with symptoms, are also included in Michigan’s testing priority criteria.4 These criteria are more likely to reach people of color who are overrepresented in low-wage, essential jobs, and who are more likely to have comorbidities.
TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SKILLS OF COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS.

Community health workers are trusted members of their communities who serve as a bridge between individuals and the clinical care system. They are especially valuable in communities that have barriers to being healthy and to accessing health care.

In this pandemic, they are a critical workforce: Community health workers know about the needs and concerns in their communities and are skilled in connecting people to resources. Because they already have many strong relationships, they are ideal messengers to ensure people have the right information, whether about social distancing, when to seek medical care, or how to get assistance meeting basic needs.

As officials ramp up contact tracing to identify people who might have been exposed to the virus, community health workers should top their list of potential tracers.

Community health workers’ skills also make them well-suited to assist in other ways, including ensuring patients receive follow-up care and providing support for families in which someone has COVID-19.

In addition, because community health workers are usually experts in what’s happening in their neighborhoods, those leading response and recovery efforts would be wise to listen to their on-the-ground experience as they plan the response and recovery efforts and seek to determine what is and isn’t effective.

TO DO

- Ensure rides are available to reach drive-through test sites and publicize their availability.
- Encourage or require test sites to accommodate patients who arrive on foot.
- Prioritize new test sites in accessible locations within neighborhoods, such as community health centers.
- Identify which groups should receive priority for tests and publicize the priorities.

- Include community health workers in contact tracing work.
- Encourage the use of community health workers to support patients and families. Consider allowing reimbursement through Medicaid.
- Include community health workers in COVID-19 response and recovery planning work.
- Work with community health workers to develop and deliver important messaging about the pandemic, resources, and recovery efforts.
PROVIDE SUPPORTS FOR PEOPLE WHO NEED TO ISOLATE.

Testing and contact tracing will be key to controlling the spread of the virus – but it will be equally important to ensure that people are able to isolate themselves if they test positive. For many people, particularly in low-income communities and communities of color, isolating at home is untenable, whether because family members are at high-risk for complications of COVID-19 or because they do not have the space to avoid contact with others in the household. Others might require more limited assistance, such as help getting food or other basic needs.

The state can make a significant difference by ensuring the availability of hotel rooms, dorm rooms, or other places for people to isolate away from home voluntarily, as well as assistance securing meals and other necessities for those who are isolating at home and cannot go out. This strategy is happening elsewhere. Chicago, for example, secured close to 2,000 hotel rooms for people who needed to isolate but could not safely do so in their homes.6

The state should also consider how to support low-wage employees who have exhausted the paid leave support provided by the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act prior to December 31, 2020, or did not receive the support provided by the Families First Act.

PROVIDE CLEAR COMMUNICATION AND REPORT MORE RACE AND ETHNICITY DATA.

Clear communication is critical to instilling confidence, ensuring everyone is on the same page – and to monitoring whether services are being delivered equitably. This includes continuing to report data on race and ethnicity, as well as expanding what data the state currently provides. We know from data already being reported that black and Hispanic state residents are disproportionately getting COVID-19 and black residents are dying from it at significantly higher rates than others. It would be valuable to know the racial and ethnic makeup of all who have been tested, not just those who test positive, to determine if more work needs to be done to ensure certain groups are able to get tested.

Similarly, if the state were to establish specific criteria for who receives priority to be tested, communicating it regularly would go a long way to helping people understand whether they should seek a test or not.

In addition to increased, clear communication, it is important to find ways to get timely feedback on what is and isn’t working.

TO DO
• Secure dorm rooms and hotel rooms for people who need to isolate away from home. If the demand is overwhelming, consider criteria to determine who receives priority.
• Continue to pursue plans to provide food delivery to those who must isolate because of COVID-19 exposure and plans to allow SNAP beneficiaries to order groceries online.

TO DO
• Report on the racial and ethnic breakdown of the full population being tested, not just those who test positive.
• Communicate clearly and transparently about testing capacity and limitations, as well as criteria for who can get a test.
• Create a way to collect feedback from people who have concerns about testing or treatment.
More broadly, state leaders must make all decisions with a lens of fairness—one that recognizes that one-size-fits-all solutions often leave significant gaps, particularly for those who are already disadvantaged. This includes considering the unintended consequences of every decision, what additional barriers certain groups will face and how to remove them, and how to determine if any decision produces a disparate impact.

As state leaders work to fight the pandemic and consider steps to reopen, it is critical that they do so in a way that reduces, rather than widens, already significant racial and ethnic health disparities. These steps will benefit all Connecticut residents by making this a safer, healthier state.
Connecticut, by design, is one of the most segregated states in the country. Hundreds of years of discriminatory governmental housing and land use policies and practices, banking policies and practices, economic development policies and practices as well as gentrification and taxation policies have brought us to our current situation. Today, Connecticut faces an increasingly dire housing affordability crisis. Fifty percent of renters statewide spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing, a benchmark conventionally used to indicate that a tenant is cost-burdened.

This brief discusses two forms of affordable housing—naturally occurring affordable housing, also described as lower-cost housing, and subsidized housing, which includes public housing, project based Section 8 housing, the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) housing, and the Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program. Both are increasingly difficult to find and keep. The high cost of constructing new affordable housing, inflated because of artificial constraints on such development, means that Connecticut’s affordable housing stock cannot expand nearly as quickly and as necessary. At the same time, underfunding existing affordable housing, poor housing conditions and the loss of subsidies for existing units squeeze the supply of affordable housing on the other end.

Affordable housing was not a priority pre-pandemic

The federal and state government has disinvested in affordable housing for decades, and the development and preservation of affordable housing has not been a priority in Connecticut. As the majority of affordable housing exists in Connecticut’s urban centers, accelerated investment in these communities is essential to ensure that every community is resourced to provide access to quality education, employment, and housing. Unfortunately, this has not been the practice. Too often, the desire to grow the footprint in which affordable housing is found has been coupled with further disinvestment in urban centers.

Exclusionary zoning restricts the development of affordable housing

Connecticut’s problems with affordable housing are not just about how much there is, but also where low- and middle-income families can afford to live. Exclusionary zoning policies—which include minimum lot size requirements, parking requirements, density requirements, and bans on multifamily housing—make it impossible or economically prohibitive to build units financially accessible to low- and middle-income people. These policies enable Connecticut’s wealthier towns to block access to low-income families and people of color.

Connecticut’s municipalities have a long history of using zoning requirements as a legal mechanism to exclude people of color. This problem persists today. Due to Connecticut’s long-standing tradition of local control, towns have free authority to set their own zoning regulations with minimal oversight from the State. Meanwhile, municipal leadership and residents of wealthy suburbs continue to resist the development of more affordable forms of multi-family housing via superficially “neutral” appeals for green lawns, quiet streets, and preservation of neighborhood character. These practices only further contribute to the segregation of Connecticut’s towns and the dire need for more affordable housing.
Deteriorating housing conditions intensify Connecticut’s affordability crisis

The inadequate funding of affordable housing is compounded by landlords seeking to charge a naturally occurring affordable rent but who then lack the resources to invest in their properties. Moreover, insufficient code inspection leads to poor housing conditions. This causes units to deteriorate to the point that they are no longer safe to live in. In Connecticut’s cities, there are deeply troubling examples of this problem, including the relocation of more than 140 families from three subsidized apartment buildings in Hartford’s North End, and a fatal fire in a New Haven apartment building that highlighted the deadly consequences of failing to enforce housing code. By restricting the supply of affordable housing, the continued deterioration and destruction of aging lower-cost and subsidized housing intensifies Connecticut’s affordability crisis.

Severe underfunding of subsidized housing further limits affordability

Severe underfunding of subsidized housing at all levels of government limits availability of subsidized units or vouchers. At the same time, stagnant wages and increasing economic inequality make these subsidies even more crucial. While increasing Connecticut’s housing stock is absolutely necessary to hold down rent increases for those with incomes around the area median income (AMI), low-income and extremely-low-income (ELI) families also desperately need increased rental subsidies to survive. Current funding at both the state and federal level only allow for a fraction of eligible households to receive assistance. Federal estimates indicate that only one in four income-eligible families receives housing subsidy.

Limited affordable housing impacts opportunities, particularly for Black and Latinx children

Due to exclusionary zoning, the location of naturally occurring and subsidized affordable housing concentrates the state’s poorest Black and Latinx residents in lower-resourced and segregated neighborhoods. Seventy-three percent of Black and Latinx residents live in low and very low opportunity areas, compared with 26 percent of white residents and 36 percent of Asian residents.

Approximately half of the state’s Black and Latinx residents live in the two percent of land categorized by the state as “very low opportunity.” Only nine percent of white residents live in the same neighborhoods. This statistic is indeed staggering. However, it is important to be clear about what this really means.

It is true that the terms “low opportunity” area and “high opportunity” area have been widely used and accepted within the housing lexicon. Unfortunately, these terms misrepresent what these communities are and how they became that way. The more accurate reflection of a so-called high opportunity area is that it is wealthier by design and, as a result, higher resourced. The more accurate reflection of a so-called low opportunity area is that it is poorer by design and, as a result, not only lower resourced but has also been historically denied resources.
Nowhere is this inequality more visible than in education. Typically, Connecticut’s students attend school in the neighborhood they live in, leading to high rates of school segregation for Black and Latinx students. This racial segregation is closely linked with economic segregation, concentrating low-income children of color in schools with limited opportunity. The experience of attending such a school directly impacts academic achievement due to the lack of resources available for students and increased exposure to trauma and hardship. Thus, the equitable investment in these communities is essential to ensure that every community is resourced fairly. Without the revitalization of urban centers and more opportunities for the residents of these communities, we are yet again dictating housing choices for people of color. Said another way, true housing equity is about the option to live in the community one chooses.

Statewide reform of land-use controls will increase development of affordable housing

In addition to the jobs they create (the construction of 100 units creates 120 jobs), the development of affordable housing can help in two ways. First, the creation of new, market-rate housing is proven to aid in driving down housing costs across municipalities. This is particularly important for renters at or just below the AMI. Second, reform of land-use will make it easier to build subsidized and deeply-affordable housing units for renters earning substantially less than the AMI and modest, starter homes that enable families to begin to build wealth. However, to equitably develop more affordable housing, statewide reform of land-use controls is critical. Connecticut Voices for Children supports the policy recommendations made by Open Communities Alliance, Partnership for Strong Communities, Housing and Community Economic Development Clinics of the Jerome N. Frank Legal Services Organization at Yale Law School (LSO), Desegregate Connecticut, and Elm City Communities.

First, as recommended by all the aforementioned organizations, the Connecticut General Assembly should change zoning statutes by removing all references to maintaining the “character” of a neighborhood. Doing so begins the process of reversing harmful racist policies.

Second, as recommended by LSO and Elm City Communities, Connecticut should follow the lead of both Oregon and California—two states that have reformed their zoning regulations. In 2017, Oregon required municipalities to allow for the construction of one accessory dwelling unit (ADU) per single family dwelling unit. In 2019, California reformed its earlier law allowing the construction of ADUs to further ease the process. The Connecticut General Assembly should pass similar legislation to allow for the construction of ADUs and to address other forms of exclusionary zoning. These practices will allow for the development of more housing units in Connecticut, a practice proven to aid in driving down housing costs. Related to this and as recommended by Elm City Communities, the Connecticut General Assembly should amend zoning statute to require cities and towns to permit starter homes and multi family homes by right as well as eliminate single family zoning, something other states have also done.

Third, as recommended by Desegregate Connecticut and Open Communities Alliance, the Connecticut General Assembly should strengthen the authority of Conn. Gen. Stat. § 8-30g, which mandates municipalities have at least 10 percent affordable housing stock and allows affordable housing developers to override exclusionary zoning policies in towns that have not met their quota. Related to this and as recommended by Elm City Communities and Desegregate Connecticut, the Connecticut General Assembly should incentivize the development of “missing middle housing” and the first-time homeownership from underrepresented groups.
Lastly, the Connecticut General Assembly should remove jurisdictional authority for public housing authorities (PHAs), a policy spearheaded by Elm City Communities and Open Communities Alliance. Currently, Connecticut PHAs, which develop and maintain publicly-owned subsidized housing and have some authority to administer Housing Choice Vouchers, operate within municipalities. (A handful of PHAs in Connecticut also have the ability to develop affordable housing.) Expanding their authority to include up to 30 miles beyond municipal boundaries would encourage voucher usage across the state, ensure affordable housing is located and maintained across the state, and, for those PHAs that have the ability, aid in the development of deeply affordable housing for residents that need it.  

**Requiring uniformity in housing codes will improve deteriorating conditions**

While municipalities are primarily responsible for enforcing housing codes, the State can require some level of uniformity for the housing code in each municipality. The Connecticut General Assembly should require more uniformity in municipal housing code, as recommended by New Haven Legal Assistance Association. The state should require inspections to be done with a specific process and set of outcomes, mandate more regular inspections, and improve training for housing inspectors. In addition, the state should implement stringent financial penalties for landlords who fail to improve living conditions.

Connecticut’s local governments have a responsibility to preserve existing affordable housing and communities in which housing exists, and they can improve housing conditions by creating and enforcing the housing code. As officials from New Haven’s Livable Cities Initiative (LCI), the city’s anti-blight agency, have noted, following through on increased inspections and improving licensing policies requires hiring more inspectors, prioritizing which properties to inspect based on past performance in inspections, developing a more effective way to access records electronically, and ensuring tenants know how to contact LCI.

Best practice zoning codes for municipalities include increasing allowed density, increasing allowed height, reducing parking minimums, requiring a certain portion of newly constructed units to be affordable, and of course, ending zoning exclusively for single family homes. However, Connecticut municipalities can do more than change local zoning codes; they can also strengthen housing discrimination protections and permit the construction of more housing of all types, affordable and market-rate. The most important action for the state and municipal governments is to invest in urban communities in ways that support revitalization without displacement and gentrification.

Even with these changes, more direct action to prevent rent increases and aid low-income residents is necessary. Increased funding for subsidized housing is critical. While some of this funding should come from the federal government, Connecticut’s affordability crisis requires immediate state action.

**Additional enclosures to learn about housing affordability in Connecticut:**

- “Housing Data Profiles” by Partnership for Strong Communities provides additional data on Connecticut’s housing stock and costs.
- “Map of Distribution of People of Color and Opportunity in Connecticut” by Open Communities Alliance provides a visual representation of OCA’s opportunity mapping and the density of people of color who live in each opportunity zone.
- “Inclusive CT” by Elm City Communities provides a framework for how Connecticut can undo its history of racist housing policies.
- The “12 Point Plan for an Inclusive CT” by Elm City Communities provides 12 policy reforms that will help to increase affordable housing access for families in Connecticut.
Housing Data Profiles 2018

Population, Age, & Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>3,593,222</td>
<td>3,405,565</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households</td>
<td>1,352,583</td>
<td>1,301,670</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average household size</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>-3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average family size</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Median age for those living in Connecticut is 40.4 years old, nearly 3 years older than the U.S. median age of 37.6.

Race and Ethnicity: Connecticut

- Hispanic or Latino (of any race) 526,508 15%
- White 2,487,119 69%
- Black or African American 346,206 10%
- American Indian and Alaska Native 4,856 0%
- Asian 149,368 4%
- Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander 746 0%
- Other/Multi-Race 78,419 2%

Source: 2011-15 American Community Survey

Household Income

Connecticut’s annual median household income in 2015 was $70,331. Among Connecticut’s municipalities, median household income ranges from a high of $217,171 in Weston to a low of $30,630 in Hartford.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>$70,331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfield County</td>
<td>$84,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartford County</td>
<td>$66,395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Litchfield County</td>
<td>$72,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middlesex County</td>
<td>$79,893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Haven County</td>
<td>$61,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New London County</td>
<td>$66,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolland County</td>
<td>$79,626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windham County</td>
<td>$59,392</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2011-15 American Community Survey

Aging of the Population

Most of Connecticut’s municipalities - 116 of 169 - are projected to see a drop in their school-age population between 2020 and 2030. In Connecticut, the projected decrease is 2%. Meanwhile the 65+ population for Connecticut is projected to increase by 12%.
Connecticut saw its number of housing units increase by 7% from 2000 to 2015. Renters live in 30% of Connecticut’s housing stock.

In Connecticut, 66% of occupied homes are single-family, 33% are multifamily (2+ units in structure), and 1% are mobile homes. Renters live in 79% of Connecticut’s 445,850 multifamily homes, and owners occupy 90% of its 896,611 single-family homes.

A majority of homes in CT have 3 or more bedrooms, with 37% having 3 bedrooms and 22% having 4 or more. 42% of the homes in the state have 2 or fewer bedrooms. Towns and cities that have larger homes with more bedrooms offer fewer housing options for younger workers or downsizing Baby Boomers.
Housing Costs for Owners and Renters

Affordability

Across CT, 50% of renters and 32% of owners spend more than 30% of their income on housing. Households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing may have little left over for necessities such as transportation, food, health care, etc.

Home Value

The value of homes in Connecticut has risen significantly over the last 15 years, putting home ownership out of reach for many middle-class households. In Connecticut, 42% of homes were valued under $150,000 in 2000, compared to 15% now. The median home value in Connecticut is now $270,500, an increase of 68% since 2000.

Self-Reported Value of Owner-Occupied Homes: Connecticut


# Units % Total
Owner-Occupied
Spending <30% 607,903 45%
Spending >=30% 292,926 22%
Not computed 5,398 0%
Renter Occupied
Spending <30% 195,062 14%
Spending >=30% 222,020 16%
Not computed 29,274 2%
Source: 2011-15 American Community Survey

Housing Costs as a % of Household Income: Connecticut

Median Income
Households with a Mortgage
Median Income: $102,774
Median Monthly Owner Costs: $2,067

Households w/out a Mortgage
Median Income: $62,953
Median Monthly Owner Costs: $833

Renter Households: Connecticut

Median Gross Rent = $1,075
35% of income for rent.
65% of income for all other expenses.

Owner Households: Connecticut

The average homeowner household in Connecticut has a median income of $92,047.

Gross Rent

According to 2011-15 American Community Survey data, 54% of Connecticut's 446,356 rental units have a gross rent over $1,000 per month and 20% have a gross rent under $750 per month.

Rental Units by Gross Rent: Connecticut

Source: 2011-2015 American Community Survey

In Connecticut, incomes among those who own their homes tend to be much higher than incomes for renter households. However, incomes for owners who no longer pay a mortgage also tend to be lower than for those paying a mortgage, as those no longer paying a mortgage may be retired and living on fixed incomes.

Source: 2011-2015 American Community Survey

PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES
Housing Wage

2017 Housing Wage: Connecticut

$24.72

Each year, the National Low Income Housing Coalition calculates the “housing wage,” the hourly wage needed for a household to afford a typical 2-bedroom apartment in metro areas throughout the United States.

Connecticut’s housing costs are typically high, ranking #8 in 2017 with a housing wage of $24.72.

Building Permits

Connecticut saw a sharp decline in building permits following the crash of the housing market in the mid-2000s. As the housing market slowly recovers, statewide building permits have increased by small amounts since 2011, with permits for multifamily units at levels not seen for a decade. Building permits issued, however, remain well below the levels seen in the 1980s and 1990s.

Affordable Housing Appeals List

Each year the CT Department Of Housing surveys municipalities in the state to determine the number of affordable units each has. The data is compiled for the Affordable Housing Appeals List. The following housing units are counted as affordable in Connecticut in 2016:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assisted Units Counted in 2016 Appeals List: Connecticut</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90,687 Governmental Assisted Units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42,658 Tenant Rental Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26,006 CHFA/USDA Mortgages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ 5,647 Deed Restricted Units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164,998 Total Assisted Units</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Calculation of % of Total Units Assisted: Connecticut

164,998 ÷ 1,487,891 = 11.1%

Total Assisted Units

Total Units, 2010 Census

Units Assisted

Percentage Change in Real Estate Property Values:

Real Property Grand List Values, 2008-16: Connecticut

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Real Property 2008</th>
<th>Total Real Property 2016</th>
<th>% Change, 2008-16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>$360,546,710,703</td>
<td>$326,080,205,562</td>
<td>-10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Connecticut housing prices declined precipitously after the 2008 financial crisis and have not rebounded to pre-crisis levels, particularly in municipalities - 113 of 169 - where housing stock is dominated by single-family homes. Across the state, 152 municipalities have seen either no change in real property grand lists, or declines, forcing most to raise mill rates, reduce services, or both.

Source: CT Office of Policy and Management

Housing Data Profiles are produced by the Partnership for Strong Communities.

For more details about the information presented or to use any of the graphics in the Housing Data Profiles, please contact: Charles Patton, Senior Policy Analyst, charles@pschousing.org.

PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES

February 2018
Data Sources & Notes

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⇒ Populations, Age, & Race
  DP-1 - Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000, Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data
  DP02 - Selected Social Characteristics In The United States, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
  DP05 - ACS Demographic And Housing Estimates, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

⇒ Note: Due to rounding throughout the profile, some results may not appear to correspond with the values in tables, charts and text.

⇒ Age & Income
  • Median Household Income
    B25119 - Median Household Income The Past 12 Months (in 2015 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) By Tenure, Universe:
    Occupied Housing Units More Information, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Note: Some
towns were excluded from the 2011-2015 American Community Survey because their margin of error was too large.
    In these cases, data from the 2010-2014 American Community Survey was used instead.

⇒ Aging of Population

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⇒ Tenure, Units in Structure, Year Built, Bedrooms
  DP04 - Selected Housing Characteristics, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

⇒ Tenure note: Universe is all housing units. Total housing stock includes vacant units.

⇒ Units in Structure notes: Multifamily includes all units with 2+ units in structure. Does not include boats, RVs, vans, etc.
  Universe is occupied housing units (does not include vacant units).

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⇒ Affordability
  DP04 - Selected Housing Characteristics, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Note: Percent
  income spent on housing costs is not calculated for some households, noted in chart as “Not computed.”

⇒ Home Value
  B25075 - Value, Universe: Owner-occupied housing units, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

⇒ Gross Rent
  DP04 - Selected Housing Characteristics, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

⇒ Housing Costs & Income
  • Median Household Income by Tenure
    B25119 - Median Household Income The Past 12 Months (in 2015 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) By Tenure, Universe:
    Occupied housing units, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

  • Median Household Income for Owner-Occupied Households by Mortgage Status
    B25099 - Mortgage Status By Median Household Income The Past 12 Months (in 2015 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars),
    Universe: Owner-occupied housing units, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

  • Median Monthly Housing Costs by Mortgage Status, Median Gross Rent
    DP04 - Selected Housing Characteristics, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Note: Median
    Gross Rent data suppressed for some geographies by Census Bureau, reasons for suppression may vary.

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⇒ Housing Wage
  Out of Reach 2017, 2-Bedroom Housing Wage, National Low Income Housing Coalition

⇒ Grand Lists
  Total Grand Lists by Town, 2008 and 2014, CT Office of Policy and Management

⇒ Building Permits
  of Economic and Community Development

⇒ Affordable Housing Appeals List
  2016 Affordable Housing Appeals List, CT Dept. of Housing
Inclusive CT

CT remains one of the most segregated states in the country due to the combined impact of hundreds of years of discriminatory governmental housing policy, banking practices and local land use decisions that are upheld today by present-day zoning practices, land use decisions, developer practices, gentrification, other exclusionary practices and taxation policy. The country is at a pivotal moment of reckoning around historical and current day racial inequities and poised to take action. What follows in this moment may be incremental or transformational. These ideas are offered as a means to create long-lasting and meaningful reform.

No longer can we accept the disproportional siting of affordable housing, the racial isolation in neighborhoods and communities, the racial isolation in our schools, the disparity in resources between communities and the impact on opportunities for all CT residents. As we address racism in policing, racial inequities in health outcomes and educational outcomes, we must recognize and address the intersections with housing policy.

The housing patterns that we see today are the result of a long history of racist policy. We must take intentional actions to reverse these patterns. **CT zoning statutes must be revised to remove all references to maintaining the “character” of the neighborhood.** Further, in order to enact anti-racist housing policy in CT, we call for:

- Increase access to homeownership in all communities
- Increase access to affordable rental opportunities in all communities
- Increase investment in under resourced communities while protecting against gentrification and displacement
- Strengthen housing discrimination protections
- Eliminate racial imbalance in school districts
- Enact policing reforms that address policing strategies that make communities welcoming to some and exclusive to others

Recommended reforms include:

- Incentivize and support the development of the “missing middle housing” as defined by Opticos Design (www.opticosdesign.com) as the housing for middle income families that is missing in communities. Missing Middle Housing is a transformative concept that highlights the need for diverse, affordable housing choices in sustainable, walkable places.
- Substantially increase the funding for first-time homebuyers and homebuyers from underrepresented groups in communities to purchase homes. Funding should support home buyer education, down payment assistance and favorable mortgage terms.
- Amend zoning statutes to require CT cities and towns to permit starter homes by right in

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(203) 498-8800 • TTD (203) 497-8343 • www.elmcitycommunities.org
every community.

- Amend zoning statute to require CT cities and towns to permit multi family homes by right. Eliminate single family zoning as has been done in other states.
- Implement Fair Share requirements that mandate every town to provide its fair share of affordable housing.
- Amend zoning statutes to require CT cities and towns to permit accessory dwelling units.
- As the major sources of subsidy that creates true affordability, public housing authorities that have the capacity to do development and place federal subsidy must be allowed to develop regionally. CT must remove restrictions on jurisdictional authority for PHAs.
- CT must strengthen housing discrimination protections to protect renters from landlords who refuse to rent to lower income families.
- Priority must be given to the preservation of existing affordable housing and communities in which housing exists. Rooting out slum landlords, addressing housing quality issues and revamped housing code should be coupled with support for small private landlords in owner occupied multi-families to allow their investment in their properties.
- CT must prioritize investment in urban communities to support revitalization without gentrification and displacement.
- Post-COVID housing market stabilization is required through eviction prevention and rent relief investment.
- Housing policy changes will impact school districts. CT must strengthen the racial imbalance statute that has allowed jurisdictions to maintain racially segregated schools within their districts for years.
- Enact policing reforms such that policing is not used to create community access for some and exclusion for those determined to be “outsiders”.

1 Inclusive CT is an initiative of the Elm City Communities/Housing Authority of the City of New Haven. Inclusive CT recognizes that housing opportunity is limited by policy and ideas that restrict access to well-resourced communities. These policies and ideas are rooted in racism and discrimination. In our role as a housing developer and manager, we must create pathways for local, state and federal change that eliminates the racial isolation in CT communities.

ECC/HANH provides affordable housing services for over 6,000 families. ECC/HANH integrates progressive housing policy, community development and social service provision in ways that create communities of opportunity for low-income residents in the City of New Haven. ECC/HANH’s vision is communities where every resident has a safe and decent home that they can afford and opportunities to fulfill their goals.
Incentivize "missing middle housing"

Incentivize and support the development of "missing" housing for middle income families.

Permit starter homes

Require amendments to local zoning codes to permit starter homes by right, end large lot single family exclusive zoning.

Implement fair share

Implement Fair Share legislation to require cities and towns to provide its fair share of affordable housing.

First time homebuyer

Substantially increase funding for first time homebuyers and homebuyers from demographic groups that are underrepresented in given communities.

Permit multifamily

Require local zoning codes in CT cities and towns to allow multifamily by right.

Permit accessory dwelling units

Require local zoning to allow accessory dwelling units on permissible lots to increase supply of affordable housing.
Mailing lists of group chats are helpful. You can chat with parents going through home school the first time, share stories, get tips. Times may be hard but you don’t have to go through it alone.

Racial imbalance in schools
Strengthen the racial imbalance statute that has allowed communities to maintain racially segregated schools

Expand housing authority jurisdiction
Allow PHAs with development experience and federal subsidy to develop housing regionally

Prevent gentrification
Invest in urban communities to support revitalization without displacement and gentrification

Preservation of affordable housing
Prioritize investment in existing affordable housing, regulation of slum landlords and support for owner-occupied, multi-family owners

Post COVID-19 housing market stabilization
Stabilize the market through eviction prevention, mortgage and rent relief efforts

Fair housing protections
Strengthen the protections for renters from landlord discrimination due to low income status

Racial imbalance in schools
Strengthen the racial imbalance statute that has allowed communities to maintain racially segregated schools
Part 2: Connecticut’s Eviction Crisis Predates the Covid-19 Pandemic, and It Will Only Intensify in the Pandemic’s Aftermath Unless the State Acts
The COVID-19 pandemic will exacerbate already existing housing inequalities that disproportionately burden low-income families and people of color. In 2018, Connecticut had the ninth highest housing costs, with only 38 affordable rental units per 100 extremely low-income households. The affordability threshold is determined where a tenant(s) should pay no more than 30 percent of their gross monthly income towards rent.

The eviction crisis will only intensify in the pandemic's aftermath
Evictions are often a consequence of challenges around housing affordability, and the rates of eviction filings will dramatically increase without substantive changes to the state’s response. Due to COVID-19, Connecticut is facing the most dire unemployment crisis since the Great Depression. Since the pandemic began, nearly 600,000 people across the state have filed for unemployment, and the unemployment rate has surged from 3.9 percent in March 2020 to 18 percent (as of the end of April 2020).

The reported number of residents unable to pay rent has more than quadrupled from five percent to 22 percent from April 2020 to June 2020. Further, 36 percent of Connecticut residents have little to no confidence in their ability to pay next month’s rent. Of that 36 percent, 60 percent are people of color. Therefore, Governor Lamont’s administration predicts that eviction rates could more than triple between the months of July 2020 through December 2020, from the annual average of 4 percent to around 13 percent.

While Connecticut has had a strong housing policy response to the pandemic thus far, including setting aside funds for rental assistance, more needs to be done to prevent eviction. Without more money, and resources and safety nets in the hands of those who need it, an eviction crisis is inevitable after the moratorium on evictions expires on August 22, 2020.

Several Connecticut cities are ranked as top evicting areas: approximately 6 percent of renters in Waterbury and Hartford experience eviction annually, followed by 5 percent in Bridgeport, and 4 percent in New Haven. In contrast, approximately 2.4 percent of renters experience eviction nationally.
Evictions have a disparate impact on Black women whose wages or public benefits are insufficient to sustain housing costs due to Connecticut’s affordability crisis. One in five Black women report they have faced an eviction, compared with 1 in 12 Latinx women, and 1 in 15 white women. Research from Milwaukee indicated that while Black women make up just 13 percent of tenants, they suffer 40 percent of evictions. Having children creates further challenges—in fact, it is found to triple the likelihood of receiving an eviction notice due to landlords perceived concerns about property damage, attracting police or Child Protective Services, or testing positive for lead.

Low wages are a significant reason Black women face higher rates of eviction. Repeated racial oppression of Black people, coupled with the intersection of race and gender bias, leads to Black women facing systematically higher unemployment rates, fewer job opportunities, lower pay, worse benefits, and more job instability. However, mass incarceration of Black men worsens the problem. Black people, and disproportionately Black men, are incarcerated at a rate five times that of white people. Post-incarceration, Black men struggle to find steady employment, so they turn to the informal economy. As a result, Black women are also more likely to have leases in their name. These structural obstacles due to racism all lead to Black women disproportionately targeted with eviction notices. As Matthew Desmond, author of the 2017 book Evicted, noted, “in poor Black neighborhoods, eviction is to women what incarceration is to men: a typical but severely consequential occurrence contributing to the reproduction of urban poverty.”

Eviction has devastating long-term consequences for families and children

The consequences of being evicted for non-payment are well-documented in Connecticut. In just under a month, a landlord can file a notice to quit—an official written notice of the pending eviction—process the eviction, and send a marshall to remove the tenant’s belongings. This process has thoroughly researched implications on well-being.

Eviction forces a family to leave their home, often having long-term traumatizing psychological and academic consequences for children and parents. People who are evicted often lose their possessions; when a marshal comes to remove a family’s belongings, these belongings are either placed out on the street or put in storage, where they can only be reclaimed after paying a fee. Mothers who experience eviction are more likely to suffer from depression, report worse health for themselves and their children, and increased financial hardships.

Once a tenant has an eviction on their record, tenant screening services mark the individual with a “Scarlet E” where it becomes nearly impossible to find safe, quality housing. Tenant names appear on so-called “black-lists;” thus, landlords deny tenant applications and tenants struggle to access subsidized housing. Hence, previously evicted tenants, who are often the most disenfranchised, are punished and pushed to the bottom of the rental market where they are forced to accept substandard housing in neighborhoods that may not meet their families’ basic needs.

Connecticut should be proactive to prevent evictions in the pandemic’s aftermath

Connecticut Voices for Children supports the efforts of the Connecticut Cancel Rent Now coalition that is working to cancel rent obligations for the duration of the pandemic. Connecticut should halt rent obligations starting April 1, 2020, and continue that moratorium until 45 days after the declared state of emergency has resolved; Connecticut should then set aside funds for landlords to recover lost rental income. The State has set aside some funds to aid landlords on behalf of unemployed tenants and to prevent evictions. However, in order to cancel the rent obligations of everyone affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, a much larger and more sustained investment is critical.
Connecticut should expand tenant protections by establishing a legal right to counsel

Beyond financial assistance, Connecticut should establish a right to counsel. As recommended by the Housing and Community Economic Development Clinics of the Jerome N. Frank Legal Services Organization at Yale Law School (LSO), this action can help prevent evictions and lessen their consequences. It is crucial to shift the patterns of unequal legal representation between landlords and tenants throughout the entire eviction process, which includes mediation and court proceedings. While approximately 90 percent of landlords have legal representation; most tenants do not. Numerous studies have shown that access to legal representation improves outcomes for tenants. Attorneys can help a client find alternative housing, or negotiate payment plans to avoid the eviction altogether. Research done in Baltimore, after the city implemented right to counsel, found that each dollar the city spent on providing free legal representation reduced future spending by at least $3.06. These savings are realized through preventing the disruptive effects of eviction and subsequent social safety net response.

While federal law does not require representation for individuals involved in civil cases, such as eviction, several U.S. municipalities—including Baltimore, New York City, and San Francisco—have begun to explore and implement the idea. Further, the 2016 Connecticut General Assembly Task Force to Improve Access to Legal Counsel in Civil Matters recommended establishing a right to counsel for defense of residential evictions, arguing that the “fiscal and social cost of likely injustice significantly outweighs the fiscal cost of civil counsel.” And in 2019, Senator Mae Flexer proposed legislation to provide legal counsel to tenants earning less than fifty thousand dollars per year. Moving forward, Connecticut legislators should prioritize these suggestions to shift the balance of power between landlords with legal representation and tenants without.

Connecticut should take steps to remove the “Scarlet E” from renters

Having an eviction on one’s record adds an additional hurdle for a family seeking safe and stable housing. Municipalities have used several methods to limit the practice. In 2019, the city of Minneapolis, Minnesota passed an ordinance creating a reformed screening method that excludes criminal background, rental history, and credit score. In that same year, the city of Portland, Oregon set a similar screening criterion. At the state level, California enacted legislation in 2017 that removes tenants from the so-called “blacklists” if their eviction case is dismissed, by keeping any records of an eviction lawsuit sealed on the individual’s record. And in Massachusetts’ last legislative session, legislators introduced a bill to seal all eviction records after three years. While Massachusetts’ legislative session ended early due to COVID-19 concerns, the bill will likely return. Connecticut should consider some combination of these approaches to combat the unjust practice of having the “Scarlet E.”

Additional enclosures to learn about eviction in Connecticut:

- “Understanding Eviction in Connecticut” by the Princeton University Eviction Lab provides additional data about eviction in Connecticut.
UNDERSTANDING EVICTION IN

CONNECTICUT

A presentation generated by The Eviction Lab at Princeton University

Data extracted on 2019-01-17

For further information, visit evictionlab.org
- Number of evictions per day: 37.6
- Eviction Rate: 3.04%

* An eviction rate is the number of evictions per 100 renter-occupied households

- Eviction/filing rate is too low.
- Eviction/filing rate in the top 1%.

Please see our FAQ section to better these issues https://evictionlab.org/help-faq/
COMPARISON OF EVICTION RATES OVER TIME

Connecticut

United States

1 Connecticut

2 United States
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connecticut</th>
<th>2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evictions</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Eviction Filings</td>
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</table>

### Census Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>% Renter-Occupied Households</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poverty Rate</td>
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<td>Median Gross Rent</td>
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<td>Median Household Income</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Races</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
Facts About Eviction

What is an eviction?
An eviction happens when a landlord expels people from property they own. Evictions are landlord-initiated involuntary moves that happen to renters, whereas foreclosures are involuntary moves that happen to homeowners when a bank or other lending agency repossesses a home.

Why do people get evicted?
Most evictions happen because renters cannot or do not pay their rent. Landlords can evict renters for a number of other reasons, too, including taking on boarders, damaging property, causing a disturbance, or breaking the law. In most American cities and towns, landlords can evict renters even if they have not missed a rent payment or otherwise violated their lease agreement; these are called “no fault” evictions.

What is the relationship between the affordable housing crisis and the eviction epidemic?
Today, most poor renting families spend at least half of their income on housing costs, with one in four of those families spending over 70 percent of their income just on rent and utilities. Incomes for Americans of modest means have flatlined while housing costs have soared. Only one in four families who qualifies for affordable housing programs gets any kind of help. Under those conditions, it has become harder for low-income families to keep up with rent and utility costs, and a growing number are living one misstep or emergency away from eviction.

What is the eviction process like?
Landlords initiate the process, and renters are served notice to appear in court. Almost everywhere in the United States, evictions take place in civil court, where renters have no right to an attorney. For this reason and others, most renters do not appear in eviction court. When this happens, they receive a default eviction judgement, provided that the landlord or a representative is present. Renters who do appear in court may also receive an eviction judgement ordering them to vacate their home by a specific date. Eviction cases can be resolved in other ways as well. For one, the case may be dismissed or ruled in favor of defendants, allowing renter to remain in their home. In addition, a mediated agreement can be established between a landlord and a renter, often called a “settlement” or “stipulation,” which comes with certain terms. If renters meet the terms, the eviction is dismissed; if they do not, an eviction judgment can be rendered. In the event that evicted renters do not leave their home by the specified date, their landlord may file a “writ of restitution,” which permits law enforcement officers to forcibly remove a family and often their belongings.
Who is at most risk of eviction?

Low-income women, especially poor women of color, have a high risk of eviction. Research has shown domestic violence victims and families with children are also at particularly high risk for eviction.

How does an eviction affect someone's life?

Eviction causes a family to lose their home. They often are also expelled from their community and their children have to switch schools. Families regularly lose their possessions, too, which are piled on the sidewalk or placed in storage, only to be reclaimed after paying a fee. A legal eviction comes with a court record, which can prevent families from relocating to decent housing in a safe neighborhood, because many landlords screen for recent evictions. Studies also show that eviction causes job loss, as the stressful and drawn-out process of being forcibly expelled from a home causes people to make mistakes at work and lose their job. Eviction also has been shown to affect people's mental health: one study found that mothers who experienced eviction reported higher rates of depression two years after their move. The evidence strongly indicates that eviction is not just a condition of poverty, it is a cause of it.

For further information, visit evictionlab.org
The relationship between America’s jails and prisons and public health has increasingly become a national conversation in the last few years. One of the most prominent examples is the conversation and outrage that has accompanied the numerous killings of Black Americans by the hands of police officers across the country. With Black men dying at rates of 1 in 1,000 at the hands of police,\(^{114}\) (a rate that matches the attack rate of coronavirus in NYC),\(^{115}\) and the many instances of police violence against protestors in the wake of the killing of George Floyd, many officials have come out to declare police violence a public health crisis.\(^{116}\) Connecticut Voices for Children supports this declaration (see the section of this Issue Briefing Book 2020-2022 about public health).

Police officers, however, are only one part of the carceral system, and police violence is only one of the public health epidemics the U.S. is facing at this moment. The coronavirus has revealed flaws and risks inherent behind prison walls as well. Prisons are essentially mostly closed-off, confined spaces where many people are held at a time. Keeping large numbers of people in these spaces serves to negate collective efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Connecticut Voices for Children joins with community leaders and organizations like the Juvenile Justice Alliance; the Center for Children’s Advocacy; the Connecticut Youth Services Association; Stop Solitary-Connecticut; the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut; African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities, Inc.; the Office of the Child Advocate; True Colors; Sex Workers and Allies Network; Greater Hartford Harm Reduction Coalition; Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice; Alliance for Living; Yale Program for Recovery and Community Health; Yale Global Health Justice Partnership; and One Standard of Justice, and others in the call for decarceration as one of many ways to combat this deadly pandemic.

In the best of times, prisons are detrimental to the health of prisoners and the public

The U.S. has the largest prison population on the planet, even beating out countries with larger overall populations, like China and India. Incarcerated individuals are forced to share living spaces, cafeterias, recreational spaces, showers, hygiene products, and restrooms constantly. Additionally, U.S. prisons are known for their unsanitary conditions\(^{117}\) and barriers to healthcare access.\(^{118}\) Formerly incarcerated residents of Connecticut and their families have recently called out facilities for poor health and safety practices, such as having an inadequate number of doctors for incarcerated people, overcrowding, and poor ventilation systems that simply distribute disease throughout the prisons.\(^{119}\) Currently, incarcerated adults showing COVID-19 symptoms are being taken to Northern Correctional Institution, a facility whose conditions were deemed unconstitutional partially due to “cramped cells that smelled like feces because of the facility’s plumbing problems.”\(^{120}\) Youth
charged with adult crimes, on the other hand, are being held at Manson Youth Institution, a facility currently under federal investigation for, among other offenses, restricting the purchase of hygiene products.\textsuperscript{121}

In the U.S., about four percent of incarcerated people have HIV, 15 percent have hepatitis C, and three percent have active tuberculosis.\textsuperscript{122} For contrast, only .28 percent of people have HIV in the general population.\textsuperscript{123} If Connecticut’s correctional facilities and incarcerated populations were compared to a small town, it would have significantly higher rates of chronic illness, and a generally older population than the rest of the state. This means that the Connecticut’s incarcerated populations are at a greater risk than most of having the most severe reactions to the coronavirus. As incarcerated people go between prison walls and their communities, disease is not stopped by prison walls, further affecting the Black and Brown communities already disproportionately affected by the U.S. justice system.

\textbf{Decarceration will help lower the overall COVID-19 death toll}

In addition to paying attention to the effects of crowding, unsanitary conditions, and substandard healthcare in incarceration facilities, we also cannot ignore that jails and prisons are a part of our communities. Correctional staff have to travel to and from work. People are arrested and released. Incarcerated populations are not static. If COVID-19 continues to persist in incarcerated populations, it will undoubtedly have an impact on outside populations. In April, an ACLU model created by pulling data from 1,200 midsize to large jails, predicted that the Trump administration’s projection that less than 100,000 people would die from COVID-19 in the U.S. vastly underestimates the problem. The model suggests that 200,000 people could die from the virus if incarcerated people were not included in the pandemic response.\textsuperscript{124} Now that the U.S. COVID-19 death toll sits well over 110,000, we should take these warnings more seriously.

\textbf{Connecticut prisons are unnecessarily placing people at risk in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic}

There have been 1,342 reported cases of COVID infection among incarcerated people in Connecticut as of the end of June.\textsuperscript{125} 340 new cases were reported in the week of June 9th alone. The infection rate of about 990 per 10,000 inmates is 699 percent higher than the infection rate of Connecticut overall.\textsuperscript{126}

As the Connecticut ACLU chapter has pointed out, it is also necessary to acknowledge that on top of these staggering infection rates, the Connecticut prison population is 71 percent Black or Latinx, despite being 26.5 percent of the state’s overall population. Additionally 82 percent of incarcerated people at Northern C.I. (the aforementioned facility deemed unconstitutional for its bad conditions, and the place where symptomatic inmates are being held) are people of color.\textsuperscript{127}

On the other hand, even though reported staff member cases have decreased heavily in the last month, the infection rate for this group of people is still 397 percent \textit{higher} than Connecticut overall.\textsuperscript{128} In May, it was reported that more than 300 of 369 Department of Corrections (DOC) staff members who tested positive for the coronavirus have returned to work.\textsuperscript{129} Of more than 300 corrections officers, when asked to scale their
Incarcerated youth are put at unnecessary risk of contracting COVID-19

Family Economic Security: Justice - Part 1, Figure 1: COVID-19 Diagnoses in Juvenile Facilities: Youth Cases
At this point in time, hundreds of youth and staff members in youth carceral facilities across the country have been diagnosed with COVID-19. **Figure 1** shows the rise in the number of diagnoses of coronavirus in youth in carceral facilities across the nation. **Figure 2** shows a parallel rise in coronavirus positive diagnoses in staff who work in youth carceral facilities; people who interact with vulnerable youth before heading home to their own communities. According to the Sentencing Project, about 70 percent of youth incarcerated are there for nonviolent offenses. According to Connecticut’s own statistics, the vast majority of incarcerated youth in FY 2018 stayed in state detention centers for less than 60 days, with nearly 70 percent staying for less than two weeks. As **Figure 3** shows, the incarcerated youth and staff moving in and out of these facilities have also tested positive for—and are therefore able to contribute to the spread of—the coronavirus.
Crowding and close contact in these facilities continue to cause cases to rise. Inadequate treatment, testing, and reporting continue to put Connecticut’s youth at risk. Additionally, some treatments, such as placing infected youth in solitary confinement, can be ultimately detrimental to long-term youth mental health. Use of solitary confinement on incarcerated youth for even short periods result in symptoms of paranoia, depression, and anxiety. Youth forced to experience long-term confinement are the most likely to attempt or commit suicide.

**Releasing incarcerated persons early isn’t uncommon in Connecticut**

Connecticut is already in the decarceration era, and the state has made great strides to rightsize its justice system. Connecticut’s incarcerated populations have been declining for a decade, and simultaneously, crime and arrests have gone down both nationally and locally. This rightsizing of the system is happening both through reforms that prevent incarceration (including reduction of judicial involvement such as for certain drug offenses and status offenses and expansion of diversionary opportunities) as well as reforms that reduce time spent in prison and decrease the likelihood of reentering the justice system after returning to the community.

In April, the state’s prison population reached its lowest number since 1993. Since the beginning of March alone, correctional facility populations have dropped from 12,409 to 10,444 on June 1st. That is a decrease of 15.8 percent. However, the Department of Corrections regularly releases prisoners through what is known as “discretionary early release,” a tool that has been commonly used in Connecticut since former commissioner Scott Semple streamlined and centralized discretionary early release decisions during his tenure. ACLU reports indicate that early release numbers haven’t increased significantly in the midst of the current epidemic from their usual “business-as-usual number and ratios.” According to the same report, most decreases in the correctional facility population are happening on the front end, through factors such as drops in arrest rates. This leaves the disproportionately Black and Brown people already in the facilities largely trapped and forgotten in the midst of a national healthcare disaster that disproportionately puts them at risk.
The seriousness and scale of this viral outbreak both magnifies where Connecticut needs further reforms to prevent and reduce justice involvement and demands that Connecticut takes action in order to protect its vulnerable and endangered communities.

**Connecticut should eliminate School Resource Officers (SROs) and shift funds towards improving student mental and behavioral health care.**

According to a March 26, 2018 report of the Office of Legislative Research, around two-thirds of Connecticut school districts utilize school resource officers (SROs). Districts spend up to $200,000 a year for two or three uniformed police officers. Research conducted by Connecticut Voices for Children shows that the employment of SROs in school increases the likelihood of students being punished, expelled, and arrested without measurably increasing student safety or academic outcomes. In fact, the presence of officers in schools is associated with an increased risk of Black and Latinx students being arrested by three and four times respectively, and white students by 2.8 times, compared to students in schools without SROs. Moreover, research also suggests that SROs are likely to escalate conflict, and arrest students for behavioral issues.

Removing police from pre-K-12th grade public schools is a much needed step toward further preventing children entering Connecticut’s justice system. Students should not be arrested for facing problems that could best be solved through interventions from counselors or other mental and behavioral health professionals. Especially in a time when COVID-19 threatens the health of incarcerated individuals, we cannot and should not abide detaining and imprisoning students as a form of school discipline.

**Connecticut should halt detention and incarceration of youth, unless they are determined to be an immediate and substantial risk to the safety of others**

Connecticut Voices for Children joins with community partners and organizations in calling for a reduction in the number of youth being put into jails and prisons. This includes eliminating incarceration as a punishment for technical violations, and law enforcement declining to arrest youth for minor disciplinary issues. If youth must be arrested, law enforcement should use their discretion to “counsel and release” them to their families whenever possible.

**Connecticut should decarcerate its correctional facilities to protect all of its communities**

The ACLU reports hearing numerous cases about denied requests for release from people who were set to be released to halfway houses, have not finished programs that were discontinued during the pandemic, people with safe places to go to, medically vulnerable people, among many others. In the case of incarcerated youth and young adults, the majority are nonviolent, and end up being held for less than a couple weeks. Connecticut should follow the lead of places like Fresno County, CA, and Colorado, who released low-risk and adjudicated youth respectively to slow the spread of the disease. In partnership with other Connecticut organizations, we also call on Connecticut correctional facilities to release the youth in their care to families and communities when possible, especially those that are awaiting trial.

For youth that are currently detained and/or incarcerated, the Connecticut DOC and Judicial Branch should examine all pre- and post-adjudication release processes and mechanisms at their disposal and begin releasing.
youth as quickly and safely as possible. Youth with chronic or serious illnesses, or those in need of medical care should be quickly released to their homes or other safer places where their medical needs can be safely and adequately met. Plans to transition youth out of correctional facilities should be done with youth, trusted adults, and relevant state agencies to ensure that youth have a safe and stable place to live, their basic needs met, the ability to receive immediate and adequate medical care, community support, and access to Medicaid insurance. Keeping large groups of people circulating in and out of largely confined spaces will only serve to reintroduce the virus to Connecticut’s populations, even as the rest of the state continues to take measures to flatten the curve.

**Connecticut should increase communication and supports as well as facilitate connection with youth awaiting release**

It is crucial that youth are kept informed about their current situation, and kept connected to their support systems. Youth should be provided with verbal and written communication about COVID-19, access to medical care, and community-based supports. Youth should be ensured continued access to education, with care placed on the federal rights afforded to youth receiving special education. Youth should also be ensured access to family contacts, legal support, and confidential teleconferencing, as well as unlimited, free calls. As pointed out by the Center for Children’s Advocacy, the Department of Corrections already owns JPay tablets that were purchased to help facilitate connections between incarcerated youth and their loved ones. In addition to increasing connection during this time, youth should also be given increased access to mental health and therapeutic resources. The currently owned tablets can play a part in achieving this goal.

**Connecticut must make equity a focus of its decarceration efforts**

From unemployment rates, to infection rates, to incarceration rates, we see that systemic failings have left Connecticut’s communities of color vulnerable to COVID-19 in a myriad of ways. Any response to this pandemic must not only deal with its effects, but the societal gaps that people of color continue to fall through in the state of Connecticut.

**Additional enclosures to learn about justice-involved people in Connecticut**

- “Ending the Criminalization of Youth: One Investment at a Time—Executive Summary” by the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance provides information about the history and work of the Alliance, and focuses on systemic changes that can be made to incarcerate youth and prevent initial youth contact with the justice system.
- “The Need for Counselors” by Connecticut Voices for Children provides background information on the effects of school resources officers on punishment in schools, youth contact with the justice system, and the need for counselors in school to better handle student behavioral and mental health needs.
- “Just Fact: No Place for a Child” by Carl Jiang and Connecticut Voices for Children provides research on the harm and long-term societal impact of justice system involvement for young children. It makes a case for raising the minimum age for youth involvement in the justice system to 12.
- “Why Status Offense Laws in Connecticut Have Changed” by the Tow Youth Justice Institute discusses the effect status offense laws have on youth involvement in the justice system, and possible alternatives and diversions to incarceration that are more behavioral and youth development focused.
ENDING THE CRIMINALIZATION OF YOUTH:
ONE INVESTMENT AT A TIME

JUNE 2020
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report develops legislative asks and calls to action for policymakers and community members to reduce the number of youth entering the juvenile justice system. It does that by centering the knowledge and experiences of those most impacted by the justice system into all conversations on juvenile justice policy, practice and reform.

First, this report provides background on the history and work of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance (CTJJA/the Alliance) and state of juvenile justice in Connecticut. Though progress has been made in reducing the size of the juvenile system and improving conditions for system-involved youth, there is still much more work to do in both areas.

Second, this report identifies the need for systemic change to ensure continued progress in removing currently incarcerated youth and preventing their initial introduction into the justice system. In 2017, the Alliance began hosting conversations, referred to as vision sessions, with impacted youth and community members. The information gathered from these sessions was used to identify seven inequities commonly experienced in traditionally underserved communities and communities of color that lead to justice system involvement.

Identified as The 7 Themes of System Change, these root causes of justice system involvement are:

1. Economic Insecurity
2. Housing Insecurity
3. Need for More Credible Messengers and Positive Influences
4. Lack of Equal Opportunity
5. Lack of Trust in the System and Abuse of Authority
6. Trauma Caused Within Communities
7. Lack of Hope
Third, this report presents the conversations had with impacted youth and community members, where they discussed the problems identified in the 7 Themes of System Change and some solutions necessary to address these root causes of justice system involvement. In having these discussions, youth and community members also discussed what happens when the 7 Themes funnels kids into the justice system in the first place by examining additional problems faced by system-involved youth.

By reviewing the information received through Vision Sessions, the Alliance was able to identify 10 calls to action necessary to stop the funnel of kids into the justice system, by investing in the success of youth and communities. These calls to action, which make up the overarching asks in the #InvestInMeCT Campaign, are:

1. The state must remove all youth under the age of 18 from prison-like environments within the adult and juvenile justice systems.

2. To better meet the needs of youth identified by system-impacted individuals, and to improve outcomes for system-involved youth, the state must invest money into non-prison-like, rehabilitative programs.

3. State and local leaders must fully invest in a wide variety of individualized activities, programs, and resources to better serve communities.

4. The state must ensure law enforcement, and other individuals in positions of power who display abuses of authority are held accountable for their actions.

5. The state must invest in mental health and other support services to prioritize healing individual and community-level trauma faced by youth and families.
6. State and local leaders must create strategic plans to address and eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in our justice systems.

7. State leadership must acknowledge there is racial inequality when it comes to accessing basic resources like employment or housing and to develop a plan to address the inequities that lead to economic and housing insecurity.

8. The state must fully invest in an education system where all youth get the same quality education and opportunities as kids who reside in more affluent communities.

9. State and community leaders must develop and implement a plan to establish trust and heal relationships between state agencies and communities where there has historically been distrust and fear.

10. State systems and community organizations must work to ensure those typically left out of positions of power are encouraged and supported to have a say and to become decision-makers themselves.

Together, these 10 calls to action work to reduce the number of system-involved youth through increased investment, of funds, time and care into communities that have long been left out and left behind. By providing resources and opportunities, Connecticut can prevent youth from entering the justice system in the first place, and by improving conditions and practices for currently detained or incarcerated youth our state can ensure youth are able to successfully re-enter their communities without future system-involvement.
Within the past year and a half, CT Voices has examined the factors that contribute to students facing punishment, exclusionary discipline, and arrest in school and the efficacy and prevalence of School Resource Officers (SROs) in Connecticut. Through our research we’ve discovered:

- Discrimination, health inequities, and socioeconomics are factors that push students of color through the school to prison pipeline at rates higher than that of their white peers. These factors can, in part, be mitigated by ensuring students have access to adequate counselors and social workers.
- Many schools maintain an inadequate ratio of counselors/students and social workers/students, and about 15 percent of Connecticut school districts do not employ a single social worker—meaning that many children are unable to access valuable mental and behavioral health services in their schools.
- Students in schools that employ SROs are more likely to face punishment, expulsion, and arrest than students in schools that do not employ SROs—thereby exacerbating the school to prison pipeline.

**Counselors Not Cops**

The State should eliminate SROs from schools, and boards of education should utilize the cost-savings to fund additional counselors and social workers with the sole purpose of helping to build a positive school climate. This is necessary to ensure Connecticut students have access to mental health and counseling supports that improve student engagement and to reduce the number of children being pushed through the school to prison pipeline each year.

**How Do We Address This?**

The American School Counselor Association advocates that schools need a counselor to student ratio of at least 250:1 for counselors to adequately meet the needs of students. In a ten-year overview of school counselor presence, Connecticut consistently had a ratio greater than 400:1. In the most recent reported figure from the 2014-2015 school year, Connecticut had a ratio of 466 students to one guidance counselor.

The number of social workers able to support students is also inadequate. The National Association of Social Work recommends the same ratio of 250 students for every school social worker. According to a report by the Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut, the statewide ratio is approximately 530 students to one social worker, over twice as much as recommended.

In addition to helping meet the behavioral health and guidance needs of individual students, counselors and social workers—if trained appropriately and provided the right ongoing and culturally responsive supports—provide students with comprehensive college and career pathway guidance, deepen students’ attachment to school through personal relationships, and contribute to a more positive school climate.
SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS DO NOT MEASURABLY INCREASE SAFETY:

Schools with SROs are Not Measurably Safer: We do not find evidence that SROs are associated with better academic outcomes for students, nor are they associated with worse academic outcomes for students. They also do not appear to statistically contribute to a measurably safer school climate in most cases.

Schools with SROs have Increased Rates of Arrest: Black and Latino students in schools with SROs are over three and four times, respectively, at greater risk of being arrested or referred to law enforcement than Black and Latino children in schools without SROs. White students were at 2.8 times greater risk.

SROs in Schools lead to Larger Disparities for Latino Students: When adjusting for other factors that may influence referral to law enforcement and arrest rates, the percentage of Latino students arrested in schools with SROs was six times higher than the percentage of Latino students arrested in schools without SROs.

SROs in Schools Escalate Conflict: Research suggests that SROs may escalate conflicts when there is significant room for discretion in how to respond to student behavior. A survey of Delaware SROs showed that 77 percent of SROs surveyed reported that they had at some point arrested a student simply to calm them down.

Schools with SROs Increase Trauma for Some Students: When SROs are present in a school, administrators may defer disciplinary duties to SROs. Unlike security guards and school administrators, SROs have the power to arrest students. Experiencing arrest can be traumatizing for children who are arrested, their families, and other observers who may be present. Even one arrest can result in children experiencing reduced access to future educational and employment opportunities.

POLICYMAKERS MUST ACT TO FUND COUNSELORS AND SOCIAL WORKERS:

The United States is experiencing a nationwide trauma due to COVID-19, and this is even greater for Black and Latino children whose communities and families have been hit harder. This trauma is compounded by the public murder and widespread viewing of George Floyd at the hands of police officers. When these children return to school, they need schools to be prepared to help students heal from these traumas.

In the wake of the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012, schools have engaged in two conversations. How do we keep our students safe? And how do we meet the mental health needs of our students? In response to the first question, the number of schools utilizing SROs increased by 29 percent between the 2012-2013 school year and the 2015-2016 school year. In response to the second question, state funding and local efforts have led to the establishment of mental and behavioral health programs for children. While these efforts have offered support to thousands of students across the state, the programs have never received full and equitable funding. Therefore, many children are still unable to access the needed care and counseling in their schools.

If we shift toward considering our students’ mental health and safety as intertwined, we begin to understand that in meeting their mental health needs, we are increasing the safety of our students.

To meet the mental, emotional, and general well-being of students across the state, Connecticut should eliminate School Resources Officers and utilize the cost-savings to fund additional school counselors and social workers that look like the students they serve, and fund their appropriate training and ongoing supports.

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The information outlined here is based on the findings of our two reports: “Policing Connecticut’s Hallways: The Prevalence and Impact of School Resource Officers in Connecticut,” and “Beyond Exclusionary Discipline: Re-Conceptualizing Connecticut’s School to Prison Pipeline to Address Root Causes.” Both of these reports are available online at ctvoices.org
NO PLACE FOR A CHILD:
ALTERNATIVES FOR CHILDREN UNDER 12 IN CONNECTICUT’S JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM
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THE PROBLEM
Currently, children as young as seven are subject to arrest and detention in Connecticut’s juvenile justice system. Connecticut Voices for Children engaged in developmental, legal, and social science research to investigate this phenomenon and the implications it has on children, their families, and our state. Converging research suggested that children are not able to understand the legal process, that court involvement can harm the well-being of involved children, and that this can have long-term negative implications for public safety. Following this research, we compared Connecticut to other states that have raised the minimum age of juvenile court jurisdiction and the international standards around juvenile culpability. We conclude that raising the minimum age from seven to 12 and diverting young children to age-appropriate services is a superior alternative to the existing process.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND COURT INVOLVEMENT
- Cognitive immaturity of children: children in early and mid-adolescence are neurologically immature. They have not yet attained mature cognitive abilities to respond effectively to situations that require careful or reasoned decisions, and they are more inclined than adults to act impulsively and without planning.
- Unique factors inherent in pre-adolescence: studies demonstrate most children younger than thirteen or fourteen years of age exhibit the same degree of impairment as legally incompetent adult defendants. This means children fail to appreciate the importance of legal rights and lack even basic competence to understand or to participate in their defense during court proceedings.

LEGAL ARGUMENTS THAT THE COURT SHOULD DISTINGUISH CHILDREN FROM OLDER YOUTH
- United States and Connecticut Supreme Court decisions: the U.S. and Connecticut Supreme Court have increasingly relied upon neuroscience research to distinguish children from adults in assessing criminal culpability. Their observations regarding a child’s immaturity and lack of development is consistent with treating children dissimilarly from their older counterparts.
- Procedural Justice: evidence indicates alternatives to the formal juvenile justice process lead children to perceive the law as more legitimate and to therefore increase their compliance with the law, which improves public safety.

POLICY ARGUMENTS FOR DISTINGUISHING CHILDREN FROM OLDER YOUTH
- Assists vulnerable children: children who are arrested or charged are significantly more likely to have histories of child maltreatment, underlying and unaddressed behavioral health conditions, and/or be children from underserved populations.
- Reduces recidivism: decades of research have shown that formally processing youth in the juvenile justice system does not a) result in preventing future crime b) increases likelihood of future criminal behavior by deterring psychosocial development.
**INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS**

- Out of 193 countries surveyed, only 24 countries in the world have a minimum age where children are considered criminally responsible at seven. This is due, in part, to the United Nations adoption of the Beijing Rules, which specified that the minimum age of criminal responsibility (MACR) be no less than age 12.
- Countries with higher MACRs then Connecticut use special law enforcement procedures and/or a continuum of diversionary programs when dealing with children. These procedures and programs allow these countries to avoid the crime promoting and negative effects of the formal justice system.

**COMPARATIVE STATE POLICY**

- Both California and Massachusetts raised their minimum age of juvenile court jurisdiction to 12 after finding children do not meet standards of capacity and competency under state law. Children under 12 were arrested and charged largely for minor violations, such as destruction of property and simple assault, in these states. Importantly, Massachusetts passed a “clean” bill that did not impose carve outs or exceptions for certain categories of crime.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- According to data provided by the Connecticut Judicial Branch’s Court Support Services division, 141 youth under age 12 were referred to Connecticut court in 2018. The vast majority of these referrals (80 percent) were for misdemeanor offenses. Almost all of these children were not prosecuted, were discharged, or had their cases not accepted/dismissed during that time. In line with the findings above, Connecticut Voices for Children recommends Connecticut pass a “clean” bill to raise the minimum age of juvenile court jurisdiction to age 12.
- We further recommend that Connecticut ensure that diversionary and/or community programs sufficiently serve these children under 12 and that they are accessible, age-appropriate, trauma-informed, and tied to procedurally-just practices.
Background

The handling of status offenses of youth has been a topic for discussion across the country and each state has taken different approaches in their response to these actions. Definitions are provided later, but as a general statement, a status offense is a conduct that would not be unlawful if committed by an adult but is unlawful only because of a child’s or youth’s legal minor status.

Although significant progress has been made in many states, every year “thousands of kids across the United States are handcuffed, taken to court, or locked up for just these misbehaviors”. 1 “Using the justice system to respond to these cases makes little sense, particularly when the primary options available to law enforcement, judges, and other system players relate to protecting public safety, not addressing kids’ needs”. 2 In some states, a child who commits a status offense may end up in juvenile court. Other states have increased the use of residential placement for offenders, and others emphasize community-based programs. Today, most states refer to status offenders as “children or juveniles in need of supervision, services, or care.” A few states designate some status offenders as “dependent” or “neglected children”. 3

Status offense behaviors can be a normal part of adolescent development, “which is a time of exploration and risk-taking, often marked by being impulsive and susceptible to peer pressure.” 4 But in other instances, they can signal underlying problems at home or in school that need closer attention. When families, schools, and communities don’t know what else to do—and tensions are high—they call on the justice system to step in. A report released by the Vera Institute of Justice, Just Kids: When Misbehaving is a Crime, discusses the consequences of status offenses on youth on probation and describes how status offenses unfairly criminalize young people and increase the likelihood of youth reoffending, often with more serious crime. In these cases, youth do not have the opportunity to receive community support. According to the report, “kids who receive services in their homes and communities are able to strengthen family functions, improve their behavioral health and are less likely to reoffend”.

By looking at these offenses through a behavioral lens, some state’s child welfare agency is the first to deal with the problem and in many states, multiple agencies are involved in responding to status offenses. Further complicating the conversation nationally are age boundaries. 5 States differ in the age established for delinquency and status offense jurisdiction. “These differences impact how juvenile courts and other social services are organized and resourced”. 6
these gaps create unusual structural contradictions where status offense jurisdiction extends beyond delinquency jurisdict-

ion. 7

State juvenile justice statutes apply different legal labels to youth who commit status offenses. “Researchers at times have
associated the labels to legislative intent indicating a child welfare orientation on one side of the spectrum and a public
safety approach on the other”. 8 Removing status offenses from juvenile jurisdiction avoids youth being labeled as delin-
quent which may increase the likelihood of reoffending. 9

For the most part, state goals in dealing with status offenses became threefold:
• to preserve families
• to ensure public safety, and
• to prevent young people from becoming delinquent or committing crimes in the future.

However, some states lack options to divert, screen, and assess kids who exhibit these behaviors, often leaving the justice
system with no option to keep kids at home and in their communities. When youth are charged with status offenses and
end up in locked facilities, it further exacerbates the circumstances that drive their behaviors, and further criminalize under-
served kids who are often subject to harsh biases and discipline, including girls, kids in poor communities, kids of color, and
LGBTQ/Gender Non-conforming (GNC) youth.

Researchers have studied the various approaches across states along with data concerning the prevalence of status offend-
ers to promote the best ways to respond to “youth whose behavior may violate societal boundaries or rules, rather than
the criminal law.” 10 In addition, the cost of incarceration of youth vs. the use of diversion programs and community-based
alternatives, has been proven to reduce costs and recidivism.

Status Offenses Defined
The Coalition for Juvenile Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency
Prevention, 11 and many others offer definitions that truly highlight the inappro-
priateness of using the juvenile justice system as a response to these status
offenses.

• Chronic absenteeism/truancy is broadly defined as youth who habitually
miss school. While the number of days a youth must miss before being
considered truant varies by jurisdiction, researchers have noted common
circumstances such as homelessness and transitory lifestyles, poverty, and
neglect and abuse may lead a child to become truant. School and interper-
sonal factors may also play a part, including poor relationships with teach-
ers and peers, fearfulness of attending school, inappropriate academic
placement or support, and low self-esteem.

• A runaway is defined as any youth who, without permission, leaves home
and stays away overnight, or, if away from home, chooses not to come
home when expected. Youth who run away often suffer from turmoil at
home that may include physical abuse, sexual abuse, and/or neglect.
Poverty and troubled family dynamics are typically associated with their
backgrounds.

• Youth who have defiant relationships with their parents and family mem-
bers, and fail to comply with reasonable requests of a parent or approved
caregiver to the point that the youth is deemed to be beyond the control
of the parent or caregiver are considered “ungovernable”. These youth
often struggle with emotional, social and interpersonal issues that may be
compounded when a parent does not possess the ability to deal with the

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misbehavior in a healthy fashion.

- Curfew violations are established locally, by cities or counties. Typically, they prohibit young people under a certain age (usually 18) from being in a public place during certain hours (between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m., for example). Most curfew ordinances contain exceptions for things like travel to and from work or school events. For the most part, local governing bodies enact curfews with the goal of preventing juvenile crime and keeping the peace.

Additionally, there are state statutes and local ordinances that lead children and youth to be charged with other types of status offenses, including loitering violations and prohibitions against possession of firearms, tobacco and/or alcohol by youth under the legal age as defined by the jurisdiction.

Rethinking status offenses led to more reform in Connecticut

In the 1990s, thousands of kids in Connecticut were being referred to court for status offenses and hundreds of them were being locked up. In 1992, the state referred 2,500 kids to court for status offenses, and by 2002, that number had grown to more than 4,000. In 2005, state leaders drafted two different bills to rethink their approach and passed legislation that ended the use of detention for any status offenders who had violated court orders and created and funded a network of Family Support Centers throughout the state to identify and address the needs of the kids and their families, and divert them away from the juvenile justice system, allowing them to remain in their communities. In addition, in 2007, Connecticut also passed Raise the Age legislation that ended the practice of punishing 16 and 17 year olds as adults.

Status offense cases in Connecticut are known as Family With Service Needs (FWSN). A FWSN case involves a child who:

- has run away without just cause;
- is beyond control of his or her parents or guardians;
- has engaged in indecent or immoral conduct;
- is truant or defiant of school rules and regulations; and/or
- is thirteen (13) years of age or older and has engaged in sexual intercourse with a person who is thirteen (13) years of age or older and not more than two (2) years or younger than such child.

FWSN cases originate when parents, guardians, the child's school superintendent or other entity files a referral with the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters alleging that the child has committed a status offense. Though FWSN matters are handled in the juvenile court, they are not delinquency offenses. In these non-judicial cases, a juvenile probation officer will meet with the child and family, conduct assessments and based on the factors in that case, he or she may choose to supervise the child for up to 180 days, dismiss the case with no action required, issue a warning, request the child to perform community service or refer the child to counseling.

In judicial FWSN cases, the child is entitled to legal representation in court proceedings, and if indigent, will be appointed an attorney by the court. The child’s attorney is usually assigned counsel by the office of the Chief Public Defender.

At the conclusion of a judicially handled FWSN case, the judge can consider a number of possible outcomes or dispositions for the case:

- Issue a warning and send the child home with his/her parents/guardian;
- Continue the case with no finding; such continuance may be extended;
- Refer the child to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or to a community-based provider for services;
- FWSN supervision by a probation officer;
- Refer to the local Youth Service Bureau (YSB) for participation in an appropriate community based sex education program; or
- Community service.  

Given the increasing knowledge about trauma and brain development, juvenile justice stakeholders such as teachers, police officers and social workers are being trained on how to approach youth with a trauma lens and be trained on gender and gender expression, racial and ethnic disparities and systemic bias.  

Legislation in 2015 eliminated truancy as a status offense, effective August, 2017, and now requires schools and communities to develop appropriate responses to missed school days. This one legislative change led to a 70 % reduction in the number of status offense petitions coming to the juvenile courts.  

The chart below illustrates the number of status offenses through 2017 that were truancy referrals and the drop off when they were no longer handled as judicial cases. This resulted in a small number of remaining FWSN cases.

Legislation was also passed in 2017 that eliminated the remaining Families with Service Needs (FWSN) offenses from court referral effective July 1, 2020 and is redirecting them to other community-based systems who are better equipped to manage these behaviors, including schools, child welfare, and behavioral health systems.

**Resources for other states**

States still in need of changing their reform practices for status offenses, have tremendous resources to learn from, as well as states like Connecticut that are on the cutting edge of juvenile reform. The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) is a national strategy of the Annie E. Casey Foundation developed to offer state and local juvenile justice systems ways to dramatically reduce their reliance on detention without sacrificing public safety. Launched in 1992, JDAI has been
replicated in over 150 jurisdictions in 32 states and the District of Columbia. 17

Since the early 2000s, Vera Institute has worked with many state and local leaders, practitioners, and policymakers to rethink their policies, practices, and programs around status offenses and offer family-focused, community-based support outside of the juvenile justice system. Vera’s Status Offense Reform Center (SORC) has been a critical resource offering tools, on the ground assistance and research, and analytic support.

Footnotes
1. VERA Institute’s Status Offense Reform Center
2. Ibid
4. How Status Offenses Shape a Youth’s Path Through the Justice System, Chronicle of Social Change
5. Status Offense Issues - Age Boundaries, JJGPS
6. Ibid
7. Ibid
8. Status Offense Issues – Labeling, JJGPS
12. VERA Institute’s Status Offense Reform Center
13. Justice Policy Institute, Juvenile Justice Reform in Connecticut: How Collaboration And Commitment Have Improved Public Safety And Outcomes For Youth, February 27, 2013, Mendel, R.
15. https://chronicleofsocialchange.org/page/2?s=status+offense
16. VERA Institute’s Status Offense Reform Center
17. Coalition for Juvenile Justice SOS project, YOUTH CHARGED WITH STATUS OFFENSES: DEFINITIONS OF COMMON TERMS

Other Resources
• Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO), Facts and Resources, CJJ
• 2015, Pew Cheritable Trusts, Source: U.S. Department of Justice’s O ce of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
• Status Offense Issues – Reported Data, JJGPS
• Coalition for Juvenile Justice SOS Project, National Standards for the Care of Youth Charged with Status Offenses
• http://modelsforchange.net/reform-areas/status-offense-reform/index.html
• Research Division of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges www.ncjfcj.org
Part 2: Keeping undocumented families in Connecticut healthy, safe, connected, and together during the COVID-19 Pandemic
In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S., like many other countries, adopted a number of quarantine measures that resulted in international travel restrictions and the closing of the borders while the majority of states imposed social distancing measures and stay-at-home orders mandating the closing of all but the most essential businesses. The impact of these measures, combined with the ongoing threat of exposure to the coronavirus, has been particularly difficult on low-income families of color, who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 due to a number of systemic issues. In Connecticut and across the nation, people of color are more likely to live in crowded conditions and work in fields that are considered “essential” under the pandemic; they are more prone to have preexisting health conditions and less likely to have regular access to health care. These disparities lead to an increase in economic and mental stress that can jeopardize the physical and mental well-being of entire families. Undocumented families of color have been especially vulnerable throughout the pandemic: in addition to the issues identified above, the undocumented have also been uniquely impacted by issues directly connected with their vulnerable status.

**Family stress is likely to be increased during the COVID-19 pandemic**

The closing of non-essential business throughout Connecticut and the country has deeply impacted the livelihood of Connecticut’s families. The Connecticut Department of Labor (DOL) had received nearly 600,000 unemployment claims by June. Nationwide, 26 percent of adults have lost their jobs, 34 percent have either taken reduced hours or a pay cut, and an additional seven percent have been furloughed due to COVID-19. Those impacted are disproportionately part-time employees, hourly workers, and workers from low-income households. Twenty-nine percent report they have fallen behind in paying bills, and/or are struggling to afford household expenses. While some businesses have begun to reopen, and fewer new unemployment claims are being filed with the Connecticut DOL, some health experts warn that future coronavirus waves are to be expected until a vaccine is found and distributed.

**Undocumented families are particularly vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic**

Undocumented families in Connecticut have been particularly vulnerable under the pandemic. Because of their status, they are ineligible to participate in anti-poverty programs (e.g. SNAP, TANF, Medicaid, etc.). In addition, undocumented families as well as “mixed status families” (where at least one member of the family is undocumented) have been excluded from benefiting from Unemployment Insurance or the COVID-19 federal relief acts, including the recovery rebates contained in the CARES ACT that many families received.

A recent survey conducted by Unidad Latina en Acción underscores some of the challenges the undocumented population in Connecticut have had to face under the pandemic. Of the 274 immigrant breadwinners surveyed, the majority (57%) reported being laid off, having reduced hours or being forced into quarantine because of illness either at work or at home. The overwhelming majority (93%) were without a social security number, severely limiting their ability to seek other work and prohibiting them from accessing government services to
support their families, which included 143 children and 30 elderly. Their vulnerability to the pandemic was underscored by the fact that only 44 percent of those still able to work reported workplaces with COVID-19 prevention measures or accessible personal protective equipment.

Undocumented families have been also uniquely vulnerable to wage theft, which occurs when an employer steals wages by paying less than the minimum wage, fails to pay an overtime premium, forces employees to work off the clock, steals tips, withholds pay, or does not pay workers at all. Under the pandemic, undocumented workers are not only vulnerable to wage theft, but as a result of the stay at home orders, they have been left to fend for themselves, with fewer jobs available, increased vulnerabilities in the workplace and no safety net. What is more, despite the pandemic, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has continued to carry out enforcement activities. From March 1 to July 7 an estimated 26,912 people were booked into ICE custody.156

When wage theft occurs, the options for undocumented workers are limited

Nationally, an estimated 64 percent of low-wage workers, including undocumented workers, suffer some form of wage theft each week.157 While construction, landscaping, childcare, domestic work are all examples of industries employing hundreds of thousands of vulnerable workers who are often victims of wage theft, the areas where Connecticut workers suffer from high numbers of overtime violations are in the retail, restaurant, and building services.158 Undocumented workers have very little recourse when wage theft occurs. Many fear the consequences of what might happen to them if they seek redress. And even when they do, the results are often limited. At the federal level the number of investigators who cover minimum wage law violations has shrunk over the years—from 1,700 in 1941 (1 investigator for every 9,000 workers) to 1,000 in 2010 (one investigator for every 130,000 workers).159 With the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) gutted, the Connecticut DOL is left to enforce wage and hour laws, but the Connecticut DOL is also underfunded and, as a result, when a worker files a complaint, often the Connecticut DOL does not recover the full amount of wages, and the employer almost never faces serious consequences. Consequently, many Connecticut employers are repeat offenders who deprive their workers of the basic minimum wage every year with few repercussions.

Undocumented families also live in constant fear of being deported and ICE enforcement continues during the COVID-19 pandemic

Undocumented immigrants, particularly immigrants of color, have experienced what attorney and immigrant rights advocate Kica Matos calls, “the double oppression that comes from over-policing by traditional law enforcement and that of immigration enforcement.”160 Since January 20, 2017, five days after the inauguration, the Trump administration laid out its mass deportation and anti-immigrant agenda in an Executive Order, “Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States.” This included, among other things, an escalation of community arrests and raids; the targeting of “sanctuary jurisdictions”—those that have policies limiting collusion between local law and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)—and the targeting of immigrants at their court appearances for arrest, retention, and deportation.161 The overlay of local and immigration laws has also led to extremely harsh consequences for immigrants, up to and including deportation.162
Despite the stay-at-home orders issued by the majority of states since the pandemic began, ICE has compounded the stress felt by undocumented immigrants putting their lives further at risk by continuing its enforcement actions around the country. A March, 2020 tweet by Acting DHS Secretary Cuccinnelly stated, “@ICEgov will exercise its law enforcement authority in a manner that accounts for the dangers presented by #coronavirus, which maintains the safety and security of the communities it has sworn to protect.” To compound matters, the spread of COVID-19 in detention centers has caused further consternation to undocumented families and led to legal and advocacy efforts to release immigrants around the country. In Connecticut, advocates have been successful in advocating for the release of immigrants detained in Bristol, Massachusetts based on concerns related to the spread of COVID-19 in detention centers.

The state of Connecticut should act in three main ways

While there are a number of matters that need to be addressed at the federal level, there are things Connecticut can do. To this end, the first recommendation can be supported by both state and federal governments; the second and third recommendations are state actions.

Policymakers should provide a larger pool of dedicated funds and resources for undocumented children and families

The federal and state government have provided very little in the way of funding for immigrant children and families in Connecticut. The relief provided in the four Congressional actions to date have focused mainly on health care supports and supports to big businesses, which while certainly necessary are not helpful for out-of-work residents who need to pay rent or mortgages and purchase basic items including food and cleaning supplies.\(^{163}\) While advocacy by immigrant rights advocates led to the State of Connecticut and philanthropy to create a public-private partnership in May to support the state’s immigrant families, at an estimated $8.33 per person, the resources in this pool are far from adequate.\(^{164}\)

Given the unique vulnerabilities faced by the undocumented, Connecticut should increase the amount of resources made available to this population. Funding should, at a minimum, meet California’s example of $500 ($1000 per household) to every qualifying Connecticut resident.\(^{165}\) However, funds are not the only supports that undocumented families need right now. We assume the majority of Connecticut’s immigrant residents able to work are on the frontlines of the pandemic and, as such, additional resources should be set aside to provide additional support that is needed, such as expanded access to healthcare, a worker relief fund for those who have lost their jobs or access to early child care. Connecticut should ensure that quality early child care is available to all Connecticut families who need it irrespective of their immigration status (see the section on Early Child Care in this Issue Briefing Book 2020-2022).

Connecticut should prioritize keeping families in crisis together by ensuring immigrant families are protected from wage theft

It is hard to imagine a more fundamental right than the right to get paid for your work, but wage theft—the under-payment or non-payment of wages—is rampant in Connecticut. Wage theft hurts workers and the families who rely on them. It hurts law-abiding businesses who are undercut by lawbreaking businesses. It hurts the state’s bottom line. It drags down wages for all workers and renders our wage laws meaningless. The workers are not the only victims.
Businesses that comply with the law face unfair competition from low-balling rivals. The state loses tax revenue, too. In short, this is a major economic problem with real—and very negative—economic ramifications for Connecticut and its citizens. Connecticut Voices for Children supports Unidad Latina en Acción’s (ULA) proposal to protect undocumented workers from wage theft. Specifically, ULA proposes the following:

- the Connecticut Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division be provided adequate funding in order to stop wage theft;
- the Connecticut General Assembly should pass a “wage lien” bill that places a lien on an employer’s property to secure a payment of unpaid wages owed to an employee; and
- The Connecticut General Assembly should draft and pass a “Domestic Workers Bill of Rights.”

**Connecticut should reduce its Class A misdemeanor sentence to eliminate the current immigration consequences that can lead to deportations**

As it relates to a more just judicial system, reducing the maximum sentence for class A misdemeanors by a single day—from 365 days to 364 days—would limit some of the most disproportionate immigration consequences for Connecticut’s undocumented residents and their families. Four other states have already enacted similar changes to protect families, save government money, and preserve the integrity of plea-bargaining in state court; 10 other states already had a misdemeanor sentence of less than 365 days. Connecticut Voices for Children endorses Unidad Latina en Acción’s proposal to change misdemeanor sentencing to decrease deportations, preserve families and communities, and facilitate fairness in sentencing.
PART 3: CENTERING YOUTH IN STATE CARE AND JUSTICE-INVOLVED YOUTH DURING THE CRISIS
While the health impacts of COVID-19 fall disproportionately on older individuals, the consequences of a global shutdown, such as job loss and negative education outcomes, fall disproportionately on youth. Economic and political turmoil have galvanized youth across the world, and that galvanization will only continue if barriers to employment and capital for young people (especially young people of color) are not addressed during this pandemic. Even under the best of circumstances, youth leaving the care of Connecticut’s child welfare and justice systems do not always have the best, or even good outcomes. Higher rates of unemployment, incarceration, and unstable housing rates, as well as lower levels of academic achievement for youth in state care, are a reflection of persistent systemic opportunity gaps. They are indicative of a state that continues to fail the most at risk of being in vulnerable situations.

Unfortunately, we are now in a pandemic that is continuously disrupting the American economy. Millions of people across the country have lost their jobs, and many are struggling to figure out how they can secure housing and other basic necessities during a national crisis with no clear end in sight. As these struggles become common even among the general public, it becomes all the more urgent to ask how has the coronavirus pandemic exacerbated the issues faced by Connecticut’s already struggling youth populations. If youth are not targeted in the state’s recovery planning, their lack of access to capital and job markets will not only undercut Connecticut’s economic recovery and growth, but will possibly lead to further political and societal unrest.  

Family stress often leads to child abuse and neglect

Economic tensions in households will directly impact the safety and security of Connecticut’s children. The cyclical loss of jobs and wages will undoubtedly lead to increases in stress on families as they continue to search for ways to pay for food, housing, and healthcare costs brought about by the pandemic. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) lists low income, unemployment, economic stress, poverty, and societal income inequality as risk factors for domestic violence. The nationwide recession will be felt harshly in Connecticut, a state with one of the largest income inequalities and racial wealth gaps in the country. It is also important to acknowledge that a great number of new coronavirus cases have appeared in the last few weeks, resulting in recently re-opened businesses having to re-close their doors. With the enhanced unemployment insurance benefits facing expiration this month, it is clear that the economic toll of this pandemic is far from over. As the economic fallout continues to be felt in the coming months, its effects might be felt hardest in places that are hardest to see—in the homes of Connecticut families, and especially in the homes of Connecticut’s Black and Latinx families. Figure 1 shows that reported incidents of domestic violence increase during economic recessions, with the latest spikes occurring in 1990, 2001, and in 2008’s Great Recession.
“Social distancing,” while necessary for controlling the rate of COVID-19’s spread, has disrupted many important social and emotional supports for children and families.

One of the unfortunate byproducts of the current quarantines is isolation, which can be stressful for children and families. During the ongoing pandemic, in a national study of youth ages 18-25, 33 percent expressed wishes for more connections to people who could help them. Many Americans currently find themselves having to physically avoid their friends, family members, coworkers, partners, teachers, mentors, and other supports. This also means that children are less frequently coming in contact with those who could recognize and report abuse or neglect.

Declines in calls to child abuse centers are down, but this should have us worried

For Connecticut’s children and families, the events surrounding the pandemic increased the risk of children being victims of abuse and neglect. Although many child abuse call centers around the nation have seen a fall in reported incidents lately, there are fears that the decline actually betrays the prevalence of abuse and neglect during the current pandemic and recession. While there could be many explanations (for example, the fear of being deported has decreased the number of calls regarding domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse for undocumented residents since 2018), we ought not forget the drop in calls during this pandemic contradicts what is typical during an economic recession.

The most logical explanation for the drop in calls is that this pandemic and pandemic induced recession has been accompanied by school closings. Approximately two-thirds of child abuse and neglect reports are done by mandated reporters, like teachers and school officials. Another explanation for the drop in calls...
The needs of youth in State care were not being met, even before the onset of the current pandemic

As a previous Connecticut Voices for Children study points out, in 2016, 21 percent of youth discharged from foster care did not have a high school diploma.\textsuperscript{179} Fifty-seven percent of youth who exited DCF care were unemployed, and 46 percent were in unstable living situations at the time of discharge. Of the 42 percent employed, the majority were only working part-time. Only 11 percent managed to achieve an Associate’s or Bachelor’s degree,\textsuperscript{180} leaving them with grim prospects in the Connecticut job market.

Equally dismal are educational outcomes for justice-involved youth. Education for justice-involved youth is, by way of the system, inherently fragmented. Youth are constantly moved in and out of school systems, there are no inherent transitional supports, the cost of education is too costly in youth correctional facilities to afford an adequate number of teachers, and there is no single entity responsible for strong educational outcomes (or even a concrete definition for what quality education looks like for incarcerated youth).\textsuperscript{181} The failures of this broken system were on full display when, in 2015, “91% of youth in the custody of the DCF—which holds both justice system involved youth and youth in the abuse and neglect system—did not reach the state’s math achievement benchmark, and 80% did not measure up in reading.”\textsuperscript{182}

A Connecticut Voices for Children study has shown that an earlier cohort of youth aged-out of care were not faring much better. According to an analysis of data from the National Youth In Transition Database, half were relying on some form of public assistance by the age of 21, and 30 percent had been homeless in the previous couple years.\textsuperscript{183}

In the years since, data shows little relief. A 2018 survey of unstably housed and homeless youth in Connecticut found that 20.6 percent had at some point come into contact with the Connecticut justice system, 33 percent had come into contact with the state’s child welfare system, and a staggering 42.1 percent said they were still in foster and/or in the DCF’ care.\textsuperscript{184} Furthermore, national statistics show that within four years of aging out, 50 percent of youth have no income, and those that have an income average annually $7,500.\textsuperscript{185}

Youth in State care and justice-involved youth often lack the familial and economic supports that youth not in State care and justice-involved youth experience

It is no secret that Connecticut is experiencing a shortage of both foster parents\textsuperscript{186} and foster homes.\textsuperscript{187} In 2016, Pew Research Center data showed that for the first time in over a century, young adults (18-34) were more likely to live with their parents than any other living situation. Additionally, 50 percent of parents had provided financial support to at least one adult child that past year, with 27 percent of these parents providing the primary support.\textsuperscript{188}

Chronically justice-involved youth are likely to have trouble finding support when returning to their home communities. As the justice system disproportionately affects youth and communities of color, justice involved
youth often return to communities that have been historically economically and socially targeted, neglected, and abandoned. One in four have a sibling or father, respectively, who has been incarcerated. One in 10 have a mother who was incarcerated. Parents also can struggle at times to deal with behavioral changes in youth that can occur as a result of incarceration, and find it difficult to intervene if their children get into trouble again. In addition to lacking parental and communal support, chronically justice-involved youth have to deal with the stigma, educational deficits, and barriers to employment that incarcerated populations all too commonly face.

Connecticut was one of the states hit hardest by the recession, and one of the slowest to recover. For youth in care, a group already dealing with issues of support and employment, the slow recovery following the last recession only further aggravated these barriers to financial stability. We can expect the current recession to seriously impact them as well.

The data on the effects of COVID-19, while being continuously updated, is already showing troubling trends for the future economic prospects of youth in general and youth in care

Nationally, 43 percent of young adults reported that COVID-19 had a negative impact on their living situation, 72 percent said that their financial situations would be stable for a month at most, 21 percent are in financial crisis, and 67 percent report that COVID-19 had a major impact on their education attainment. A survey of youth currently in care in 32 states showed that due to COVID-19, seven percent are couch surfing or homeless, 55 percent are food insecure, 48 percent had their employment negatively impacted, 32 percent are applying for public assistance, with 14 percent applying for unemployment.

Studies and surveys show time and again that unemployment hits young people especially hard during recessions. The problems facing youth in state care are far from new, but they will only get worse if the COVID-19 pandemic is allowed to continue to affect the most vulnerable among us. Below are a few recommendations put together through research and in partnership with organizations focused on child welfare. A more robust set of recommendations concerning Connecticut youth and the COVID-19 pandemic will be presented later this year (November, 2020) at Connecticut Voices for Children’s 10th Annual Youth at the Capitol Day

The Connecticut Department of Children and Families should analyze the change in child abuse referrals during this time

Largely unexplained drops in calls to child abuse centers are concerning, but truthfully the cause of such a drop is uncertain. In order to gain an understanding of the situation, it is important that the Connecticut DCF analyzes the change in calls in order to determine where reports are coming from, whether acceptance rates of cases have changed, and to examine if there has been any change to the risk levels and responses assigned to reports during this time. Understanding these data can help DCF reflect upon whether the policies in systems in place are effective for sorting families with safety needs from families with other needs and whether some of the drop in calls may be attributed to policies that encourage over-reporting.
Policymakers should work to make sure residents can stay socially connected with family and with community while physically distant

Poverty and geography are just a couple of factors of the wifi and technology inequality that exists throughout Connecticut and the country. Unfortunately, in a time when people are required to separate, technology grows increasingly important in keeping our society together. Without internet and equipment access, children and families are unable to keep in contact with necessary supports needed for their mental health. In order to support the safety and well-being of Connecticut’s children and families, it is important to create safety nets for the possibility of this pandemic continuing for months into the future. It is critical that the State’s policymakers ensure all families can access the internet for employment needs, health services, and maintaining connections with their communities. State and federal policymakers could additionally go further by supporting net neutrality, and arranging online community spaces to help parents who are struggling through the coronavirus crisis connect with each other and practice positive parenting in the face of inordinate stress.

Connecticut should consider extending care to youth that would otherwise not be covered during this time

It should be noted that Connecticut’s DCF was quick to place a moratorium on suspension of services for youth who are now old enough to no longer receive DCF care. DCF should continue its moratorium on discharging youth from care, suspend requirements for remaining in care, and expedite processes for youth to re-enter care at this time. Youth who have recently exited care should maintain contact and be provided with wrap-around supports and information. Other Connecticut institutions should follow suit so that youth in state care are not thrown out and abandoned in the current health, job, and housing crisis. Programs available to youth in care, like CHAFEE, which help youth in care achieve self-sufficiency through employment, housing, education, and financial support, should extend their resources to eligible youth for as long as this current crisis persists.

The federal government, under Title IV-E, will provide states with reimbursable foster care, adoption, or guardianship assistance payments to youth up to the age of 21 if the youth is:

- “completing secondary education or a program leading to an equivalent credential;
- enrolled in an institution which provides post-secondary or vocational education;
- participating in a program or activity designed to promote, or remove barriers to, employment;
- employed for at least 80 hours per month; or
- incapable of doing any [of the above] due to a medical condition.”

As it stands now, DCF only extends care to youth who fall under the first three conditions. DCF should reconsider extending their coverage of care to ensure the health and stability of these other groups of youth over the age of 18.
The Connecticut General Assembly should preserve the state’s budget line item for Homeless Youth

Connecticut Voices for Children supports the Center for Children’s Advocacy in asking that the state budget’s line item for homeless youth be preserved. It is the only state line item that provides for this population. Federal funding does not allow as much flexibility as to who can be served, and flexibility is critical in this unprecedented pandemic.

Connecticut should invest in support systems for youth exiting State care

The lack of foster parents and foster homes for youth in care can be devastating, especially in times of crisis that require having a safe and stable place to stay. Connecticut should invest in recruiting and incentivizing people to foster youth, especially in times of severe economic downturn. Connecticut needs a more robust pool of foster parents to support and give stability to youth. Connecticut should also incentivize foster parents to foster youth past the age of 18, especially during times when aging out could prove extremely detrimental to youth’s well-being and security. Investing in more support for youth in care will help provide them with guidance, mentorship, and most importantly, a safety net.

Connecticut should mobilize its private and public resources to train and prepare youth for, and perhaps even guarantee, employment

As businesses in Connecticut reopen and reorganize their workforces, Connecticut’s youth in care should not be forgotten. Both the private and public sectors should work to engage with youth in Connecticut care so that there is a more stable and clear path to employment and security. Connecticut’s state agencies can take inspiration from its own DCF, and from places like Texas’ Department of Family and Protective Services, who give hiring preference to job applicants who were formerly in state care.194

Connecticut institutions of higher education should provide holistic services for youth leaving state care, like the California State university system.195 Youth in care in places like California and Texas receive university housing, admission, orientation, career planning, and other services. Although, youth currently in Connecticut state schools are provided housing if alternative support systems are unavailable, those support systems should continue during breaks during the current pandemic, allowing youth in care to find shelter on campus.

Additional enclosures to learn about youth in Connecticut state care

- “Between People and Places” by Connecticut Voices for Children discusses the harm caused to youth by constant upheaval and housing instability.
- “The Intersection of Juvenile Justice and Child Protection” by the Tow Youth Justice Institute provides information on the unique challenges and barriers to successful independent living faced by youth who are involved in both Connecticut’s juvenile justice and child welfare systems.
- “The Time to Grow” by Connecticut Voices for Children talks about the barriers to successful transitions to independent living faced by youth aging out of DCF care.
- “Finding Your Voice—Executive Summary” by Connecticut Voices for Children explores the importance of youth self-advocacy and self-empowerment in youth development.
For any child, moving to a new place can evoke uncertainty and anxiety. A move may present new opportunities such as new teachers, new friends, new neighborhoods, and a new space to call home. With these new and exciting opportunities, however, may also come devastating loss: leaving school connections, saying goodbye to familiar everyday faces, changing routines, and the loss of possessions in the shuffle.

Moving from place to place is often a regular experience for some children in foster care, as the search for a perfect home for a child may take a few tries. When children and youth in foster care are moved to a new placement, the transition can cause significant upheaval by introducing a new set of adult caregivers with different routines, personalities, and expectations. Although in the short-term, most individual placement changes occur to advance the child’s best interest, placement changes can add to the trauma and upheaval experienced in foster care.

Research tells us:

- Older youth and children who have been in foster care longer tend to experience more placement changes.
- A vicious cycle: youth who have experienced repeated placement changes often show maladaptive behavior, which may contribute to more instability in future placements.
- With one fewer placement change per year, youth are 1.8 times more likely to graduate high school.
- Experiencing multiple placements in childhood is associated with lower life satisfaction, low self-efficacy, and more criminal convictions in adulthood.

In Connecticut, youth experience an average of

2.92

moves per 1,000 days in foster care

National standard: 4.12

Continued on back
Data

Connecticut youth in care experience an average of 2.92 moves per 1,000 days in foster care. While much lower than the national average, that’s a little more than one move every year. For youth who remain in care for many years, those moves add up.

In Connecticut:

• Youth aged 12+ move more often than younger children.
• Latino and Black children move more often than white children and children of other races.

In the fall of 2017, Connecticut Voices for Children conducted an informal, voluntary survey with 46 youth from Department of Children and Families (DCF) Youth Advisory Boards. Although this was not a random sample and should not be considered representative of the general population of youth in care, it does show some of the range of foster youths’ experiences. Youth reported:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Having experienced</th>
<th>Having experienced</th>
<th>Having moved as recently as</th>
<th>With advance notice ranging from</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to 4 placement changes this year</td>
<td>0 to 30 placement changes in total</td>
<td>this week or as much as 8 years ago</td>
<td>minutes to 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>median = 1</td>
<td>median = 3</td>
<td>median = 11 months</td>
<td>median = 1 day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Policy Recommendations:

1. Ensure that youth receive at least ten days notice before moving whenever possible, and help them prepare to change placements.
2. Convene the team (including youth) to plan, process, and regroup whenever placement removals occur.
3. Develop an individualized list of each child’s possessions that must follow the child between placements.
4. Improve data collection and reporting regarding who experiences placement changes, why, and what the process looks like.
5. Convene youth to provide input into policy and practice around placement changes.

Read the report: www.ctvoices.org/youthonthe move
The Intersection of Juvenile Justice and Child Protection: Dual Status Youth

**Background**

Dual status youth are often an invisible population and experience a myriad of challenges. While states have a general understanding that there are many youth being served by both their child welfare and juvenile justice systems, in the majority of states, the movement has not been sufficient toward collaborating to better serve this very vulnerable population. Research estimates of youth in the juvenile justice system with child welfare involvement is upwards of 50%.  

Dual-status youth often struggle with a number of challenges, many of which are also common to youth in either the child welfare or the juvenile justice systems. These include educational and mental health problems, a higher incidence of drug use, and sexual abuse. Additionally, dual status youth experience more “complex trauma” than youth in the general population — meaning “exposure to multiple traumatic events, often of an invasive, interpersonal nature, with the potential to have more wide-ranging and long-term impact.”  

Children who experienced abuse or neglect early in life were also more likely to be younger at their first arrest, to recidivate, and to become chronic offenders.

Both youth of color and females are disproportionally represented among dual status youth. The causes are varied and have often proved resistant to change. Females are disproportionately represented in the dual-status youth population. They make up one-third to one-half of the cases, compared to females in the juvenile justice system alone comprise 20 to 25% of the cases. Youth of color have been overrepresented at every stage of the delinquency process — from arrest, to secure detention, confinement, and transfer to the adult system. While Latino youth are underrepresented nationally in the foster care system, they are generally overrepresented in the juvenile justice system.

In recent years, better data collection and analysis in many localities has helped spur the development of strategies to reduce disparities among youth in contact with the juvenile justice system. This work is paving the way for a more equitable juvenile justice system that will treat youth fairly regardless of their race or ethnicity and address many issues common to the child welfare system.

**Understanding the Unique Experiences of Dually-Involved Youth**

Youth with histories of involvement in the child welfare system and juvenile justice may or may not be known by either system. It’s important to understand the three primary categories of dual status youth that tend to be underserved:

- **Dually-Identified Youth:** Youth who are currently involved with the juvenile justice system and have a history in the child welfare system but no current involvement.
- **Dually-Involved Youth:** Youth who have concurrent involvement
(diversionary, formal, or a combination of the two) with both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

**Dually-Adjudicated Youth** Youth who are concurrently in the child welfare system and adjudicated in the juvenile justice systems (i.e., both dependent and delinquent).

Youth who are served by child welfare, justice or both are often shaped by parental or guardian absence or neglect. These youth are more likely to engage in behavior that will bring them into early, frequent and prolonged contacts with the juvenile justice system and are often underserved and/or do not generally receive the services intended to address their histories of abuse, neglect and/or trauma.

Trauma is not the adverse experience itself, but rather a response to adversity when a child’s ability to cope and function is fundamentally undermined. Traumatic events can cause increased anxiety, depression, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, difficulty managing relationships, and have lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual wellbeing. Children exposed to abuse or neglect can become hypersensitive to negative feedback, develop aggressive self-protective behaviors, or become emotionally disconnected as the result of fear and anxiety. If these issues are inadequately addressed or persist, children may become difficult for caretakers and schools to manage.

Research highlights that dual status youth are younger at the time of their first arrest, have higher rates of recidivism, are detained more often and for longer periods of time, experience more frequent placement changes, are more likely to experience school failure, and generally have more extensive mental health needs than youth who do not touch both systems. "Many of our maltreated youths cross over into the juvenile justice and other systems of care, as child abuse and/or neglect increases the risk of arrest as a juvenile by 55% and the risk of committing a violent crime by 96%." Looking at youth behavior through a trauma lens offers greater insight into why youth can appear to be acting aggressively, or placing themselves in harm’s way. For example, the use of coercive practices such as seclusion and restraints in the behavioral health and juvenile justice systems; the abrupt removal of a child from an abusing family in the child welfare system; the use of invasive procedures in the medical system; the harsh disciplinary practices in educational/school systems; or intimidating practices in the juvenile justice system can be re-traumatizing for individuals who already enter these systems experiencing significant traumatic symptoms.

Without a coordinated approach, youth often move from one system to another, many times frequently, experiencing unintended additional trauma that can be attributed to: delays in recognizing dual-status and in providing appropriate responses; conflicting goals and requirements based on separate child welfare and juvenile justice case plans; duplicative and/or non-collaborative case management and supervision practices that are often inefficient and counter-productive; and poor permanency and juvenile justice outcomes for children, youth, and families. "In addition, the incapacity of systems to address the educational barriers that these children and youth face reflects the fact that each system may be overwhelmed by the unmet needs of the students.”

**Special Challenges in Addressing Dual-status Issues**

Dual status youth require systems to work together in a different way to help them realize improved outcomes. Unfortunately, experience has shown that changing entrenched system policies and practices can be difficult and accompanied by a number of challenges. Structural challenges often include a lack of cohesive case management and fiscal inefficiencies that result in poor service delivery for the dually-involved youth population. When there is no coordinated response to the identification of these youth, there is no consistent assessment of their needs and risks. Service delivery among systems can be duplicative or contradictory, and opportunities to prevent further system involvement can be lost. "Moreover, when the systems fail to collaboratively engage families or to establish a joint permanency goal for a youth, the long-term outcomes for dually-involved youth suffer.”

Dual status children often miss large portions of the school year because they move from one placement to another and teachers and administrators often do not know how to effectively serve highly mobile students if the transfer of student records is delayed. When admitted to a new school, youth find that the academic classes they need are already full and/or the level of class instruction may be very different from their previous school. Another serious problem is that children who transfer from one school to another have difficulty making lasting friendships. The lack of social bonding also is predictive of youth crossing over from the child welfare to the delinquency system.

Information-sharing challenges are often encountered among the various agencies due to complex legal rules, different record-keeping procedures, the limits of current technology,
and other factors that make it difficult for everyone involved in a particular child’s case to be fully informed about the child’s background and current situation. In addition, a lack of policies that requires systems to work together, can result in a lack of motivation to address the challenges faced.

The costs of maltreatment and trauma to children, families, and society at large are profound. According to a study funded by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the lifetime cost of child maltreatment and related fatalities in one year totals $124 billion. Indirect costs, the long-term economic consequences to society because of childhood trauma, include costs associated with increased use of our health-care system, juvenile and adult criminal activity, mental illness, substance abuse, and domestic violence. Prevent Child Abuse America estimates that child abuse and neglect prevention strategies can save taxpayers $104 billion each year. Another challenge in an uncoordinated system is the issue of secondary trauma. State agencies and service provider personnel are affected by the traumas youth have experienced. When system staff experience secondary trauma, their health and work productivity are at risk. To strengthen systems, they must work to prevent and manage secondary traumatic stress.

Strengthening the Connection between Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice

In agency structures that are created to serve youth, the intention is always to make a positive difference in the well-being of the child. However, even when agency staff recognize the need to collaborate, there can still be many barriers and few incentives. Agencies can frequently have deeply entrenched beliefs about their current way of working and system partners. “This can result in the staff from one agency expecting the “other system” to simply deal with the issue instead of working together.”

Dual status youth often exhibit the same problem behaviors in many areas of their lives. A lack of transition planning for juveniles makes successful reentry and integration into the community extremely difficult. Service providers often receive inadequate professional development and specialized transition training. Due to a lack of interdisciplinary collaboration, service providers are often unprepared to provide appropriate transition services. Providing an opportunity for child welfare and juvenile justice staff to learn about one another’s agency missions, system goals, and daily work can help strengthen this relationship. Cross-training can allow them to get to know employees from the other agency and to get a feel for their role and responsibilities.

When jurisdictions begin to work in a coordinated fashion, the systems find that they are more easily able to:

• streamline processes,
• make information available to relevant parties,
• identify opportunities for alternatives to formal processing,
• ensure the use of appropriate and valid evaluations,
• produce cohesive case plans,
• successfully engage youth and families in their own case plans, make effective use of scarce resources, and
• promote decision making that is fair, equitable, and developmentally appropriate.

“Ultimately, when systems that have historically operated in isolation from one another come together to serve the youth they have in common, there is an increased ability to access expertise and resources that best meet the needs of dual status youth. This can result in more effective responses to these youth, increasing the likelihood of steering them away from the juvenile justice system as well as linking those involved with the most effective services and treatment.”

By focusing on improved processes and interagency collaboration, structural barriers to coordination may be reduced and merged funding streams may provide more efficiencies. Information sharing can be facilitated through an integrated state-level data system, state statutes or mandates may increase the pace of statewide change, and local practices may be subject to greater oversight. Gathering information on all dual-status youth, including their educational needs and progress, will present more data for implementing evidence-based best practices to treat their needs, and identifying opportunities to prevent juvenile justice involvement.

If potential partners are operating in silos and the agency leadership and staff have inconsequential knowledge of one another’s organization, they are operating at the co-existing stage of collaboration. If the union of the agencies has progressed to the communication stage, staff and leadership across the agencies will have an understanding of one another’s mission even though no formal partnering is occurring. The lack of information sharing and integration of services can cause an increase in the number of children and youth in “placement”.

Agencies operating at the cooperation and coordination stages are often partnering more substantially, and the dialogue has moved beyond exchanging mission statements and a student’s service plans. “Much of the conversation pertaining to collaboration is likely occurring at the policymaker or agency-head level, and policies may begin to reflect practices that allow a quick and easy exchange of records. As the agencies move into the coordination stage, agency staff should begin promoting, hosting, and attending cross-agency training and staff development activities; shared decision-making should be occurring on the best way to meet the needs of young people; communication among policymakers should be routine, and case managers, front-line staff, and agencies should be addressing the needs of most children and youth in the community with complementary universal interventions and strategies.

Once agencies merge their efforts and thinking and then empower their staff to collaborate, they have reached the stages of coalition and true collaboration. A common goal underlies the supports, services, and interventions that are provided to children, youth, and families. Agencies may
have adopted common policies that support the funding of evidence-based programs. “Agencies may be developing budgets jointly and have assembled their budgets into a larger integrated children’s budget for the state or community that promotes a common goal and vision. Blended or braided funding is a common practice when agencies have formed such a collaborative union. As the agencies reach full collaboration, a heightened level of trust is established between and among them, and the partnerships are ultimately sustained. Efforts are purposefully made to connect children and youth with the larger community. The end result is that the community becomes known as a community that takes care of its young people and families.” 15

Conclusion

Again and again, success in creating dual agency systems relies on the gathering and sharing of data. This involves development of data sharing agreements; automated case linking routines; shared funding arrangements; and case coordination protocols among state-level agencies. It is important to outline areas where data sharing is critical in moving forward.

Some of these data needs are understanding:

- What are the causes for the placement disruptions that these young people experience?
- What are the underlying reasons, beyond the broad categories, for home removals?
- What are the circumstances surrounding these children’s arrests or charges?
- For example, are they getting arrested at schools or in group care facilities?
- What are the educational histories of this group of young people? How are schools interacting with them in terms of discipline and academic support?
- How many have special education needs, what types of needs, and are they being met? Who is advocating for these young people in school?
- What are the behavioral health, trauma, substance use, and family histories of these young people? What interventions are most successful in providing support for these issues?
- What programs and policies work? What happens in the child welfare cases in which young people go on to succeed and thrive? 16

Next Steps/Recommendations

Any state considering a transformation in dual systems needs to begin with an assessment of the level of collaboration they are currently operating in and the readiness for partnerships. Strong judicial and administrative leadership and a comprehensive knowledge of the characteristics and needs of the dual status youth population is essential in moving toward effective interagency collaboration.

In the case of Connecticut, we are progressive in our ability to collaborate and understand the need for data sharing. A full understanding of what happens to a dually-involved youth in the juvenile justice system and what prevention opportunities are available is needed. This includes a coordinated response to identification of a youth, effective service delivery, engagement of the legal, educational and behavioral health systems, recognition of the impact of trauma and, transition planning for youth.

There is good news in Connecticut. The Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC) has been tasked, since 2014, with evaluating policies related to the juvenile justice system. This legislatively mandated body has submitted recommendations for four years that have orchestrated significant system reform. They have, over the course of the past several months, been developing a new strategic plan which outlines goals to be achieved by 2021.

The first goal of the new draft Strategic Plan is focused on limiting youth entry into the justice system. It begins, “Connecticut is committed to preventing youth from entering the formal justice system by appropriately serving them by alternative means or systems (e.g., community-based diversion, Restorative Justice approaches mental/behavioral health services, etc.) in order to achieve better outcomes for youth.” 17 This highlights the importance of cross-agency collaboration within and outside of the justice system to ensure youth are not inappropriately
One of the key objectives for this first goal in the draft Plan is to ensure that youth have appropriate supports from youth-serving agencies (schools, Department of Children and Families, etc.) as viable alternatives to the formal juvenile justice system, including but limited to:

- Substance use services
- Mental and behavioral health services
- Child Protection and Welfare Services
- Educational services, including special education
- Other services for youth with disabilities

Connecticut is poised to make substantial progress in cross-system collaboration, as the JJPOC and its workgroups begin to implement the goals and objectives in their 2019 – 2021 Strategic Plan “Achieving Positive Youth Outcomes for Safer and Healthier Communities: A shared vision for Connecticut’s juvenile justice system.” Hopefully Connecticut will become a model in addressing dual-status youth in the near future.

Footnotes
10. Addressing the Unmet Educational Needs of Children and Youth in the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Systems, pg 2, (Sebring et al., 2006; Kendziora and Osher, 2009
11. Addressing the Needs of Multi-System Youth: Strengthening the Connection between Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice, Shay Bilchik, Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, Georgetown University
12. Addressing the Unmet Educational Needs of Children and Youth in the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Systems, pg 18, 2012 Edition, Peter Leone, University of Maryland, Department of Special Education, Lois Weinberg, California State University, Los Angeles, Division of Special Education and Counseling
15. Addressing the Unmet Educational Needs of Children and Youth in the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Systems, pg 4, 2012 Edition, Peter Leone, University of Maryland, Department of Special Education, Lois Weinberg, California State University, Los Angeles, Division of Special Education and Counseling
16. Missed Opportunities: Preventing youth in the child welfare system from entering the juvenile justice system, Citizens for Juvenile Justice, pg 15
17. JJPOC Strategic Plan DRAFT, 2019 – 2021
18. Ibid
Children do best when they live in stable, supportive families. DCF has made great improvements in keeping families intact and in placing children with relatives, but in many cases DCF is unable to achieve reunification, adoption, or a transfer of guardianship. When this happens, children ultimately “age out” of state care as legal adults without the guidance or financial supports that families provide. Over the last five years, 1,374 foster youth in Connecticut aged out of the care of DCF care into adulthood, often entirely alone.

Connecticut offers youth who stay in care multiple pathways toward success, however, many youth struggle to meet DCF expectations to stay in care. In 2016, 276 youth aged 18 to 23 were discharged from care; 23% of those discharges were due to failure to meet DCF expectations. In total, 21% of all foster youth who aged out last year left without a high school diploma. 57% left without a job. At least 46% were living in unstable housing situations. 13% were already pregnant or parenting. Only 11% had achieved an associate's or bachelor’s degree. In Connecticut’s job market, few of them can expect to earn a living wage.

The result is that youth who grow up in state care are ill-prepared to navigate adulthood alone at 18, and many continue to experience hardship throughout their lives. At least 18% required intensive developmental or mental health services upon leaving. Follow-up of an earlier cohort of youth who had aged out found that at least 50% were relying on public assistance for food, housing, or cash welfare.
From state care into adulthood without a supportive family. In the event of a crisis, many of the most vulnerable former foster youth have no one to whom they can turn.

Although DCF has managed to provide many quality services under limited appropriations, poor outcomes for so many youth highlight the need for continual refinement. As a historical leader in social services, Connecticut must continue taking steps to better support the youth in its care as they move from the child welfare system into adulthood. The state’s obligation to prepare youth for stable, successful adulthood is both ethically and fiscally sound. Ethically, after assuming the responsibility of parenting, the state should ensure that youth in care receive what a supportive family would provide. For most young adults, the guidance and material support of family extend long past an 18th birthday. Fiscally, wise investments in foster youth can promote a robust young workforce and reduce the need for costly later interventions to combat poverty, incarceration, and homelessness.

**Recommendations:**

- Assist youth in better preparing for the future. This includes innovation in case planning, ongoing education about post-secondary policies, comprehensive discharge planning, and developing contingency plans.
- Enhance supports for older youth seeking connections with their biological and foster families.
- Provide a guaranteed 90-day transition period for all youth leaving care.
- Prevent youth from discharging into homelessness, and intervene in the event of homelessness.
- Expand data collection regarding youth outcomes after leaving care.

Data presented in this brief come primarily from the Department of Children and Families. Full report available at www.ctvoices.org/timetogrow
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FINDING YOUR VOICE:
SUPPORTING THE SELF-ADVOCACY OF YOUTH IN THE CARE OF THE CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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Learning how to voice concerns, assert rights, and challenge harmful systems is a difficult and necessary part of youth development. Self-advocacy is the skillset that helps individuals navigate the space between personal identity and society. It is a skillset by which individuals identify their wishes, strengths, needs and rights; understand the systems they exist in; and understand when and how to challenge those systems when their needs are not met or their rights are violated.

Youth rely on the adult caregivers and support systems in their lives to both show and tell them how to use self-advocacy in everyday and complex situations, however, adults are often skeptical of a young person’s ability to understand their own needs, and can undermine a child’s self-advocacy, doing what they think is best rather than what the youth wishes.

Self-advocacy is especially important for people belonging to marginalized groups—such as people with developmental or intellectual disabilities, people with learning disabilities, people of color, and, we argue, youth in foster care—due to the oppressive nature or historical failings of the systems that serve them.

Adolescents who grow up in the foster care system can face a number of barriers to their development; removal from home, separations from communities and supports, and changes in placement and social workers are a few hurdles that youth in care may have to overcome in their journey to find their voice. Providing youth in foster care with tools and strategies to advocate for their needs and structuring child welfare processes to create space for youth self-advocacy and respond to youth self-advocacy are critical to ensure that youth in the child welfare system can meet their goals.

National literature about self-advocacy of youth in foster care is limited, so Connecticut Voice for Children extends literature examining self-advocacy of youth with learning disabilities to create a framework for understanding how youth in Connecticut’s foster care system can advocate for themselves within the child welfare system. We conducted a scan of the Department of Children and Families’ policy to find avenues for supporting and training youth advocacy. Some important existing policy and tools include:

- Youth Advisory Boards (YABs): YABs are small convenings of youth organized by a local coordinator in each of the area offices and a statewide coordinator at the central office. At YAB meetings, youth in DCF care are able to share their insights and thoughts on DCF policy and practice and make suggestions for improvement.
- SpeakUp Handbook: A guide created by the Center for Children’s Advocacy that covers the right of youth in care. The booklet also informs youth of the responsibilities of those that care for them and different ways they can participate in decisions that affect them.
- Child and Family Permanency Teaming: Permanency teaming is the intentional work, by DCF, to actively involve the social supports of the youth “in the process of engaging, assessing, and planning for the child’s best interests in order to achieve safety, permanency, health and learning.”
In our research, Connecticut Voices for Children collected and utilized four types of data: a youth survey, youth focus groups, DCF staff interviews, and analysis of quantitative systems data provided by DCF and the Juan F. Federal Court Monitor’s Office. We utilized this mixed methodology in order to create a robust empirical basis to demonstrate that youth in foster care have better experiences and outcomes when their self-advocacy is meaningful and to understand the ways in which youth in DCF care are supported in their advocacy, as well as the systemic barriers they face. Our analyses across these combinations of both qualitative and quantitative data from youth and the adults that support youth identified four major themes:

The importance of self-advocacy for youth in care.
• 82 percent of youth surveyed indicated that it is important to them to be able to advocate for their needs.
• Across all measured domains of youth’s needs—educational needs, medical and dental health needs, and behavioral health needs—youth’s needs were more likely to be met when youth participated in their case planning processes.
• However, most youth do not participate in the case planning process. Almost 90 percent of DCF offices had less than 40 percent of youth attend the meetings in which youth’s needs are identified and goals are set to meet those needs.

Trusted relationships are vital to youth advocacy.
• Youth who felt comfortable advocating for their own needs also indicated appreciating having someone they trust present when voicing their concerns.
• 87 percent of youth indicated that they felt more comfortable voicing concerns when with their social worker, and DCF staff interviewed indicated that the youth in their care come to them with needs, problems, and grievances.
• When parents attend case planning meetings, youth’s behavioral needs are more likely to be met.
• However, not all youth have similar access to the trusted relationships that support their self-advocacy. Less than half of youth ages 13-17 and just over 50 percent of Hispanic youth engage in what their case plans determine to be regular enough visits to maintain connections with parents.

DCF has great tools for teaching and supporting self-advocacy, but these tools are not accessible to all youth.
• Only 47 percent of youth surveyed had heard of the SpeakUp book, but all those youth indicated that the information in the book was useful.
• Not all DCF regions have regular YAB meetings, and many YABs are not accessible for youth with disabilities or verbal delays.

Youth in care face systemic barriers to receiving the tools and support they need to self-advocate.
• When youth do not feel that their needs are being met, youth and staff reported that it could result in acting out or self-injurious behaviors.
• Stability in social worker is a critical component of helping youth self-advocate. As the number of social workers a youth had during their time in care increased, youths’ comfort with self-advocacy decreased. Over half of youth indicated that they wanted to have more time with their social worker.
• Stability in foster placements is also an important component for self-advocacy. Youth who experienced a greater number of moves (6 or more) placed less importance on self-advocacy.
After conducting a policy scan of the current policy in DCF, looking to other states for best practices, and analyzing our data, Connecticut Voices for Children developed a series of policy recommendations integrating youth voice and collected data. Broadly, we propose:

- DCF promotes awareness of YABs throughout the department, ensures that YABs meet monthly, and coordinates transportation for youth.
- DCF lessens the workload of YAB coordinators and ensures that adolescent specialists are present in every region.
- DCF utilizes technology to facilitate youth and trusted others attending ACR meetings.
- DCF schedules meetings at a time and in a location accessible to youth, their families, and their lawyers.
- DCF develops a course to teach youth how to advocate in their ACR meetings with a focus on giving youth progressive control over leading and reporting in their case planning.
- DCF creates accessible standardized trainings for social workers regarding topics like the SpeakUp handbook, YABs, youth rights, and other youth advocacy tools.
- DCF makes SpeakUp books accessible to youth’s lawyers.
- DCF creates a position for a Youth Ombudsman.
- DCF utilizes a Universal Design for Accessibility framework to ensure all youth have self-advocacy tools and opportunities.
- The Connecticut General Assembly passes a bill that requires social workers to review the SpeakUp tools and adolescent services with youth when youth receive bills of rights.
- The Executive Branch bring together agencies serving youth in foster care—including the courts, the education system, and others—to discuss how youth are taught and supported in self-advocacy across systems.
- The Judicial Branch collect data on youth participating in Child Protective Services hearings and work to ensure that youth are invited to these hearings.
- The Connecticut General Assembly passes a bill making it mandatory that adolescent youth ACR and permanency teaming meetings occur outside of work and school hours.
- The Connecticut General Assembly passes a bill mandating that DCF must offer to schedule meetings in a location accessible to youth and fund necessary social worker overtime.
- The Connecticut General Assembly passes a bill to ensure youth in care aged 18 and over can access legal representation and provide funding so that Public Defenders can provide this representation.

For more information on our research and recommendations, read the full report at www.ctvoices.org
During adolescence, youth should have experiences that contribute to their development into successful adults. These experiences lead to the development of personal identity, and youth need support while developing answers to the questions “Who am I?” and “What is my place in the world?” Safe opportunities to explore one’s identity may occur by joining school clubs, attending local events held by community organizations, going to summer camps, participating in religious groups, developing relationships with friends and mentors, and more. For any adolescent, developing identity is a complex – yet crucial – process.

Involvement with the foster care system impacts youths’ path of identity exploration and development. Some experiences in foster care—such as placement moves that may result in changing schools or caseworkers—can disrupt a youth’s life, including their developing sense of self. Within this already vulnerable group of young people, some youth need specific supports to fully explore and develop certain dimensions of their identity such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Connecticut DCF has made vast improvements in recent years that have increased positive outcomes for youth and their families. More youth now remain at home instead of entering foster care; when youth must be removed, they are increasingly placed with relatives and are less likely to be placed into a group or residential placement.

Yet, additional work remains. On any given day, there are roughly 4,000 children in Connecticut’s foster care system. In Fiscal Year 2018, 37 percent (over 1,500) of youth in Connecticut foster care are 13 years of age or older. A majority of youth experience three or more placement changes since their most recent entrance into foster care.
Adolescents in foster care are less likely to return home or to be adopted than children of younger ages. Moreover, adolescents are the least likely age group to achieve permanency within 18 months of residing in foster care. This instability means that adolescents in foster care face an increased risk for adverse outcomes and need enhanced support during this critical developmental period.

Connecticut Voices for Children conducted voluntary, informal surveys and discussions with youth across the state from the DCF Youth Advisory Boards. Responses from these discussions offer a look into how some youth feel foster care has influenced their identity development. Youth reported:

**Feeling disconnected from their schools and community.**
Several of the survey responses revealed that youth did not feel connected to their current schools and communities—this was especially true for youth who had had three or more placement changes.

**The importance of having freedom to be oneself.**
Like most adolescents, youth wished to have the freedom to wear the clothes that matched parts of their identity and participate in the activities they enjoyed.

**The need for support in identity exploration.**
Youth highlighted the importance of having caregiver support when exploring different facets of their identity including spirituality, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

To support this developmental process effectively, Connecticut must dedicate sufficient resources to better serve the unique needs of adolescents and implement strong processes to adequately assess, protect, and support the identity development of adolescents living in foster care.

"Whatever we share with [foster parents], they should accept us no matter what."
- Connecticut foster youth, age 17
As a result, Connecticut Voices for Children has developed a series of policy recommendations based on a scan of current DCF policy and best practices in other states, integrating youth voice and state-collected data.

RECOMMENDATION 1
Update the current Adolescent Bill of Rights and Expectations to incorporate protections and supports for identity development and implement a process for all adolescents to receive and be explained these rights.

- This includes placing an emphasis on cultural awareness, social and peer inclusion, and community inclusion as a part of normalcy. This update should also represent youth voice by including additional recommendations current or former foster youth may have.

RECOMMENDATION 2
Bolster the protections for youth who identify as LGBTQ and implement programs to support the identity development of these youth.

- We recommend that DCF strengthen existing protections for LGBTQ youth specifically to include provision regarding identity disclosure sensitivity, identity pronoun and preferences, and responsive placement considerations and case planning.
- We also recommend that Connecticut require that DCF staff and youth caregivers receive training specifically about LGBTQ identities that prepare them with the knowledge and resources necessary to support LGBTQ youth.

RECOMMENDATION 3
Work to improve the assessment and support of identity development of all adolescents who reside in foster care.

- Connecticut Voices for Children recommends that DCF implement a tool to assess adolescent needs inclusive of identity development. In addition, we recommend that DCF, with support from the state legislature, commit further resources to recruit and train a diverse group of foster parents specifically for adolescents. Lastly, we support the implementation of mutual information sharing prior to moving into a new placement.
Expanding access to affordable, reliable, high-quality early child care is an investment in Connecticut’s recovering economy

“All other infrastructure sectors in our economy receive significant public support because we recognize that the private sector alone cannot bear the cost of a quality infrastructure. Public goods require public investment. All of society benefits from quality child care, but parents still bear the majority of the costs. By recognizing the importance of child care as a part of economic recovery, we can now push to have child care included as a priority investment in future infrastructure and economic development programs. Our economy depends on it.” Mildred E. Warner, “Recession, Stimulus and the Child Care Sector: Understanding Economic Dynamics, Calculating Impact***196

For Connecticut’s economy to recover from the devastating effects of the coronavirus, parents in Connecticut need access to affordable, reliable, and high-quality early child care. Connecticut’s early child care infrastructure, however, was ill-equipped to meet the needs of Connecticut parents before the spread of the coronavirus. The early child care industry will need significant investment and restructuring to ensure that it can expand to meet the needs of all parents who want to re-enter Connecticut’s labor force.

Research by Connecticut Voices for Children found that Connecticut’s early care industry has shrunk in its capacity to serve young children.**197 Figure 1 shows that in 2003, Connecticut had 89,576 licensed and accredited early care slots for children age zero through five. Early in 2020, CT had 2,055 fewer licensed and accredited early care slots than in 2003. The state’s 50,000 infant and toddler slot shortage has created larger strains on new parents. This shortage is caused, in part, by a steep decline in the number of licensed family child care centers (FCCs). In 2002, there were 3,431 FCCs across the state, and in 2019 there were only 1,890 FCCs. The decrease in FCCs, which provide more affordable child care than many child care centers, especially impacts low-income working families and families of color in the state. These families are more likely to utilize FCCs than center-based care due to FCCs having lower costs, more flexible hours, and closer proximity to many homes.
Family Economic Security: Employment - Part 1, Figure 1: The number of licensed family child care centers in Connecticut is steadily declining. Source: Connecticut Voices for Children. The state of early childhood: Can Connecticut’s struggling family child care providers fill a 50,000 infant and toddler gap amidst the coronavirus recession?¹⁹⁸

As the supply of early child care has decreased, the provision of care has become increasingly unaffordable for parents. Connecticut has the fifth-most expensive child care in the nation.¹⁹⁹ The state’s average weekly fees are $309 for center-based providers and $220 for FCCs, equating to $16,068 and $11,440 per year, respectively. For a family earning the median wage in Connecticut, center-based infant care can cost over 20 percent of their annual salary. Furthermore, the cost of child care impacts parental employment, particularly for mothers.²⁰⁰ A 10 percent increase in the price of child care is associated with a three to four percent reduction in the number of employed single mothers and a five to six percent reduction in the employment of married mothers.

Despite the high costs to parents, though, increasingly untenable pay is a driver of the state’s decreasing FCC labor force. Connecticut Voices for Children estimates that the average FCC owner earns $21,561 annually, not including the costs of benefits.²⁰¹ Over the years, the prices of rent and products have steadily risen, but the state’s early child care reimbursement rates have not kept up.

Expanding access to early child care can increase the number of businesses contributing to the economy

As Connecticut re-opens its economy, it is vital to rapidly stabilize the early child care industry. The early child care industry is a significant economic sector in its own right. Nationally, the early child care industry generates more revenue than commercial and industrial machinery and equipment repair, warehousing and storage, pipeline transportation, and water transportation.²⁰² This industry is composed of small businesses that provide employment and purchase goods and services. In 2016, Connecticut’s early child care industry brought in $718 million in revenue.²⁰³ Only 20.5 percent of this ($147,010,627) came from federal and state
Expanding access to early child care can increase the number of parents in the workforce

The early child care industry, at its core, allows parents to work and grow in their careers. In 2016, 27 percent of Connecticut families with children under the age of five had one or more parents outside the labor force. This included 16 percent of single-parent households and 33 percent of two-parent households. A significant amount of research suggests that not being able to access child care explains why many parents are outside of the labor force. A study in the city of Rio de Janeiro found that when Brazil created a constitutional right to child care, the employment rate of mothers rose from 36 percent to 46 percent. National estimates from the United States find that 94 percent of workers who involuntarily work part-time cite child care problems as the reason; 8.7 percent of families with a child under the age of six had someone quit a job, not take a job, or greatly change their job responsibilities in the past 12 months because of problems with child care. As schools and early care centers closed in response to coronavirus, an estimated five percent of individuals in Connecticut now experiencing unemployment cite child care as the reason for their—hopefully temporary—unemployment. Before the recession caused by coronavirus, lack of access to affordable child care kept many parents out of Connecticut’s labor force, and this barrier has only grown. It will be critical to get as many parents re-engaged in the workforce as possible for economic recovery.

Expanding access to government-subsidized early child care will have positive economic outcomes for parents, businesses, and taxpayers across the state of Connecticut. One reason for this is that “states with a greater share of women in the labor force consistently have a higher share of children in paid care.” A model utilizing 2016 data from all 50 states found that a one percent higher women’s labor force participation rate was accompanied, on average, by a 1.228 percent higher share of children in paid child care. If we input Connecticut’s data into this model, it suggests that increasing the share of children in paid care from its current 28.5 percent to 36 percent may be associated with an increase in the women’s labor force participation from 63 percent to 67 percent. Although this model is not causal, comparisons to data from countries that have instituted widespread affordable child care suggest that there is in fact a causal relationship between expanding child care and women entering the workforce. Twenty years after Quebec instituted a universal child care program, the percentage of women ages 25-44 in the workforce rose from 64 percent (similar to Connecticut’s) to 80 percent. In 2018, Quebec’s women’s workforce stood around 85 percent.

Extrapolating further and utilizing 2019 Census population estimates, Connecticut has 2,035,779 women between the ages of 18 and 65. If labor force participation among these women increases from 63 percent to 67 percent, Connecticut’s labor force will increase by 81,431 women. Assuming these women, on average, earn the median wage for women in CT of $48,776, Connecticut stands to gain almost $5 billion in additional taxable incomes.
Even among working parents, expanding access to affordable, reliable, high-quality child care will likely result in positive economic activity. A 2018 study that surveyed parents with children under the age of three found that parents who do not have adequate child care experience fewer work hours, less productive work, and diminished career opportunities. This study then completed a national economic analysis of per worker impacts.

The research found that annually, each working parent with children under the age of three who does not have adequate child care loses $3,210 in savings and $140 due to the extra cost of job searching. Over ten years, this compounds to a lost $8,940 per worker. Businesses that employ working parents with children under the age of three also suffer financial consequences when parents don’t have adequate child care. Per working parent without adequate child care, a business loses an estimated $860 in lost revenues (due to lower productivity) and $290 for extra costs to rehire. Over ten years, this amounts to businesses losing $1,490 in revenue per working parent without adequate child care. The lost revenue from workers and businesses then equates to lost tax revenue. The study estimates that per worker without adequate child care, the federal government loses $400 in income tax revenue and $230 in sales tax revenue. Over 10 years, this equates to $2,270 in lost tax revenue.

Expanding access to early child care can increase children's educational achievement

In addition to the short-term economic benefits of early child care businesses employing individuals and child care allowing parents to work, the early child care industry creates long-term economic benefits for future generations. The benefits of preparing children to learn in school are particularly robust for children from disenfranchised communities. A review of studies on the long-term economic effects of high-quality preschool found that children from disenfranchised communities who attended preschool experienced higher reading achievement throughout their education, reduced need for special education services, lower likelihood of justice system involvement, higher high school graduation rates, higher earnings at age 27, and reduced use of social services by age 27. Although the results were not as robust for children who come from more economically privileged communities, these children still showed higher reading achievement and language development attributed to preschool attendance.

In Connecticut, barriers to access to preschool fall particularly hard on low-income families and on Black and Latinx families. Connecticut Voices for Children finds that since 2003, between 56 and 80 percent of children in lower-income school districts (District Reference Groups F-I) have attended preschool, as opposed to between 77 and 98 percent in higher-income school districts (District Reference Groups A-E). These lower preschool attendance rates are likely to impact economic opportunities and earnings for lower-income children in Connecticut for the duration of their lifetimes.

Investing in universal access to early child care is the right investment in Connecticut’s economic recovery and long-term economic health

Although no states have yet introduced universal early child care access, several countries have created universal programs. Norway found that within two years of expanding their early child care system to be universal, increased tax revenue offset more than 13 percent of the extra cost of expanding child care. The amount of recouped tax revenue continued to compound each year as individuals’ average earnings rose, producing an enduring tax base. Findings from Norway were consistent with studies conducted in Quebec, Spain, Brazil, and Belgium. In Quebec, the expansion of women in the workforce has been so great that the
universal child care program more than pays for itself; it is actually a driver of revenue for the province.\textsuperscript{218} States that have introduced universal preschool programs, including Oklahoma\textsuperscript{219} and Georgia,\textsuperscript{220} have found universal programs almost entirely pay for themselves over time.

Universal access to early child care is a bold solution that Connecticut needs to help more parents re-enter the labor force, boost the workforce’s productivity, support more child care small businesses, and invest in the long-term economic well-being of Connecticut’s children and families. In the short term, offering universal access to early child care will help boost Connecticut’s economic activity from a larger and more productive labor pool and more small businesses employing individuals and purchasing services and goods. This is especially critical as Connecticut begins to feel the impacts of closing the economy to slow the spread of COVID-19. In the long term, offering universal access to early child care will help to close the racial and economic opportunity gap in Connecticut and contribute to a thriving economy for the next generation. It is both the smart and the just solution.

**Additional enclosures to learn about early child care in Connecticut**

- “Just Facts: The State of Early Childhood” by Connecticut Voices for Children provides additional data and policy recommendations to help Connecticut stabilize it’s early child care industry during and after the coronavirus closures.
- “Connecticut’s Early Care and Education for Infants and Toddlers in Crisis” by the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance, Connecticut Voices for Children, and the Connecticut Association for Human Services provides data and policy recommendations to help Connecticut expand the number of child care slots for infants and toddlers.
- “Care 4 Kids Primer” by the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance, Connecticut Voices for Children, and the Connecticut Association for Human Services provides background information about the Care 4 Kids child care subsidy program.
THE STATE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD:
CAN CONNECTICUT’S STRUGGLING FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS FILL A 50,000 CHILD CARE GAP AMIDST THE CORONAVIRUS RECESSSION?

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Our report examines the family child care provider (FCC) economic model specifically and shows that many FCCs are making far below minimum wage, just $6.10 per hour. We also find that certain aspects of the industry, such as the market rate survey, don’t work for FCCs. Moreover, necessary funding for preschool programs has benefited some child care providers but has diverted families with preschool-aged children away from FCCs.

This year, our report examines the status of Connecticut’s child care industry before the coronavirus pandemic, and explores recommendations that can help state policymakers create a stronger early childhood environment that is necessary for rebuilding the state's economy. We find that while Connecticut has made some progress, many indicators point to the same conclusions that we have drawn in our previous years’ reports on the state of early childhood. This year’s report concludes that the state continues to see the following:

1. **A SHORTAGE OF CHILD CARE SLOTS,**
2. **HIGH CHILD CARE COSTS THAT ARE NOT AFFORDABLE TO MOST FAMILIES,** and
3. **A CONTINUING DIVIDE IN PRESCHOOL EXPERIENCE BETWEEN HIGHER- AND LOWER-INCOME TOWNS.**

Our report examines the family child care provider (FCC) economic model specifically and shows that many FCCs are making far below minimum wage, just $6.10 per hour. We also find that certain aspects of the industry, such as the market rate survey, don’t work for FCCs. Moreover, necessary funding for preschool programs has benefited some child care providers but has diverted families with preschool-aged children away from FCCs.

The coronavirus pandemic brings into heightened focus the critical importance of child care to the operations and the economy of our country and state. Connecticut announced a 50,000 infant and toddler child care shortage in early February of this year, and the coronavirus pandemic has only worsened the situation. With these rooted conditions and in light of the resulting conditions from the crisis, our report offers both short- and long-term policy recommendations.
Policy Recommendations

Child care workers are mostly women and disproportionately women of color, and child care providers are often overlooked within the family of small business; however, they are a critical industry that is integral to the “restarting” of the economy. As such, our policy recommendations are divided into two sections. First, we recommend actions, during the coronavirus pandemic, to stabilize the industry. Second, we urge the state to seize the opportunity for the child care sector to take root as essential infrastructure in rebuilding the economy.

Short-Term Policy Recommendations

- **Replace private paying fees.** The OEC should pay the income from private paying families and the parent contribution portions of subsidy families at March enrollment amounts for the duration of the crisis. This would ensure that child care providers have a full replacement of income without having to apply for myriad grants, loans, and other economic relief measures.

- **Draw down from the Budget Reserve Fund.** To ensure that more child care providers can stay open during the pandemic, Connecticut should draw down from the Budget Reserve Fund to fill in payment gaps for providers while they wait to receive CCDBG grant funding that is being distributed to states as part of the CARES Act.

- **Offer business training specific to child care.** Connecticut should immediately offer guidance and training specific to child care providers to assist them in navigating the current fiscal environment.

- **Move to presumptive eligibility for essential workers.** Connecticut should move to presumptive eligibility for Care 4 Kids for essential workers. Withholding full funding now means that families and providers have to gather and fill out the necessary paperwork, some of which may be much more difficult and time-consuming to gather while the state is locked down. Also, families and providers will need to wait until Care 4 Kids can make a determination before care can begin. This delays essential workers who are required to respond immediately to the current crisis and who need to know that their children are cared for in a quality child care setting.

- **Offer a more robust bonus and less complicated system of supports.** Connecticut should offer a more substantial bonus and a less complicated system for child care programs staying open to serve essential workers. Indeed, if Connecticut does not, some providers might opt to take the newly available unemployment insurance benefits. The unemployment insurance benefit announced in the federal CARES Act will likely not only replace but enhance many FCC providers’ pay.

- **Provide essential supplies.** Connecticut should give child care workers support in the form of essential supplies. Mandatory guidelines at retail stores limiting items to only one per customer of cleaning supplies and other necessary items and food have driven child care workers to shop more frequently, endangering themselves and others. Retail stores are limiting products such as cleaning supplies, hygiene products, and even milk. Child care businesses should have an exemption from these limits. They should also have priority access from stores to these essential goods.

- **Increase capacity, accountability, and oversight.** Time is of the essence in enacting these policies. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAYEC) completed a survey of child care providers in mid-March 2020 and found that 17 percent of providers do not have funds available to re-open after a week of closure, 30 percent would not be able to re-open after two weeks of closure, and an additional 16 percent would not be able to re-open after a month of closure—63 percent in total. State governments are much more nimble than the federal government in their ability to supply businesses with money and other resources needed in-the-moment, but this can only happen when state governments adjust to increased workloads. After years of shrinking the State’s workforce, Connecticut should increase its agency capacity, accountability, and oversight to administer new emergency relief programs in a timely and appropriate manner.
**Long-Term Policy Recommendations**

- **Equalize subsidy rates for child care providers.** Connecticut should equalize the subsidy rates between centers and family child care providers. Both meet state licensing requirements, both are regularly inspected, both are fully regulated, and both have training and professional development requirements. Moreover, perpetuating a system that pits providers against each other and where some serve the most economically disadvantaged children and families and, yet, are paid less than other licensed counterparts is inequitable and bad for the economy. The lowest-income children need the same—if not better—care as children from high-income families. All licensed and regulated child care workers should be equally valued. This means that the State should replace the flawed market rate survey used to set rates with another system that acknowledges the actual cost of care. Allowing School Readiness slots at FCCs can also help to alleviate the injustice and grow the FCC industry.

- **Limit family pay to no more than 7 percent of income.** Connecticut should set its benchmark for families receiving subsidies to the federal benchmark. The State has made laudatory investments in pre-school slots and the minimum wage for workers. The State needs to make corresponding investments in the child care market to ensure that families have affordable child care available to them. In 2016, the federal Office of Child Care, under the Administration on Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, set a federal benchmark for families receiving subsidies, stating that affordable co-payments for these families should not exceed seven percent of household income. Connecticut should set this benchmark as a goal for all families.

- **Ensure all child care providers make a living wage.** Connecticut should raise reimbursement rates so that more entrepreneurs open centers after the government lifts physical-distancing guidelines. The child care industry must be economically viable for it to continue to provide this essential service. All workers must make, at the very least, a minimum wage and, preferably, a living wage. Ensuring the economic viability of the industry is the only way that families can have needed choices and access to high-quality child care. There is an immediate need to fill the 50,000 child care gap that Governor Lamont cited in February 2020. It is also a national need. With such low pay and razor-thin margins, there is little incentive for entrepreneurs to open new child care centers. Now is the time to raise reimbursement rates so that more entrepreneurs open centers after the government lifts physical-distancing guidelines. Or, better yet…

- **Redesign child care so that it is an essential infrastructure.** Connecticut should initiate universal child care. Child care is both a $99 billion industry nationally and necessary for the state and country’s overall economy to thrive. This pandemic underscores the importance and the pervasiveness of the need for child care—as well as the disparities that exist within it. Infrastructure consists of systems that undergird the basic economy. As with access to running water, which has been recognized by the United Nations as a human right, many Americans don’t question the existence of infrastructure until a crisis hits, exhibiting debilitating racial and socioeconomic inequities. During and after the coronavirus crisis, Connecticut should make efforts to ensure that access to child care is no more remarkable than access to running water. Many European countries understand that child care is an essential infrastructure and have figured out innovative approaches to make it as accessible and affordable as possible. For example, Germany’s “Kindertagesstätte” system, which has both government-funded and private-funded providers, uses a funding formula based on the scope of care, family income, and the number of siblings in care.
REFERENCES


What’s the Crisis?

Connecticut families need and deserve a strong and reliable early care and education system. When families have access to high-quality early care and education, their children are ensured a strong start in life and parents are available to contribute to the workforce. Connecticut Voices for Children estimates that Connecticut gains approximately $1.9 billion dollars per year from the results of children’s participation in high-quality early care programs.1 Yet, the current system does not have enough child care for families who seek care. Much of that care is unaffordable and some is of questionable quality.

Many families rely on Connecticut’s child care subsidy, Care 4 Kids, to help to pay for their children’s care while they are in the workforce to support their families. The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) administers Care 4 Kids with federal US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and state dollars. For information about Care 4 Kids, please see the Care 4 Kids Primer.2 Increased funding for Care 4 Kids is necessary to ensure that the early care and education system can meet the needs of families and our state while supporting the providers who are at the heart of the system. Currently, low wages and poor work conditions cause high turnover among educators and high rates of program closures. Families feel the pinch of the low availability and high costs of high-quality care.

1. Availability. Connecticut must commit to making further investments in an early childhood system that promotes healthy development for all children from birth to school age, particularly for children from low-income families. While Connecticut has invested heavily in subsidizing preschool through the School Readiness program, there needs to be greater investment in a system that supports infant and toddler care and education.

Low reimbursement rates impact the number of providers willing to accept families who require the subsidy. There are more young children needing child care than there are spots available. The OEC estimated that Connecticut needs approximately 51,0003 additional early care education spots. In fact, our state lost almost 600 ECE providers between July 2017 and June 20184 due to closures of 390 family day care homes and 198 centers. It is unclear how many child care spaces that number represents. The United Way of Connecticut surveyed these providers and found that of the 133 providers who responded to the survey, almost 27 percent reported a career change or that business was not profitable as the reason for closure. These percentages were even higher among the 54 providers from center-
based programs who responded to the survey. More than 35 percent of the center-based programs reported that the business was not profitable while 25 percent indicated that they were seeking a career change. These percentages are mutually exclusive, meaning that among center based providers, these two reasons account for almost 60 percent of the closures.

It is not surprising that the unprofitability of running an early care and education business was among the top reasons for making the decision to close. The federal government mandates that payment rates are “sufficient to ensure equal access for eligible families to child care services comparable to those provided by families.” This is typically defined as 75 percent of the state market rate as determined by a statewide survey – the Market Rate Survey (MRS). Our state has been unable to fund Care 4 Kids to the level of need or at 75 percent MRS, as recommended by HHS. If Connecticut is going to approach compliance with the federal MRS requirements, there likely will be fewer child care and education spaces available to families without additional Care 4 Kids funding from the state. This is true even with additional funds from the federal government. Therefore, it is likely that the Care 4 Kids program will return to operating a waitlist. The previous closure from 2016 to 2017 resulted in a waitlist of over 5,700 families. These waitlists create a barrier for many families seeking care.

2. Affordability. Linked to availability is affordability. The high cost of child care is burdensome to many low and moderate-income families. Approximately 80 percent of all child care in the state is not subsidized. Too many low and moderate-income families do not earn enough money to afford quality child care without the support of a child care subsidy. This is particularly true of care for infants and toddlers, which is the most expensive to provide and most difficult to find. Thousands of families in the labor force with young children struggle to find affordable options to provide care for their children while working. However, in 2016, only one in four families in Connecticut could adequately afford child care based on state and federal affordability guidelines.

Both the OEC and the U.S. HHS define affordable child care as care that costs no more than 10 percent of a family’s income. However, finding care at that rate is virtually impossible, even for families with middle to high incomes. For a family of four with an infant and preschooler in Connecticut, their income would have to be $266,760 per year in order to pay the average cost of center-based care and have their costs remain within 10 percent of their income. A family would have to be among the top ten percent of income earners in Connecticut in order to meet this expense comfortably.

Care 4 Kids determines what the family share of the costs should be based on their income (please see Table 1 below). For families with gross incomes at or above the 50 percent of the State Median Income (SMI) threshold, this is also ten percent of their gross income, but for others, it could be as low as two percent.

Table 1. The family share of the approved cost is a percentage of their gross income.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Share</th>
<th>Income Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0% to less than 20% SMI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4%</td>
<td>20% to less than 30% SMI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6%</td>
<td>30% to less than 40% SMI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>40% to less than 50% SMI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>50% to less than 86% SMI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: Care 4 Kids Income Guidelines
Currently, Care 4 Kids is only available for families with household earnings up to 50 percent of the state median income (SMI). This is $56,275 for a family of four, and, given the DHHS recommendations, that would put their child care costs at just over $5,600 per year. The average annual cost of infant and toddler care is almost three times that amount ($15,600) for full-time center-based care and almost twice as much for home-based care ($11,076). According to the Connecticut MRS, current Care 4 Kids rates for infants and toddlers are at the fourth percentile and at the seventh percentile for preschool. Given the actual cost of care relative to low reimbursement rates, many parents are required to pay the difference.

Even for a family of four at or above 75 percent of SMI ($84,412), the cost of care can be a challenge to manage. If parents have more than one child, the task is almost impossible without support. Without affordable care, many parents have to make very difficult decisions including juggling their bills, leaving the workforce or placing their children in unlicensed or makeshift care.

3. **Quality.** The value of early care and education hinges on it being of high-quality. The research regarding return on investment in ECE is founded on the expectations that young children are exposed to experiences that promote children’s development. Infants and toddlers require an environment with warm, supportive, nurturing, and positive relationships that are stimulating for their intellectual, social, and emotional development. High-quality child care is one that provides consistent, reliable, and safe care that promotes strong and healthy development in children. These factors lay the foundation for future growth and learning.

Teachers are crucial elements in developing high-quality programs. Concurrently, many early child care educators struggle to make a living wage. This year, the state legislature’s Education Committee tried and failed to increase rates to Care 4 Kids providers, despite a bipartisan effort. The OEC is still required to increase rates to at least the 25th percentile of the MRS, and this will likely result in fewer subsidized slots for families. Historically, efforts to increase the number of slots has come at the expense of low rates of reimbursement to providers. Connecticut cannot continue to sacrifice quality for the sake of quantity.

One of the greatest threats to quality is early childhood educator wages. Paradoxically, while many families struggle to find high-quality, affordable child care, early child care educators are among the lowest paid professionals in our state. Demand for quality child care is high and cost to families is also high, yet the wages to child care professionals remain unsustainably low. The early care and education workforce is consistently underpaid, particularly when compared to educators in the K-12 workforce, even with similar credentials. Connecticut has had legislation in place to increase educator levels among the ECE workforce for more than a decade. In 2011, the Connecticut legislature passed Public Act 11-54 to mandate education attainment of ECE head and assistant classroom teachers. However, wages have not kept pace with the mandate and the deadline has been extended several times. As teachers receive their bachelor degrees, many leave the field. The current ECE system incentivizes their transition to the K-12 system, where educators have better working conditions (e.g., fewer classroom hours, more planning time), as well as better pay and benefits.

Unfortunately, despite their value, many early childhood educators struggle to make a living wage. According to the Connecticut Department of Labor (DOL), the median hourly wage of child care workers was only $13.25 in 2018. This is approximately $27,567 per year, just a little more than the survival budget for a single
adult with no children. However, it would be a challenge for a single parent with even one child or for two parents with children earning low wages to afford housing and other necessities. This is compared to Kindergarten teachers in Connecticut, who on average earn $77,272 per year. This is far more than even directors of child care programs in the state, who earn an average annual salary of $63,140.

Connecticut must ensure that early childhood educators can both support themselves and pursue a meaningful career. This will reduce staff turnover and will allow the profession to keep its most educated staff. Staff turnover is a huge problem in the field; it reduces quality and adds to program costs. Reducing staff turnover is even more critical, as replacing staff in this field will be more difficult than it has been in the past. Connecticut has to comply with federal background check requirements by October 2019. This requirement is related to program safety and quality. Programs cannot place new educators in classrooms until at least the findings from background checks conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) as well the State Police Department have been shared with the OEC. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in the state losing up to five percent of CCDBG funding.

While the goal is to have this information relayed to the OEC within 24 hours, the best case scenario is for providers to receive the reports within two weeks. Although the OEC is working diligently to address the concerns, including waiving fingerprinting fees, it is unclear when Connecticut will be able to meet the requirement in a timely manner. Ultimately, fingerprinting delays will postpone the hiring of new staff in a field that is struggling to maintain staff. Access to the requisite fingerprinting machine is among the main reasons for the delay in reporting the results of fingerprinting. Currently, individuals have to travel to the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) in Middletown to use the live scan electronic fingerprint machine. When live scans become available at all police stations that do fingerprints over the next couple of years, the process will be more accessible across the state. While complying with the federal background check rule is important and necessary, it is also important that programs meet the staff-child ratios required by law. Otherwise, families who depend on care to support their families will suffer. To put this in context, the Connecticut Department of Labor (DOL) estimates that there are over 3,000 child care openings annually. The retention of ECE providers is a critical goal in early childhood policy.

What are the Solutions?

Connecticut must support families to ensure that all children have the best start in life. The Connecticut economy is experiencing slow and uneven growth. As a state, we need to approach solutions with an equity lens. Increased investments in early care and education is a sound economic strategy and done strategically, supports families who need it most. When families have access to care, they are better able to join the workforce and/or prepare for their careers by obtaining more training or schooling. This also supports the state’s economy. Connecticut cannot continue to nickel and dime the early care and education community. Once a leader in developing early child care systems, Connecticut has not continued to make the crucial investments necessary to support the state’s youngest and most vulnerable constituents.

There is a vast amount of research detailing the importance of children’s earliest experiences. Brain science demonstrates that children’s experiences in their first one thousand days of life lay the groundwork for their future. The investments that families and communities make to ensure that infants and toddlers experience warm and
nurturing interactions provide a foundation for success in later life. High-quality care builds children’s protective factors and promotes resiliency. Policies that support families with young children must include continued investments in Care 4 Kids to ensure Connecticut:

1. Has adequate availability of high-quality subsidized child care to support parents who are seeking care for their infants and toddlers and cannot afford the out-of-pocket costs – Connecticut cannot afford to return a waitlist for the Care 4 Kids subsidy;
2. Expands the eligibility requirements to include families with incomes up to 75 percent SMI, as well as those parents who are in training programs, adult education, college or other forms of education;
3. Supports families by increasing reimbursement to providers to 75 percent MRS to reduce the discrepancy between the cost of care and the parent share for providers who accept Care 4 Kids funds;
4. Supports ECE educators by promoting policies to increase wages for all early childhood providers; and
5. Offers an incentivized pathway for early childhood educators to obtain further education and remain in the ECE field

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9 Based calculations from SMI found at https://uwc.211ct.org/connecticut-state-median-income-2013 and average cost of care found at https://www.211childcare.org/reports/average-child-care-cost/
12 Connecticut Department of Labor, Retrieved from: https://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/hotnot_results.asp
What is Care 4 Kids?

Care 4 Kids, the state’s child care subsidy program, provides critical assistance to eligible families who demonstrate the need for care but may struggle to afford to pay for child care. These subsidies support families to obtain infant and toddler care, preschool, and afterschool care for children from Kindergarten through 13 years of age. However, low reimbursement rates to providers and limited eligibility for parents mean that affordable, high-quality child care remains out of reach for many working families. We believe early care and education should be made more accessible to families who need it, providers should be paid a living wage, and families who are seeking to better themselves through education and training should have the opportunity to participate in the program.

Who Currently Participates?

In November 2018, 14,925 children participated in Care 4 Kids. This included 5,785 infants and toddlers and 4,870 preschoolers. Enrollment was nearly one-third lower than for same month in 2015 (by approximately 4,400), prior to closure of the program to new applicants in 2016. (The program re-opened in late 2017.) Almost every town in Connecticut (more than 97%) has families who benefit from the program. There are no public data on exactly how many providers receive the subsidy.

Family Eligibility

Families must meet both non-financial and financial requirements to be eligible for Care 4 Kids. Currently, the income limit for new applications is 50% of the state median income (SMI). For a family of four, this amounts to less than $56,275 per year.

The program is available to parents who meet certain residency and citizenship requirements. Additionally, parents must “demonstrate a need for care” by:

- being employed with no alternatives for child care
- participating in an “approved employment services activity” while receiving Temporary Family Assistance (TFA)
- attending high school for teenage parents (under 20 years of age) while not receiving TFA

Parents who seek to further their education are not currently eligible for child care during classes or class-related activities.
Providers Eligibility Requirements

All Connecticut families face multiple challenges when seeking child care: availability, affordability, and quality. A robust Care 4 Kids system benefits all families, even when they do not receive the subsidy themselves. The federal government has established several requirements for quality of care that providers must follow, so all children under these providers’ care also benefit.

Providers who participate in Care 4 Kids include center-based programs, family child care, and relative providers (e.g., a grandparent, aunt/uncle, or sibling who are at least 20 years old). There is a range of professional learning requirements, depending on the type of provider. These may include health and safety, CPR, and first aid. The Office of Early Childhood (OEC) is required to set aside some of the federal funds to offer training and professional learning opportunities. Additionally, parents receive resources, including information about family benefits, developmental screenings, and consumer protection.

How is it Funded?

Care 4 Kids is funded with a mix of state and federal funds. The OEC receives money from the Federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDF) and those funds are supplemented with funding from the state budget. More funds are needed to ensure that all families have access to care and education, while ensuring that providers receive a living wage.

Rates of Reimbursement

Providers are reimbursed based on provider type, child age, region of the state, and hours/week of care. While the average cost of care for infants and toddlers is $300 per week, the average rate of reimbursement by Care 4 Kids is only $211 per week. Parents must make up the difference, which adds up to more than $4,600 per year per child over 50 weeks. It should be noted that family child care providers receive an average of $221 per week for the same level of care.

Recommendations

An investment in early education for our children is an investment in our future. Connecticut needs an early childhood system that supports children, their families, and the people who care for and educate them. Governor Lamont proposes to increase funding for Care 4 Kids in his state budget for Fiscal Years 2020 ($4.9 million) and 2021 ($9.8 million). This is in addition to an increase of $14 million in federal CCDF funding. At the same time, there are several bills from both sides of the aisle that would increase funding for reimbursement to providers and expand eligibility for families. This increased funding should be used to:

1. Increase rates of reimbursement to providers to the 75th percentile of market rates. Providers should make a living wage and parents should not be asked to pay more than they can afford.
2. Expand family eligibility by:
   - Including parents who are attending a program of study, including two- and four-year college programs;
   - Increase eligibility to 75% of the SMI for new applicants. This amounts to $84,412 for a family of four. This is just over what the United Way calls a “survival budget” ($77,832) for a family of four with an infant and preschool aged child. Parents should not have to choose between basic needs and the cost of child care.

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1 https://www.ctcare4kids.com/care-4-kids-program/reports/
2 https://www.ct.gov/oec/cwp/view.asp?q=545048#17b74902a
3 https://www.ctcare4kids.com/care-4-kids-program/income-guidelines/
4 https://www.ctcare4kids.com/provider-information/centerbasedprograms/
5 https://www.ctcare4kids.com/licensedfamilychildcareproviders/
6 https://www.ctcare4kids.com/provider-information/unlicensedrelativewhereproviders/
8 https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/fact-sheet-occ
Part 2: Connecticut's essential workers have kept the state afloat and deserve fair compensation.
Essential workers do work that is critical for protecting and sustaining the lives of Connecticut residents

Connecticut was one of the first states to issue an order mandating that “non-essential” businesses must close their doors and, where possible, move toward telework arrangements. Governor Lamont’s Executive Order 7H defined “essential” businesses to include the 16 Critical Infrastructure Sectors, as defined by the federal Department of Homeland Security, as well as select other businesses including child care for employees of other “essential businesses.” Within these essential businesses, some businesses have determined work that employees can do from their homes and other work that employees must report onsite to do.

The current definition of 16 Critical Infrastructure Sectors was developed under President Obama’s administration. The Essential Services Act of 2013 provides further guidance on specific employees who must work during times of emergency, furlough, and sequestration. It defines “essential employees” as those that perform “work involving the safety of human life or the protection of property.” For the purposes of this document, we utilize the interaction of the definitions of “essential businesses” and “essential employees” to discuss employees of essential businesses who must report to work in-person during the COVID-19 crisis.

As coronavirus has swept through Connecticut and the rest of the country, essential employees have been responsible for keeping residents of our state alive, healthy, and working. The Kaiser Family Foundation reports that one-third (34%) of adults in the United States hold jobs in which they are defined as “essential employees,” and they are currently working outside of their home.

Within the 90 million workers in the country working in industries defined as “essential industries,” 50 million workers must report daily to their places of employment and interact closely with other people to do their jobs. The Brookings Institution has named these workers “frontline workers.” Because there is no clearly standardized definition of these workers, we utilize the term “frontline workers” when we discuss research done by the Brookings Institution and “essential workers” when we discuss research done by other organizations.

While commercials on television laud the work of doctors and nurses caring for COVID patients, far more of the heroes caring for Connecticut in life-threatening circumstances go unacknowledged. Aides caring for the elderly, grocery store clerks keeping families fed while families shelter in place, and retail salespeople and stock clerks filling online orders are also frontline workers. Without these individuals showing up to work in-person, other Americans could not continue working and caring for their families from the comfort of their homes.

The pandemic has highlighted just how critical essential employees are to ensuring that Americans stay healthy and that the U.S. economy doesn’t collapse. Yet, these workers are some of the lowest-compensated workers in the country. Essential workers deserve compensation both during the pandemic and continuing after that is equivalent to the true value of their work to society.
Essential workers are some of the lowest paid workers in the country, and responses to COVID-19 have made these pay disparities greater

A Brookings analysis of frontline workers—workers who are critical for protecting the safety of human life—earn lower wages and are more likely to be people of color than national averages.228 Table 1 presents demographic data from a Kaiser Family Foundation survey of essential workers working outside of their homes. The survey found that essential workers are significantly more likely than non-essential counterparts to be Black (15% vs 5%) and to have a household income of less than $40,000 (31% vs 9%).229 On average nationally, frontline workers earn a mean hourly wage of $21.95,230 which is about 70 percent the amount that non-frontline workers in essential industries earn ($30.84) and less than 90 percent the amount that other U.S. workers earn ($24.98).

Family Economic Security: Employment - Part 2, Table 1: A demographic profile of essential workers compared to non-essential workers.

Source: Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. Taking stock of essential workers.231
At the same time that essential workers are supporting the lives and livelihoods of other American residents during a crisis, essential workers are facing their own crises caused by undercompensation and underemployment. Although Congress increased Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits as part of coronavirus relief, it retained the rule that people who choose to leave their jobs do not qualify.

During a pandemic, limiting UI to individuals forced into unemployment through business closures and downsizing means that essential workers are forced to choose between risking the lives of their families each time they show up to work or leaving work with no economic safety net. During a time of high unemployment, finding a new job is impractical if not impossible. If these workers were not required to work, however, they could collect UI benefits 25-35 percent greater than their current wages. 232

**This analysis is not an argument against Congress raising UI benefits. Rather, we must question a system in which state and federal laws force disproportionately Black and Latinx people to risk their lives for substandard pay. Is the State of Connecticut participating in and perpetuating a system that Columbia University Professor of Economics Suresh Naidu calls “forced labor?”**

**Even with hazard pay, most essential workers in Connecticut do not earn enough to cover food, utility, and healthcare costs**

Analysis of further data helps illuminate the discrepancy between the value of essential workers and how they are compensated. The 2018 United Way ALICE report (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) finds that in Connecticut, a family of four needs $77,832 to afford basic necessities.234 This means that a single parent working must earn $38.92/hour or two parents working must earn $19.46/hour. Comparing these wages to the average wages from the largest frontline worker occupations, presented in Table 2, shows that most frontline workers do not earn enough to meet this standard of affording basic necessities. For example, a maintenance and repair worker in Connecticut earned an average hourly wage of $23.84,235 which is not enough to sustain a family of four without dual incomes. Comparing Connecticut’s ALICE standard to the wages of grocery store cashiers who are risking their lives every day for the good of Connecticut’s general public and earn an average of $12.42 per hour236 shows that two parents working full-time at these wages only earn 74 percent of what they need to cover critical expenses. Even a $2 per hour hazard bonus will not fill this gap between what grocery clerks are paid and what they need.
A survey of workers impacted by the coronavirus crisis finds that essential workers report having more difficulty affording necessities than non-essential workers. They report difficulties paying off credit card bills (19% of essential workers report difficult vs 11% of currently employed non-essential workers), paying for utilities (15% vs 5%), and affording food (10% vs 4%). Essential workers are also more likely than non-essential workers to say they are worried about affording food specifically because of the crisis (24% vs 12%). This is because essential workers are significantly more likely than employed workers who are not considered essential to report that their hours have been reduced during the outbreak (35% vs 24%).

When the Kaiser Family Foundation asked essential workers how they would pay for an unexpected $500 medical bill, a significantly greater share of essential workers said they would have to borrow money to pay back the bill (31% vs. 19% of currently employed non-essential workers) or said they would not be able to pay the bill at all (16% vs 9%). Given that over half of the essential worker labor force reports having to work in-person rather than at home and interact with other people who may carry the virus, we can see that the compensation these workers receive is far from what they deserve when risking their health and life. Contracting coronavirus could bankrupt frontline workers and their families (potentially for generations), and hazard pay does not do nearly enough to make up that risk.

**Policymakers should raise the wages of essential workers to reflect the value of their work for society**

A state-by-state survey by Business.org found that at 29.2 percent, Connecticut has the second largest percent difference between the pay of so-called essential workers and workers not designated as essential. Historically, economists explain the low wages such as those essential workers receive using economic theories.
University of Utah economist Marshall Steinbaum says that recent papers find that “the enormous discretion American bosses have to dictate take-it-or-leave-it terms to dependent workers is the core reason our ‘essential’ workforce is in such dire straits.” Employers contribute to the state economy through providing wages to workers and through paying a corporate tax, but American labor markets have moved toward concentrated buyers within markets, a condition that economists call “monopsony.” This concentration of power allows employers to set lower wages for workers and reduces competition to obtain laborers. This, in turn, has led to a rise in wealth inequality and wages that do not keep pace with productivity.

Policymakers should be concerned about this rising wealth inequality and the too-low wages for the majority of the state’s workforce, particularly those fundamental to sustaining the lives and work of state residents. Below, we recommend three strategies that will help to rightsize essential worker wages immediately as well as more permanently and shift wage-setting power away from individual employers and toward fairer standards that reflect an occupation’s benefit to society. These strategies attempt to balance the burden of responsibility for right-sizing worker wages across state businesses, the Connecticut government, and the federal government.

**The Connecticut General Assembly should speed up the implementation date of the State’s new minimum wage and consider increasing the minimum wage to a living wage**

Connecticut lawmakers took necessary steps toward reducing the pay inequities plaguing essential workers when they passed a law raising the minimum wage to $15 per hour by 2023; however, our analysis shows that $15 an hour is not nearly enough for work that sustains the lives of Connecticut’s 3.56 million residents and allows non-essential workers to contribute to the state’s economy from home.

Currently in Connecticut, essential workers can make as little as $11 an hour, and many employers are ending hazard pay despite some businesses having record-breaking profits as since the onset of coronavirus. Indeed, where employers are facing troubles caused by the coronavirus crisis, it is not due to paying their employees more in hazard pay, but rather to decline in demand.

Increasing workers’ expendable funds is a well-researched way to jolt the economy in times of recession and it is a smart macroeconomic policy. While businesses may initially feel a pinch as they adjust to pay for the increase in employee salary, federal research suggests that the boost to the economy of enacting higher
While ensuring that all essential workers earn at least $15 per hour is a needed step toward filling the pay equity gap that many essential workers face, it is not enough. Large raises to the minimum wage implemented in a short period of time can indeed challenge small businesses, so there are steps the government can take to help make up the difference between what essential workers should earn and what they do earn while businesses adjust.

Creating scaled wage increase subsidies, a federal policy recommendation created by the Hamilton Project at the Brookings Institute, would immediately provide hourly-paid workers with a pay subsidy increasing hourly pay equal to half the difference between their current pay and $25 an hour. This would mean that an essential worker earning $15 an hour would receive a subsidy equivalent to $5 per hour (an additional $200 per week for a full-time worker), and an essential worker earning $20 per hour would receive a subsidy equivalent to $2.50 per hour (an additional $100 per week for a full-time worker).

The economists recommending these scaled increases note that a full program would need to be created at the federal level to offer the full amount of scaled pay they advocate for without burdening employers or states. Connecticut, however, could create a scaled-back version of this program targeted to the lowest-wage essential workers that should be active until the minimum wage catches up.

Scaled increases have the benefit of offsetting concerns regarding decreased work incentives stemming from more generous unemployment insurance. Furthermore, offering this increase as a state subsidy helps to ensure that small businesses do not shoulder the burden of increasing worker wages alone, and thus helps ensure that employers will not prefer automating frontline worker jobs. Connecticut would need to utilize funding from its Budget Reserve Fund (see the section on Spending Policy in this Issue Briefing Book 2020-2022) or MLF loan (see the section on Federal Changes) to offset the cost of this subsidy, thus both more fairly compensating the valuable work of essential workers and combating rising income inequality.

At Connecticut Voices for Children, we advocate that raising the minimum wage to $15 per hour is a necessary but not sufficient step to providing essential workers with the security they have earned and that they deserve. Instead, we believe that the Connecticut General Assembly should consider starting conversations about raising the minimum wage faster, now that hazard pay efforts have illuminated that many businesses can actually afford to pay their employees more. From there, the Connecticut General Assembly should create plans to ensure that workers are earning a living wage—at least enough to support the basic needs of a parent and a child in Connecticut.

It is in the best interest of the state to ensure that businesses contribute to efforts to ensure that essential workers receive the compensation they deserve due to the great social value of their work.
Connecticut should expand the size and scope of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

For a longer-term method to reduce income inequality, the EITC, which is a refundable tax credit for working individuals, is one of the most effective methods for increasing the incomes of low-wage workers and increasing labor force participation. It is a particularly powerful tool to boost the incomes of working parents. When Connecticut created its EITC, it set the refund rate at 30 percent of the Federal Government. Since that time, it has cut the state EITC back to 23 percent. Connecticut Voices for Children advocates for restoring our state EITC at least back to 30 percent, but preferably raising it to 50 percent. For more information about the EITC, we recommend reading the Tax Policy section of this Issue Briefing Book 2020-2022.

This policy recommendation is offered in partnership with Connecticut United Way, the Early Childhood Alliance, and the Connecticut Association for Human Services.

Additional enclosures to learn about low-wage workers in Connecticut

- “2018 ALICE Report—Executive Summary” by CT United Way documents the challenges facing ALICE families throughout our state and identifies trends that affect ALICE’s ability to achieve financial security.

- “2019 State of Working Connecticut—Executive Summary” by Connecticut Voices for Children finds three key, related findings. 1) Connecticut is experiencing a low-participation, slow-growing, highly-unequal economic expansion. 2) The middle class in Connecticut is smaller than before the Great Recession. 3) The middle class in Connecticut is less racially and ethnically inclusive than before the Great Recession.

- “2018 State of Working Connecticut Press Release” by Connecticut Voices for Children analyzes Connecticut’s wage disparities for Black and Hispanic workers and for women in the labor force. Analyses also find no evidence supporting the idea that Connecticut industries face a skills shortage.

Connecticut United Ways are committed to standing with households that, despite working hard, live paycheck to paycheck and are unable to afford life’s most basic necessities such as housing, food, child care, transportation, technology and healthcare.

This demographic is called ALICE, an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed and represents the 30 percent of Connecticut households that have earnings above the Federal Poverty Level but below a basic cost-of-living.

The updated 2018 Connecticut United Ways ALICE Report documents the challenges facing ALICE families throughout our state and identifies trends that affect ALICE’s ability to achieve financial security.

With the release of our third ALICE report, Connecticut United Ways continue to call attention to ALICE households by identifying barriers preventing ALICE from making ends meet and executing solutions that can lead to financial security for ALICE. Combined, ALICE and Poverty households make up 40% of all households in Connecticut.

Connecticut United Ways remain committed to supporting ALICE and fighting for the health, education and financial security of all Connecticut residents. We invest in child care, early learning, basic needs, diverse housing options, job training, asset development and financial education. We advocate for good jobs, fair wages, access to good schools, affordable housing, and quality child care that families can afford.
WE ALL KNOW ALICE

ALICE is our friend, neighbor, coworker and family member. ALICE cares for our children and aging parents, fixes our cars and works in our local grocery stores, retail stores, and restaurants. ALICE lives in every town and city in Connecticut. In fact, in Connecticut more than 400,000 households are ALICE households with income above the Federal Poverty Level but below the state’s basic cost-of-living threshold as defined in the 2018 ALICE Report.

ALICE workers are retail salespersons, nursing assistants, childcare workers, home health aides, car mechanics, security guards, teacher assistants—workers essential to every community’s success. We lean on ALICE for support; yet, many ALICE households are one emergency away from a financial crisis impacting their ability to feed their family, heat their home, maintain their housing, and ensure their medical care.

TRENDS IMPACTING ALICE HOUSEHOLDS

The 2018 ALICE Report digs deeper into trends that affect ALICE in the workplace and impacts ALICE’s ability to save, to build assets and achieve financial security.

1 While Connecticut still has one of the highest per capita incomes, the fastest growing jobs have lower pay.
   • Only one of the top 20 occupations in Connecticut (in terms of number of jobs) pays enough to support the ALICE Household Survival Budget.

2 The increase in on-demand or project-to-project jobs has given rise to the “gig economy”.
   • The “gig economy” presents new employment possibilities; however, these positions often have limited job security, few or no benefits, fluctuating hours and unreliable wages.

3 Shifting to a contingent workforce puts more financial risk on workers.
   • It is difficult for ALICE households to pay bills regularly, make short-term family plans (e.g., child care), or make long-term financial plans, such as qualifying for a mortgage when inconsistent work schedules result in unexpected gains or losses in work hours and income volatility.

4 Asset limited is a defining characteristic of ALICE.
   • More than 46% of Connecticut households do not have enough money saved to cover expenses for three months in the case of an emergency such as an illness or the loss of a job.
   • This vulnerability means that a medical emergency or unexpected change in income can send an ALICE Household spiraling into poverty.
WHY SO MANY WORKING FAMILIES IN CONNECTICUT STRUGGLE FINANCIALLY

WHAT CONNECTICUT WORKERS EARN

Connecticut wages are amongst the highest in the country with 55% of jobs paying $20 or more. However, wages have not kept pace with the cost of living and many Connecticut workers earn less than what is needed to get by.

CONNECTICUT’S COST OF LIVING

The cost of living continues to increase faster than many workers’ wages, leaving ALICE households with many tough financial choices.

A single adult requires a full-time job earning $12.34 per hour and a family of four needs full-time work with an hourly wage of $38.92 to afford just the basics in Connecticut.

WHAT IS THE HOUSEHOLD SURVIVAL BUDGET?

The Household Survival Budget reflects the minimum cost option for six basic necessities – Housing, Child Care, Food, Transportation, Technology (the cost of a smartphone) and Health Care. This barebones monthly budget covers the essentials plus taxes and a 10% miscellaneous contingency. It is a conservative estimate of the monthly costs to get by, and does not account for savings or emergency expenses.

The updated Household Survival Budget increased to $77,832 for a family of four in Connecticut.

WHAT CHOICES WOULD YOU MAKE?

ALICE makes tough choices every day. Put yourself in the shoes of a typical ALICE household. Follow this link: www.makingtoughchoices.org to experience the tough choices that ALICE households face daily.

### Household Survival Budget in Connecticut

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Expenses</th>
<th>Single Adult</th>
<th>Family of Four*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>$803</td>
<td>$1,231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care</td>
<td>$0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food</td>
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<td>$603</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>$308</td>
<td>$613</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Care</td>
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<td>$792</td>
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<td>Technology</td>
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<td>$75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
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<td>$590</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
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<td>$891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Total</td>
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<td>$6,486</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual Total</td>
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<td>$77,832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hourly Wage</td>
<td>$12.34</td>
<td>$38.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* *A family of four is two adults, one toddler and one infant.*
The ALICE Report recommends both short-term and long-term strategies to help ALICE families and strengthen our communities. Connecticut’s United Ways work with our community partners and continue to invest in programs and services that will enable ALICE households to achieve a more secure financial future.

INVESTING IN PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Connecticut United Ways invest in housing and homeless prevention, child care and early learning, job training and workforce development and basic needs services so that ALICE families can succeed. Last year, Connecticut United Ways invested more than 40 million dollars in programs serving those in need.

PROMOTING FINANCIAL SECURITY

United Ways support free tax preparation at VITA sites where eligible families can secure valuable tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC). United Ways also support financial education and budget coaching opportunities and digital savings incentive programs that reward good savings habits, helping ALICE build assets and savings.

MOBILIZING COMMUNITY PARTNERS

United Ways engage with businesses, government agencies, other nonprofits, the faith-based community, civic leaders and anyone who wants to work toward individual and community wide solutions that lead to more financial security for ALICE households.

CONNECTING CONNECTICUT RESIDENTS TO SERVICES

United Way 2-1-1 is Connecticut’s 24/7 access to a range of health and human services. Last year (FY18), 2-1-1 responded to 323,544 service requests from Connecticut residents. Housing & shelter, mental health services and employment & income were 2-1-1 CT’s top three requests for service.

WILL YOU STAND WITH ALICE?

GIVE.

Connecticut United Ways fight for the health education and financial security of every person in every community. Donating to your local United Way helps support programs that strengthen your community.

ADVOCATE.

United Way advocates for long-term policy solutions that can lead to more financial security for ALICE. During tough economic times in our state, United Ways have worked to protect supports for ALICE families. Download the 2018 Connecticut United Ways Policy Agenda.

VOLUNTEER.

Connecticut United Ways engage thousands of volunteers in their communities bringing people together to help ALICE families file taxes and secure tax refunds, improve grade level reading and financial literacy, reduce homelessness and hunger, and advocate for quality, affordable child care. Visit ctunitedway.org/ctuways to locate the United Way in your community.

ABOUT CONNECTICUT UNITED WAYS

Connecticut United Ways advance the common good by creating opportunities for all, with a particular focus on education, income/financial security, health, and basic needs – the building blocks for a good quality of life. We engage people and organizations throughout our communities who bring passion, expertise, and resources needed to get things done, and we invite everyone to be part of the change.

To learn more and download the full Connecticut ALICE Report, go to http://alice.ctunitedway.org.
THE STATE OF WORKING CONNECTICUT:
A SMALLER, LESS-INCLUSIVE MIDDLE CLASS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE GREAT RECESSION

CONNECTICUT VOICES FOR CHILDREN

PATRICK R. O’BRIEN, PH.D.
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SUSANA BARRAGAN
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MICHAEL ENSEKI-FRANK*

#StateOfWorkingCT

ISSUE BRIEFING BOOK: FAMILY ECONOMIC SECURITY: EMPLOYMENT - PART 2, ENCLOSURE
Labor Day became a federal holiday in 1894 in response to rising inequality and double-digit unemployment during a major economic downturn—the Panic of 1893 and its aftermath—all of which severely weakened any “middle class” of the Gilded Age. This month, we celebrate the 125th anniversary of Labor Day during the longest economic expansion in U.S. history, making it an ideal time to examine the status of the middle class in the aftermath of our most recent downturn—the Great Recession of December 2007 to June 2009—and a period increasingly referred to as the Second or New Gilded Age.2

A strong, inclusive middle class—which we measure in economic terms as the middle-income group—is one of the key foundations of a thriving economy and society. Most notably, it positively impacts economic growth, child development and education, and child and family health.

In this report on the state of working Connecticut, we provide three key, related findings. First, we show that we are currently experiencing a low-participation, slow-growing, highly-unequal economic expansion at both the national level and the state level. Second, we show that, in line with the deeply-troubling aspects of the economic expansion, the size of the middle class in Connecticut is smaller than before the Great Recession. Third, we show that the middle class in Connecticut is not only smaller but also less racially and ethnically inclusive than before the Great Recession.

Based on these findings, future reports will provide policy recommendations that we believe will be most effective in supporting a stronger, more-inclusive middle class in Connecticut.

**A LOW-PARTICIPATION, SLOW-GROWING, HIGHLY-UNEQUAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION**

In order to provide a comprehensive overview of the economy at both the national level and the state level, this section of the report examines five key economic indicators: (1) the unemployment rate, (2) the labor force participation rate, (3) the length of the economic expansion, (4) the economic growth rate, and (5) the income share for the top 1 percent of the population.

First, the U.S. unemployment rate (UR)—measured as the percentage of the population 16 years old and over that is “jobless, looking for a job, and available for work”—averaged 3.9 percent in 2018, the lowest level since the 1960s.3 This prominent indicator has been commonly used as evidence that the economy is “booming.”4

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*Michael Enseki-Frank is a Yale Law School student and a participant in its Legislative Advocacy Clinic.*
However, a related, second key indicator—the labor force participation rate (LFPR)—provides a contrasting picture. Measured as the percentage of the population 16 years old and over that is “either working or actively seeking work,” the U.S. labor force participation rate averaged 63 percent in 2018, down from 66 percent in 2007 and largely offsetting the low unemployment rate.\(^5\) To be clear, it is essential to examine the labor force participation rate and the unemployment rate together because the latter declines not only when more people become employed but also when more people are no longer “actively seeking work” due to a long-term failure to become employed. For example, in 2012, Federal Reserve Chair Ben Bernanke stressed the significance of the declining labor force participation rate due to the slow economic recovery, explaining, “This has never happened in the post-war period in the United States. [The long-term unemployed] are losing the skills they had, they are losing their connections, their attachment to the labor force.”\(^6\)

A similar dynamic has played out at the state level. The Connecticut unemployment rate averaged 4.1 percent in 2018, the lowest level since the early 2000s. However, the labor force participation rate averaged 66 percent in 2018, down from 69 percent at the start of the Great Recession and largely offsetting the low unemployment rate.

For a more detailed overview, Figure 1 shows that the Connecticut labor force participation rate began to decline during the recession of the early 1990s, the U.S. labor force participation rate began to decline during the recession of the early 2000s, and the decline at both the state level and the national level then accelerated during the Great Recession of 2007–09.\(^7\) There are several explanations for this development—for example, the beginning of the retirement of the baby boom generation and the substantial departure from the job market of men in their prime working years, especially less-educated men\(^8\)—but the key finding is that, at both the national level and the state level, the benefits of the economy’s low unemployment rate are offset in large part by its low labor force participation rate.

Next, at 122 months and counting—or 10-plus years—the third key indicator is that the current economic expansion is the longest in U.S. history. Along with the unemployment rate, the length of the expansion has been commonly used as evidence that the economy is “booming.” However, a fourth key indicator—the economic growth rate—provides a contrasting picture. Measured as the annual percentage change in the “value of the goods and services produced,” the U.S. economic growth rate has not reached 3 percent or higher for a single year since the Great Recession.\(^9\) A 3 percent growth rate is often used as a benchmark for a strong growing economy and the failure to reach it makes the current recovery arguably the slowest in modern U.S. history.\(^10\)

**Figure 1.** Unemployment and Labor Force Participation Rates in the U.S. and Connecticut
A similar dynamic has played out at the state level. The Connecticut economic growth rate averaged 1.7 percent during the eight years following the Great Recession, down from an average of 4.5 percent during the decade preceding it, meaning the economic recovery in Connecticut is even slower than the historically-slow national recovery.

For a more detailed overview, Figure 2 shows that the U.S. economic growth rate has usually exceeded 4 percent in the years immediately following a downturn and in several cases the rate has been significantly higher. For example, in the three years after the recessions of 1973–75 and 1981–82, economic growth averaged 5.2 and 5.3 percent, respectively. In contrast, economic growth became relatively slow during the early 2000s and it has continued to be slow since the Great Recession. There are several theories to explain this development—for example, the limits of increased innovation, “quarterly capitalism,” and an aging population—but the key finding is that, at both the national level and the state level, the benefits of the economy’s lengthy expansion are offset in large part by its historically-slow average growth rate.

**Figure 2. Economic Growth Rate in the U.S. and Connecticut**

![Graph showing economic growth rate from 1950 to 2020, with a note on a slow-growing recovery post-Great Recession.]

*See note 11 for data sources.*

Lastly, the fifth key indicator is that the gains of the economic expansion have been distributed highly unequally. One leading measure of this is the share of pre-tax income going to various populations. For example, from the 1950s through the 1970s, an average of 10 percent of pre-tax income went to the top 1 percent of the population in the U.S. In contrast, from 2010 through 2017, that average jumped to 21 percent. This makes the current economic recovery one of the most unequal in modern U.S. history.
CONNECTICUT VOICES FOR CHILDREN

20 YEARS OF ADVANCING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

News Release

AUGUST 28, 2018

Contact: Roger Senserrich
Communications Director
203-498-4240 x117
rsenserrich@ctvoices.org

Connecticut’s Workers Face Low Wage Growth Since the End of Recession, Median Wage down, Report Finds

NEW HAVEN – A new report from Connecticut Voices for Children provides a close look at recent trends in the state’s labor force, jobs, and wages and concludes that despite recent progress, many families still struggle to make ends meet. The report finds that although unemployment in the state is at a post-recession low, sluggish wage growth paired with persistent racial and gender disparities are leaving many working families unable to achieve a decent standard of living for themselves and their children.

Between 2007 and 2017, median wages for workers at the lowest income decile (that is, the ten percent of workers with the lowest wages) have remained flat. The median salary during the same period decreased an average of 0.3 percent a year. In comparison, workers in the top ten percent of the wage distribution saw an average increase of 0.4% a year. Although the trend has reversed slightly since 2014 as wages at the bottom decile grew faster (.5 percent) than those at the top (.35 percent growth a year), the income gap remains vast. Connecticut is the third most unequal state in the nation, behind only New York and Florida.

In addition, pronounced wage disparities also persist between White workers and workers of color. On average, Blacks and Latinos make 65 cents to the dollar compared to Whites. Gender disparities also remain, with women earning 87 cents to the dollar compared to men.

The report evaluates two common explanations for low-wage growth. First, it analyzes the commonly held view that sluggish wage growth is the result a “jobs swap”, a broader shift in the economy from high- and medium-wage sectors to low-wage, service-focused, low-salary employment. Their analysis highlights that although this trend existed in the immediate aftermath of the recession, since 2014, Connecticut’s economy has added more jobs in higher-wage sectors. The report also looks at the evidence of a possible skills shortage that is causing high-wage jobs to remain unfilled because businesses cannot find qualified workers. Analysis of the data suggests that sectors often claiming to have skilled labor shortages have not seen rising wages. Rachel Silbermann, Economic and Fiscal Policy Fellow explains “If there were a true skills shortage, we would expect employers to raise wages to attract workers from other firms and to keep their own workers from leaving, but this largely isn’t what we’re seeing.”

Jamie Mills, Director of Fiscal Policy and Economic Inclusion reports that “Weak economic growth, long-term wage stagnation, and growing income disparities are the result of policy decisions that can and should be reversed. Stagnant wage growth is exacerbating historic levels of inequality in Connecticut and across the country slowing economic growth and preventing workers and their children from having a decent standard of living.” The report offers two policy proposals to respond to stagnating wages: raising the minimum wage to $15 per hour and restoring the state Earned Income Tax Credit to 30 percent of the federal credit. Currently, 31 percent of Connecticut workers make less than $15 per hour. The majority of these workers are over 30 years old (57 percent) and are working full time (61 percent). Restoring the Earned Income Tax Credit would increase earnings to close to 200,000 household in the state making less than $20,000 per year. “These two policies will provide some immediate and meaningful relief to struggling workers and their children” says Mills.
Connecticut’s Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

In a Low-Wage Economy, the EITC is More Important than Ever
Derek Thomas, M.P.A and Ray Noonan

Updated May 2017

Every job should allow parents to provide food, shelter, and financial security for their children. Connecticut’s Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is among the state’s most sensible and effective tools for helping working families struggling to get by on low wages. The refundable tax credit — currently set at 27.5 percent of the federal EITC — boosts working families’ paychecks by offsetting their payroll taxes. This proven anti-poverty tool is now at risk, however, as all four budget proposals under consideration at the statehouse include reductions to the tax credit.

The Benefits of Connecticut’s State EITC
In 2015, nearly 200,000 low- and moderate-income households received the state EITC. On average, these households had gross incomes of under $18,500 — less than what a single parent working full-time for the minimum wage would have taken home before taxes. The average state credit among these households was about $565, a 6 percent decrease from the average in 2011 ($602). When layered on top of the federal credit, the Connecticut EITC boosted about 6,600 people over the poverty line and eased poverty for another 99,000.

The EITC encourages and rewards working families. The credit can be claimed only by people who earn income through work and is structured to encourage people to work more. Beginning with the first dollar earned, a worker’s EITC grows with each additional dollar of earnings — incentivizing people to work more — until the credit reaches maximum value before phasing out gradually as incomes rise.

This support is all the more important at a time when child poverty remains high and low-wage work is more prevalent. Over the last fifteen years, the share of jobs in low-wage industries has increased by 20 percent while the share of work in high-wage industries has declined by 13 percent.

Source: CT Voices analysis of QCEW data. Includes all three-digit NAICS codes for private industry.
The EITC promotes positive children’s outcomes such as healthy development, educational attainment, and long-term adult success. Children who benefit from tax credit expansions such as the EITC see improvements in infant health indicators, reduction in early onset of disabilities, improvement in school test scores, and increased likelihood of completing high school and attending college. The EITC represents an investment not just in today’s children but also in tomorrow’s workforce. The education and skill gains associated with the EITC will likely pay off for many years to both the individual, through higher earnings and employment, and the state, through increased income tax revenue.

The EITC helps fix our upside-down, family-unfriendly tax code. Many regard the EITC as an important correction to the state’s tax code. First, it is one of the only provisions in the state tax code that recognizes the financial responsibilities of raising a family. In a state without other pro-family tax policies such as a state Child Tax Credit, Child Care Credit, or Dependent Exemption, the state EITC provides a much-needed break for working families. Second, it benefits low-income taxpayers, standing apart from the many loopholes that benefit the well-connected at the expense of the rest of us.

The EITC at Risk

State-Level Threats

In 2011, Connecticut lawmakers took historic action to establish an EITC equal to 30 percent of a filer’s federal credit. Only two years later, due to a budget deficit, the legislature reduced the credit to 25 percent, pledging to increase it to 27.5 percent in 2014 and fully restore it to 30 percent in 2015. The legislature fulfilled their 2014 promise but in 2015 delayed the final increase to July 2017.

Now, policymakers are considering not only reneging on their pledge to restore the tax credit to 30 percent, but also reducing the credit permanently. Both the Governor and Republican leadership propose lowering the EITC to 25 percent, while Democratic leadership proposes reducing the credit to 26.25 percent. House Republicans go one step further: under their proposal, if the credit amount exceeds the income tax owed, then the state would no longer issue a check for the remaining balance to help make work pay. This would effectively do away with the program.

Reducing the EITC in 2013 resulted in a $17 million tax increase for the state’s poorest workers. The newest round of proposed cuts would cost working families $25 million per year, imposing a tax hike on nearly 200,000 Connecticut families who are working hard but not making enough to get by.
Anticipated Federal Threats
President Trump’s budget proposal would cut spending on the federal EITC and Child Tax Credit by $40 billion, primarily by reducing the number of taxpayers who are eligible for the credits. In part, the President’s proposal would require recipients who currently use an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number to provide a Social Security Number, a provision aimed at undocumented immigrants. According to Tax Credits for Working Families, this would “exacerbate the racial wealth gap by preventing many immigrant taxpayers and their children from benefiting from the credits…putting more than four million Latino children and their families (nationally) at greater risk of poverty and hunger.” As with other work supports and anti-poverty programs, state lawmakers should be cautious of cuts in current budget negotiations due to enormous disinvestments in President Trump’s budget.

Protect and Strengthen Connecticut’s EITC
At this time of increased need, Connecticut should consider steps to protect and strengthen the EITC by incorporating savings incentives and improving distribution methods to ensure that working families can meet the needs of their children. While we recognize that this is a difficult budget year, Connecticut must weigh its short-term fiscal priorities against its long-term goals of equity and shared prosperity. The EITC is a proven tool that sides of the political aisle have supported. During a year in which all parties need to come to the table to solve our state’s challenges, protecting a bipartisan tax credit that immediately impacts tens of thousands of children should be an achievable goal.

Early Refund EITC Payments
Early refund EITC payments would help working families access part of the EITC midway through the year in case of a financial emergency. A proposal described by the Center for American Progress would allow families to access a portion of their EITC starting on July 1, acting as a sort of “earned insurance” against unforeseen financial challenges. Such a policy would help to protect families against predatory lending and offer families the choice to receive part of their EITC early.

Advance EITC Payments
Advance EITC payments spread out a family’s anticipated EITC payment out over four quarters. Under one proposal, families would receive a fourth of their expected EITC each quarter, which would reduce reliance on costly lending options and would be counted as a loan against their income tax return. A pilot project in Chicago by the Center for Economic Progress that spread out EITC payments across four quarters found that the vast majority (90 percent) of families who participated in the program preferred receiving advance quarterly payments.
Citations

1 Unpublished calculations of 2013-2015 Census Bureau data from CBPP.
5 Ibid.
6 CT Voices analysis of tax year 2015 data prepared by the Connecticut Department of Revenue Services (DRS).
7 Connecticut Department of Revenue Services. Tax Incidence Report 2014
10 Phaneuf, Keith. GOP asks far more of labor to offset eroding CT tax receipts. May 2017: https://ctmirror.org/2017/05/16/gop-asks-far-more-of-labor-to-offset-eroding-ct-tax-receipts/.
11 Ibid. According to Phaneuf, “the Republican budget estimates that about 93 percent of the $133 million paid out currently under the state program would be retained by the state.”
14 According to estimates by the Brookings Institution, nearly 600,000 Connecticut residents live in households eligible for the credit, including more than 240,000 children. EITC recipients largely worked in the retail trade and health care industries, and a majority had never attended college. Brooking estimated that 49 percent of EITC-eligible filers in Connecticut are white; 19 percent are black, and about 26 percent are non-white Latino.
Brookings Institution. Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Interactive and Resources. December 2016:
https://www.brookings.edu/interactives/earned-income-tax-credit-eitc-interactive-and-resources/.
18 Ibid.
Following the spread of coronavirus, the U.S. officially entered a recession in February. The economy is projected to shrink by five-plus percent this year, which would be the largest contraction since the late 1940s. At the intersection of the economy and tax policy, there are three primary, related problems for the state government to address: (1) rising economic inequality and slowing economic growth are harming Connecticut’s families and children; (2) Connecticut’s regressive tax system is exacerbating rising economic inequality and slowing economic growth; and (3) the coronavirus pandemic and recession are generating a major shortfall in tax revenue.

To address these problems, Connecticut Voices for Children proposes the following: (1) the state government should fully employ the Budget Reserve Fund to maintain spending; (2) the state government should raise progressive taxes to maintain spending; and (3) the state government should fully and permanently transition from a regressive tax system to a progressive tax system. The program proposed here incorporates both tax policy and spending policy and it therefore spans two sections in the briefing book. This section provides an overview of the primary problems and tax policy solutions, and the spending section provides an overview of closely related primary problems and the spending policy solutions.

**Rising economic inequality and slowing economic growth are harming Connecticut’s families and children**

Economic inequality has increased substantially in the U.S. in general and in Connecticut in particular over the last four decades. Most notably, the U.S. Census Bureau and a non-partisan organization both show—using different methodologies—that Connecticut has the third highest level of pre-tax income inequality in the U.S.

Moreover, the latter study shows, as displayed in Figure 1, that pre-tax income inequality in Connecticut has recently reached the highest levels since at least the end of the Second World War in 1945. This is important because rising economic inequality negatively impacts the children from lower- and middle-income families in several ways, especially in the areas of education, health, and economic mobility. For example, in the area of economic mobility, one prominent study finds that due primarily to rising income inequality the percentage of children in the U.S. who earn more than their parents has “fallen from approximately 90% for children born in 1940 to 50% for children born in the 1980s,” a development labeled the “fading American dream.”
At the same time that the economy’s pre-tax income and wealth shares have increasingly gone to the top one percent of the population, the growth in the overall size of the economy has increasingly slowed. In particular, growth in real Gross Domestic Product—the value of the goods and services produced in the U.S. and one of the primary measures of the economy’s strength—has steadily declined from an average of more than four percent during the 1950s and 1960s to between three and four percent during 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s and to less than three percent during the 2000s and 2010s. Even more notable, economic growth in Connecticut has declined from an average of 2.1 percent during the 2000s to 0.1 percent during the 2010s, which is the third slowest of all the states. This is important because weaker economic growth generally slows the increase in the material standard of living for a state’s residents and it also diminishes fiscal conditions, meaning the government has to increase tax rates in order to raise the same amount of tax revenue that a faster growing economy would produce.

One of the primary drivers of slowing economic growth is rising economic inequality. As recent research explains, “Income inequality in the United States is suppressing growth in aggregate demand (spending by households, businesses, and governments) by shifting an ever larger share of income to rich households that save rather than spend.” This is estimated to have “slowed growth in aggregate demand by 2 to 4 percentage points of GDP annually in recent years,” and it explains in part Connecticut’s position as the state with both the third highest level of income inequality and the third slowest growth rate over the last decade.
**Connecticut’s regressive tax system exacerbates rising economic inequality and slowing economic growth**

A family’s *effective tax rate* is the total amount of taxes that it pays as a percentage of taxable income. Variation in this key tax rate across income groups reveals three basic types of tax systems: (1) a *regressive tax system* is one in which lower- and middle-income families have a higher effective tax rate than upper-income families; (2) a *proportional tax system* is one in which lower-, middle-, and upper-income families all have the same effective tax rate; and (3) a *progressive tax system* is one in which upper-income families have a higher effective tax rate than lower- and middle-income families.

Several studies show that Connecticut’s tax system is regressive. Most notably, a modified analysis of the data from the Department of Revenue Services’ 2014 tax incidence report—the most recent to date—shows in Table 1 that the effective state and local tax rate in Connecticut ranges from an average of 23.6 percent for working-class families (measured as the bottom 50 percent of the income distribution), to 13.3 percent for middle-class families (measured as the next 40 percent of the income distribution), and to 7.4 percent for the wealthiest families (measured as the top one percent of the income distribution).269

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Adjusted Gross Income</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Average Effective Tax Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>$0 to $47,948</td>
<td>Bottom 50%</td>
<td>23.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>$47,949 to $182,087</td>
<td>Next 40%</td>
<td>13.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Class</td>
<td>$182,088 to $612,040</td>
<td>Top 10%</td>
<td>9.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealthiest</td>
<td>$612,041 and up</td>
<td>Top 1%</td>
<td>7.44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fiscal & Economics: Taxes and Revenue, Table 1. Connecticut’s Regressive Tax System

To understand more fully the impact of Connecticut’s regressive tax system, consider the example displayed in Table 2. In 2018, the median household income in Connecticut was $76,106.270 In contrast, the average adjusted gross income for the top one percent of tax filers in the state was $3.1 million.271 This means that before state and local taxes are collected, the top one percent of tax filers in Connecticut have on average an income 41 times greater than that for the median household.

Connecticut’s regressive tax system then exacerbates the problem of rising economic inequality. In particular, the average effective tax rate for an income of $76,106 is 13.66 percent according to the most detailed break down provided in the DRS tax incidence report. In contrast, the average effective tax rate for an income of $3.1 million is 6.5 percent.272 This means that after state and local taxes are applied the top one percent of tax filers in Connecticut have on average an income 44 times greater than that for the median household, up from an average of 41 times greater.
Fiscal & Economics: Taxes and Revenue, Table 2. Connecticut’s Regressive Tax System Exacerbates Pre-Tax Income Inequality
Source: Connecticut Voices for Children analysis of Census Bureau and 2014 State of Connecticut Department of Revenue Services data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Pre-Tax Income</th>
<th>Pre-Tax Inequality Level</th>
<th>Effective Tax Rate</th>
<th>Post-Tax Income</th>
<th>Post-Tax Inequality Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Top 1% of Tax Filers</td>
<td>$3,092,389</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.50%</td>
<td>$2,891,384</td>
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<tr>
<td>Median Household</td>
<td>$76,106</td>
<td>x41</td>
<td>13.66%</td>
<td>$65,710</td>
<td>x44</td>
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<td>Median Black Household</td>
<td>$47,856</td>
<td>x65</td>
<td>14.72%</td>
<td>$40,812</td>
<td>x71</td>
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<td>Median Hispanic Household</td>
<td>$45,730</td>
<td>x68</td>
<td>14.72%</td>
<td>$38,999</td>
<td>x74</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The negative impact of Connecticut’s tax system is even worse for families of color. For example, the top one percent of tax filers in Connecticut have on average an income 65 times greater than that for the median Black household, and—due to the higher effective tax rate of 14.72 percent for the latter household—the inequality level increases to 71 times greater after taxes. Likewise, the top one percent of tax filers in Connecticut have on average an income 68 times greater than that for the median Hispanic household and—due to the higher effective tax rate for the latter household—the inequality level increases to 74 times greater after taxes.\(^{273}\)

The pre-tax racial income gap is due in large part to racial discrimination in access to jobs and equal pay. For example, research shows that, even before the current coronavirus recession—which is further disproportionately harming workers of color—the Black unemployment rate at the national level was “roughly double the white unemployment rate at every level of education, except among those with a bachelor’s or an advanced degree.” Moreover, the latter group—Black college graduates—were “more likely than white graduates to be underemployed when it comes to their skills.”\(^{274}\) This means that Connecticut’s regressive tax system exacerbates a problem that is largely founded on racial discrimination.

Last but no means least, by exacerbating income inequality, Connecticut’s regressive tax system further slows economic growth, which harms all of the state’s families.\(^{275}\)

The coronavirus pandemic and recession are generating a major shortfall in tax revenue
Due to the coronavirus pandemic and recession, the most recent consensus revenue estimate shows a major tax revenue shortfall in Connecticut over the next several years: $2.2 billion for fiscal year 2021, $2.3 billion for fiscal year 2022, and $2 billion for both fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2024.\(^{276}\) This means that in order to balance the budget each year, as the Connecticut Constitution requires, the government will primarily have to either cut spending to offset the shortfall in revenue, increase taxes to maintain spending, or some combination of the two approaches. The government also has the option of employing the Budget Reserve
Fund (BRF), which is projected to have a balance of $2.2 billion to start fiscal year 2021, an amount sufficient to cover part but not all of the projected multi-year shortfall in tax revenue.\textsuperscript{277}

As we address in the spending section of the briefing book, cutting spending rather than raising taxes to balance the budget will hurt the state’s economy in general and its neediest residents in particular. Moreover, as addressed in this section, raising taxes on lower- and middle-income families rather than on the wealthy to balance the budget exacerbates both rising economic inequality and slowing economic growth. It is therefore essential that the state maintains its spending and funds that spending without raising taxes on lower- and middle-income families.

**The State Government should employ the Budget Reserve Fund to maintain spending, which will support Connecticut’s economy in general and will allow the state to more effectively support its neediest families and children in particular**

The benefits of this policy are detailed in the Spending Section of the *Issue Briefing Book 2020-2022*.

**The State Government should raise progressive taxes to maintain spending, which will further support Connecticut’s economy in general and will further allow the state to more effectively support its neediest families and children in particular**

The benefits of this policy are detailed in the Spending Section of the *Issue Briefing Book 2020-2022*.

**The State Government should fully and permanently transition from a regressive tax system to a progressive tax system, which will better support Connecticut’s economy in general and allow the state to more effectively support its neediest families and children in particular**

If the government sufficiently raises taxes on the wealthy to cover the tax revenue shortfall due to the coronavirus pandemic and recession, and if the government also sufficiently reduces taxes on lower- and middle-income families once the recession ends and revenues increase, Connecticut’s tax system will become progressive. As research shows, a progressive tax system will combat rising economic inequality, especially for families of color, who are disproportionately harmed by the current tax system. Further, by combating rising economic inequality, a progressive tax system will boost economic growth, which will benefit all of the state’s families.

The following is an overview of options for raising revenue primarily from the wealthy as well as options for reducing taxes for lower- and middle-income families, both of which are essential to create the most effective progressive tax system in Connecticut. *For more details on the tax options, see the reports cited and linked in the endnotes.*
Progressive options to reform the Property Tax and raise revenue:

The property tax operates at the local level, it is the largest tax revenue source in the state overall, and it is regressive. Two progressive property tax options for raising revenue include:

- **Option 1.** Establish a statewide property tax—or “mansion tax”—(e.g., 1 mill or more) on very expensive homes (e.g., $1 million or more). For reference, of the 906,771 owner-occupied units in Connecticut, 42,245 (4.7 percent) are valued at $1 million or more.

- **Option 2.** Establish a statewide property tax (e.g., 1 mill or more) on all property taxed at the local level. At the same time, expand the size and scope of the existing state property tax credit such that it offsets the new statewide property tax for all property tax-paying families below a set income level (e.g., single tax filers earning less than $200,000 and joint tax filers earning less than $400,000, or whatever income level is desirable). This would maintain the current effective property tax rate for families receiving the restructured property tax credit and it would raise the effective tax rate for families above the set maximum income level.

Progressive options to reform the Personal Income Tax and raise revenue:

The personal income tax is the largest tax revenue source at the state level (it contributed $9.64 billion in fiscal year 2019, 56 percent of the General Fund tax revenue), and it is progressive. Three progressive personal income tax options for raising revenue include:

- **Option 1:** Raise income taxes on a relatively broad top base (e.g., single tax filers earning above $200,000 and joint tax filers earning above $400,000, or whatever income level is desirable). In order to generate a set amount of revenue, this approach allows for a lower increase in the top rates relative to raising income taxes on a narrower top base.

- **Option 2:** Raise income taxes on a relatively narrow top base (e.g., single tax filers earning above $500,000 and joint tax filers earning above $1,000,000, or whatever income level is desirable). In order to generate a set amount of revenue, this approach requires a larger increase in the top rates relative to raising income taxes on a broader base.

- **Option 3:** Raise income taxes on either a relatively broad or narrow top base and add a progressive surcharge rate structure for capital gains income (e.g., add 1 percentage point to the standard rate on income above $500,000, and add 2 percentage points to the standard rate on income above $1 million, or whatever income level is desirable).
Progressive options to reform the Corporate Income Tax and raise revenue:
The corporate income tax is one of the major tax revenue sources at the state level (it contributed $1.06 billion in fiscal year 2019, six percent of the General Fund tax revenue), and the state considers it mildly regressive, though numerous tax organizations consider it progressive. Three progressive corporate income tax options for raising revenue include:

- **Option 1**: Maintain the 10 percent surcharge on the 7.5 percent statutory corporate income tax rate (the surcharge is currently set to expire in 2021), or increase the surcharge (e.g., make it 20 or 30 percent). For reference, the surcharge was as high as 25 percent during the early 2000s, and the statutory corporate income tax rate was as high as 11.5 percent during the early 1990s, which is the equivalent of a 7.5 percent statutory rate with a 53 percent surcharge.

- **Option 2**: Strengthen the corporate income tax by eliminating existing tax breaks, by adopting the throwback rule to eliminate nowhere income, and by confirming to the Global Intangible Low-Tax Income (GILTI) regime.

- **Option 3**: Combine options 1 and 2.

Progressive options to reform the Estate Tax and raise revenue:
The estate tax is one of the major tax revenue sources at the state level (it contributed $225 million in fiscal year 2019, 1.3 percent of the General Fund tax revenue), and it is highly progressive. Four progressive estate tax options for raising revenue include:

- **Option 1**: Remove or raise the $15 million payment cap (e.g., no other state currently has a payment cap, and Connecticut’s payment cap used to be $20 million as recently as 2018).

- **Option 2**: Increase the top statutory tax rate of 12 percent (e.g., some states currently have a top rate of 16 percent).

- **Option 3**: Reduce or freeze the current $5.1 million exemption, which is set to increase to $11.4 million (e.g. the exemption was as low as $2 million as recently as 2017).

- **Option 4**: Combine one or more of the above options.

Progressive options to reform the Sales Tax and raise revenue:
The sales tax is one of the major tax revenue sources at the state level (it contributed $4.3 billion in fiscal year 2019, 25 percent of the General Fund tax revenue), and it is regressive. One progressive sales tax option for raising revenue includes:

- Expand the sales tax base to include more services (e.g., investment advice, architectural and engineering services). At the same time, use the portion of the new sales tax revenue estimated to fall on lower- and middle-income families to fund tax credits designed to benefit those families (see below for examples). This would essentially maintain the current effective tax rate for lower- and middle-income families and it would raise the effective tax rate for the wealthy.
**Progressive options to reform Tax Credits and raise revenue:**

As the economy recovers and tax revenues increase, Connecticut’s tax system will become progressive if the government keeps in place the sufficient new tax increases on the wealthy and sufficiently uses that additional revenue to expand and/or create tax credits specifically designed to reduce the effective tax rate for lower- and middle-income families. Four progressive tax credit options include:

- **Option 1:** Expand the scope and size of the existing property tax credit (PTC), which is currently capped at $200 and only applies to seniors or those with a dependent. The PTC was previously capped at $500 and it could be increased even beyond that amount. It could also be applied to renters.301

- **Option 2:** Expand the scope and size of the existing earned income tax credit (EITC), which is currently set at 23 percent of the federal credit. The EITC was previously set at 30 percent and it could be increased even beyond that level. It could also be expanded to immigrant workers filing taxes with an individual taxpayer identification number (ITIN), a group that contributes substantially to federal and state taxes.302

- **Option 3:** Create a child tax credit (CTC). Connecticut is currently one of the only states with a personal income tax that does not provide either a child tax credit, deduction, or exemption.303 To address this shortcoming, the state could create a CTC that mirrors the federal credit. It could also create a CTC that has no phase-in and—relative to the federal credit—has a phase-out at a lower maximum income level, all of which would more effectively target the credit at lower and middle-income families.304

- **Option 4:** Combine one or more of the above options.

**Additional enclosures to learn about the economy and tax policy in Connecticut**

- “2020 Reforming Connecticut’s Tax System—Executive Summary” by Connecticut Voices for Children outlines a program for tax reform to strengthen working- and middle-class families.

- “2020 Reforming Connecticut’s Tax System—Tax Credits” by Connecticut Voices for Children outlines two state-level tax credit proposals to strengthen working- and middle-class families: (1) expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit and (2) creating the Child Tax Credit.

- “Just Fact: 2020 Connecticut’s Estate Tax” by Connecticut Voices for Children outlines the importance of maintaining and strengthening the estate tax.
REFORMING CONNECTICUT’S TAX SYSTEM:
A PROGRAM TO STRENGTHEN WORKING- AND MIDDLE-CLASS FAMILIES

PATRICK R. O’BRIEN, PH.D.
RESEARCH AND POLICY FELLOW

JANUARY 2020
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report develops in three steps an argument and program for tax reform to strengthen working- and middle-class families in Connecticut.

First, the report traces the rise of income inequality, the rise of wealth inequality, and the adverse impact of income and wealth inequality on working- and middle-class families. There are three key findings overall:

After rising for several decades, the pre-tax income share for the top 1 percent in the U.S. now exceeds that for the entire working class; the pre-tax income share for the top 10 percent in the U.S. now exceeds that for the entire middle class; the wealth share for the top 1 percent in the U.S. now exceeds that for the entire combined working and middle class; and the wealth share for the top 5 percent in the U.S. is now nearly 3-times greater than that for the entire combined working and middle class.¹

After rising for several decades, pre-tax income inequality is even greater in Connecticut than the U.S. as a whole; and based on the close relationship between income and wealth, wealth inequality is also likely greater in Connecticut than the U.S. as a whole.

Among the many negative consequences, rising income and wealth inequality adversely impact the education of children in working- and middle-class families; they adversely impact the health of children in working- and middle-class families; and they adversely impact the economic opportunity of children in working- and middle-class families.

Second, the report reviews the three types of tax systems in general and it then reviews several comprehensive studies of Connecticut’s regressive tax system in particular. Additionally, the report reviews the historical rise and major components of Connecticut’s regressive tax system. This includes the property tax, sales and excise taxes, business taxes, the personal income tax, the estate and gift tax, and tax expenditures. There is one key finding overall:

The most pressing tax issue in Connecticut is not the overall tax burden but rather the regressive distribution of that burden, which exacerbates rising pre-tax income and wealth inequality by disproportionally taxing working- and middle-class families.
Third, the report outlines a tax reform program to strengthen working- and middle-class families in Connecticut. There are four key components:

Raising Taxes on Millionaires in the Top 1 Percent of the Income Distribution

*For wage income, Connecticut could create two additional personal income tax brackets, 7.99 percent above $1 million for individuals ($2 million for couples), and 8.49 percent above $5 million for individuals ($10 million for couples).*

*For non-wage income—capital gains, dividends, and interest—Connecticut could add 2 percentage points to the two new personal income tax brackets, making the rates 9.99 percent above $1 million for individuals ($2 million for couples) and 10.49 percent above $5 million for individuals ($10 million for couples).*

Raising Taxes on Multi-Million-Dollar Estates in the Top 5 Percent of the Wealth Distribution

*Connecticut could keep its exemption for the estate and gift tax at $3.6 million instead of allowing it to increase to $11.4 million as scheduled.*

*Connecticut could repeal its $15 million cap on the payment of the estate and gift tax.*

Increasing and Creating Tax Credits for Working- and Middle-Class Families

*Connecticut could increase its Earned Income Tax Credit. This would strengthen the working class by reducing its tax burden.*

*Connecticut could create a Child Tax Credit. This would strengthen both the working class and the middle class by reducing their tax burden.*

Increasing Tax Transparency

*Without further delay, the Department of Revenue Services (DRS) could publish a tax incidence report during the first half of all even-numbered years.*

*In order to provide a sufficient assessment of the tax system, the DRS tax incidence report could include the property tax as well as all major state taxes.*

*With the support of the DRS, the Office of Fiscal Analysis could include a basic tax incidence assessment as part of the fiscal note for proposed tax legislation.*

Together, the three fiscal components of the program are designed to be revenue neutral, meaning the aim is not to raise or cut taxes overall but rather to reduce the disproportionate tax burden on working- and middle-class families by shifting part of that burden to the wealthy—whose income and wealth shares have increased the most for several decades and whose effective tax rate has been the lowest. In particular, the income and estate tax components are estimated to raise taxes on the wealthy by about $600 million annually, and the tax credit component is estimated to lower taxes on working- and middle-class families by a similar amount each year through the Connecticut EITC and the Connecticut CTC—a total shift equal to approximately 3.5 percent of the state’s general fund tax revenue. Additionally, the tax transparency component of the program is designed both to prevent future tax increases on the working and middle class and, as necessary, to support further efforts at reforming Connecticut’s regressive tax system.
Increasing and Creating Tax Credits for Working- and Middle-Class Families

As the third component of a program to strengthen working- and middle-class families, Connecticut could increase its Earned Income Tax Credit and create a Child Tax Credit.

(1) The Earned Income Tax Credit

As the Congressional Research Services explains, “The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a refundable tax credit available to eligible workers with relatively low earnings. Because the credit is refundable, an EITC recipient need not owe taxes to receive the benefit. … The EITC is provided to individuals and families once a year, in a lump sum payment after individuals and families file their federal income tax returns. The credit may be received in one of three ways: (1) a reduction in federal tax liability; (2) a refund from the Treasury if the tax filer has no income tax liability; or (3) a combination of a reduced federal tax liability and a refund.” Morehver, regarding the state-level version of the EITC, the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy explains, “While all states with EITCs allow taxpayers to calculate their state EITC as a percentage of the federal credit, state credits vary dramatically in their generosity” and “refundability is by far the most important design choice …. No matter how high the state EITC percentage is, if it is not refundable, it will be ineffective.”

For a more-detailed overview of the EITC, Table 17 shows the three key parameters, which vary based on family size and marital status: (1) the phase-in rate and income range; (2) the maximum credit amount; and (3) the phase-out rate and income range.

Additionally, Figure 19 displays the key parameters of the EITC for a single tax filer in 2019. For example, with one child, the federal EITC operates as follows: (1) the credit increases by $0.34 for every additional dollar of earned income from $0 up to $10,370; (2) the maximum credit of $3,526 remains constant for earned income from $10,370 up to $19,030; and (3) the credit decreases by $0.1598 for every additional dollar of earned income from $19,030 up to $41,094, at which point the credit is entirely phased out.

Currently, the refundable Connecticut EITC mirrors the federal EITC at the rate of 23 percent. This means, for example, that the maximum Connecticut credit for a single tax filer with one child is $811, which together with the maximum federal credit of $3,526 creates a total maximum credit of $4,337. For reference, the level of the Connecticut EITC has been adjusted multiple times: in 2011, it was created at 30 percent; in 2013, it was reduced to 25 percent; in 2014, it was increased to 27.5 percent; and in 2017, it was reduced to 23 percent.
Table 17. The Earned Income Tax Credit: Key Components, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Size</th>
<th>Phase-In</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rate</td>
<td>Income Range (Single) (Married)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childless</td>
<td>7.65%</td>
<td>($0 to $6,920) (same)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Child</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>($0 to $10,370) (same)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Children</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>($0 to $14,570) (same)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2+ Children</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>($0 to $14,570) (same)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Family Size | Maximum Credit | |
|-------------|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|
|             | U.S. 23% 30% 40% 50% |
| Childless   | $529 $122 $159 $212 $265 |
| 1 Child     | $3,526 $811 $1,058 $1,410 $1,763 |
| 2 Children  | $5,828 $1,340 $1,748 $2,331 $2,914 |
| 2+ Children | $6,557 $1,508 $1,967 $2,623 $3,279 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Size</th>
<th>Phase-Out</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rate</td>
<td>Income Range (Single) (Married)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childless</td>
<td>7.65%</td>
<td>($8,650 to $15,570) ($14,450 to $21,370)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Child</td>
<td>15.98%</td>
<td>($19,030 to $41,094) ($24,820 to $46,884)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Children</td>
<td>21.06%</td>
<td>($19,030 to $46,703) ($24,820 to $52,493)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2+ Children</td>
<td>21.06%</td>
<td>($19,030 to $50,162) ($24,820 to $55,952)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 19. The Earned Income Tax Credit: U.S., Single Filer, 2019
Policy recommendation:

Connecticut could increase its Earned Income Tax Credit. Based on an analysis from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, Table 18 shows that restoring the Connecticut EITC to 30 percent of the federal credit is estimated to cost an additional $34.7 million annually; increasing it to 40 percent is estimated to cost an additional $84.1 million annually; and increasing it to 50 percent is estimated to cost an additional $133.7 million annually.

The analysis also shows five other key features:

Tax Change as a Percent of Income: For example, increasing the Connecticut EITC from 23 to 30 percent would reduce by an additional 0.2 percentage points the effective tax rate for the bottom 20 percent of the income distribution—those making an average of $14,000 in 2019.

Average Tax Cut: For example, increasing the Connecticut EITC from 23 to 30 percent would provide an additional average tax cut of $34 for those in the bottom 20 percent of the income distribution.

Percent Receiving Tax Cut: For example, increasing the Connecticut EITC from 23 to 30 percent would provide an additional tax cut for 18 percent of those in the bottom 20 percent of the income distribution.

Average Tax Cut for Recipient: For example, increasing the Connecticut EITC from 23 to 30 percent would provide an additional average tax cut of $187 for qualified recipients in the bottom 20 percent of the income distribution.

Share of Total Tax Cut: For example, 35 percent of the tax cut from increasing the Connecticut EITC from 23 to 30 percent would go to the bottom 20 percent of the income distribution.

Altogether, the analysis shows that, regardless of the overall selected rate—30, 40, or 50 percent—increasing the Connecticut EITC would overwhelmingly support working-class families. Moreover, nearly all of these families would immediately use the tax credit to pay for essential needs, which in turn would help to boost the state’s economy.
### Table 18. Increasing the Connecticut EITC to 30, 40, or 50 Percent of the Federal Credit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Group</th>
<th>Lowest 20%</th>
<th>Second 20%</th>
<th>Middle 20%</th>
<th>Fourth 20%</th>
<th>Next 15%</th>
<th>Next 4%</th>
<th>Top 1%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Income in 2019</td>
<td>$14,000</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>$101,000</td>
<td>$195,000</td>
<td>$496,000</td>
<td>$3,190,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Increasing To 30%: Total Cost of $34.7 Million

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tax Change (% of income)</th>
<th>Average Tax Cut</th>
<th>% Receiving Tax Cut</th>
<th>Average Tax Cut for Recipient</th>
<th>Share of Total Tax Cut</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-0.2%</td>
<td>$34</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>$187</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-0.1%</td>
<td>$49</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>$215</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>$222</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Increasing to 40%: Total Cost of $84.1 Million

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tax Change (% of income)</th>
<th>Average Tax Cut</th>
<th>% Receiving Tax Cut</th>
<th>Average Tax Cut for Recipient</th>
<th>Share of Total Tax Cut</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-0.6%</td>
<td>$82</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>$453</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-0.3%</td>
<td>$119</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>$523</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>$25</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>$540</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Increasing to 50%: Total Cost of $133.7 Million

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tax Change (% of income)</th>
<th>Average Tax Cut</th>
<th>% Receiving Tax Cut</th>
<th>Average Tax Cut for Recipient</th>
<th>Share of Total Tax Cut</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-0.9%</td>
<td>$131</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>$720</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-0.5%</td>
<td>$189</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>$831</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-0.1%</td>
<td>$39</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>$858</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Cost estimates and distributional analysis are provided by the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy*
(2) The Child Tax Credit

More than two decades after creating the EITC, the federal government created the Child Tax Credit (CTC) as “a $500-per-child nonrefundable credit to provide tax relief to middle- and upper-middle-income families. Since 1997, various laws have modified key parameters of the credit, expanding the availability of the benefit to more low-income families while also increasing the value of the tax credit.”91 Regarding its current form, the Tax Policy Center explains, “Taxpayers can claim a child tax credit … of up to $2,000 for each child under age 17 who is a citizen. … If the credit exceeds taxes owed, taxpayers can receive up to $1,400 of the balance as a refund, known as the additional child tax credit (ACTC) or refundable CTC.” Additionally, a non-refundable $500 other dependent credit (ODC) “is available to dependents who are not eligible for the $2,000 CTC for children under 17.” This includes older dependents as well as “children ages 17–18 or those 19–24 and in school full time in at least five months of the year.”92

For a more-detailed overview of the CTC—and the related ACTC and ODC—Table 19 shows the three key parameters, which vary based on marital status: (1) the phase-in rate and income level; (2) the maximum credit per child or dependent; and (3) the phase-out rate and income level.

Additionally, Figure 20 displays the key parameters of both the CTC/ACTC and the ODC for a single tax filer with one eligible child or dependent in 2019. For example, with one eligible child, the CTC/ACTC operates as follows: (1) the ACTC increases by $0.15 for every additional dollar of earned income from $2,500 up to $11,830, and then, once reaching the maximum ACTC of $1,400, the CTC increases by $0.15 for every additional dollar of earned income from $18,305 up to $24,300; (2) the maximum credit of $2,000 remains constant for earned income from $24,300 up to $200,000; and (3) the credit decreases by $0.05 for every additional dollar of earned income from $200,000 up to $240,000, at which point the credit is entirely phased out.

Likewise, with one eligible dependent, the ODC operates as follows: (1) the credit—which is not refundable and has no phase-in rate or statutory income threshold—begins to go into effect at earned income of $18,305 and reaches its maximum at earned income of $23,300; (2) the maximum credit of $500 remains constant for earned income from $23,300 up to $200,000; and (3) the credit decreases by $0.05 for every additional dollar of earned income from $200,000 up to $210,000, at which point the credit is entirely phased out.93

Unlike many other states, Connecticut does not currently have either a state-level CTC or a state-level Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC). For reference, the CDCTC “is a nonrefundable tax credit that reduces a taxpayer’s federal income tax liability based on child and dependent care expenses incurred. The policy objective is to assist taxpayers who work or who are looking for work.”94 Regarding the absence of a state-level CTC or CDCTC in Connecticut, a 2014 report from Connecticut Voices for Children explains, “Unlike most other states, Connecticut has no tax exemptions, deductions or credits to offset some of the considerable costs of raising children. As a result, a family of two parents and three children pays virtually the same amount in state income tax as a couple without children that earns the same income, even though households with children spend more on food, clothing, health care and other necessities, and have far less disposable income.”95
### Table 19. The Child Tax Credit: Key Components, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Filer Status</th>
<th>Credit Type</th>
<th>Phase-In</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rate</td>
<td>Income Level</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>ACTC / CTC</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>above $2,500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>ACTC / CTC</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>above $2,500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>ODC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>ODC</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Filer Status</th>
<th>Credit Type</th>
<th>Max. Credit Per Child / Other Dependent</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>30%</th>
<th>40%</th>
<th>50%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single / Married</td>
<td>ACTC (Refundable)</td>
<td>$1,400 $420 $560 $700</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single / Married</td>
<td>CTC</td>
<td>$2,000 $600 $800 $1,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single / Married</td>
<td>ODC</td>
<td>$500 $150 $200 $250</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 20. The Child Tax Credit: U.S., Single Filer, 2019
Policy recommendation:

Connecticut could create a Child Tax Credit that mirrors the federal credit, meaning it includes a CTC/ACTC and ODC. Based on an analysis from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, Table 20 shows that creating a Connecticut CTC at 30 percent of the federal credit is estimated to cost $376 million annually; creating it at 40 percent is estimated to cost $501 million annually; and creating it at 50 percent is estimated to cost $627 million annually.

The analysis also shows five other key features:

Tax Change as a Percent of Income: For example, creating the Connecticut CTC at 30 percent would reduce by 0.5 percentage points the effective tax rate for the second 20 percent of the income distribution and it would reduce by 0.3 percentage points the effective tax rate for the fourth 20 percent—those making an average of $35,000 and $101,000, respectively, in 2019.

Average Tax Cut: For example, creating the Connecticut CTC at 30 percent would provide an average tax cut of $162 for those in the second 20 percent of the income distribution and it would provide an average tax cut of $255 for those in the fourth 20 percent.

Percent Receiving Tax Cut: For example, creating the Connecticut CTC at 30 percent would provide a tax cut for 19 percent of those in the second 20 percent of the income distribution and it would provide a tax cut for 31 percent of those in the fourth 20 percent.

Average Tax Cut for Qualified Recipient: For example, creating the Connecticut CTC at 30 percent would provide an average tax cut of $850 for qualified recipients in the second 20 percent of the income distribution and it would provide an average tax cut of $821 for qualified recipients in the fourth 20 percent.

Share of Total Tax Cut: For example, 15 percent of the tax cut from creating the Connecticut CTC at 30 percent would go the second 20 percent of the income distribution and 24 percent would go to the fourth 20 percent.

Altogether, the analysis shows that, regardless of the overall selected rate—30, 40, or 50 percent—creating the Connecticut CTC would overwhelmingly support working- and middle-class families. Moreover, a substantial portion of those families would quickly use the tax credit to pay for the high cost of raising children, which in turn would help to further boost the state’s economy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Group</th>
<th>Lowest 20%</th>
<th>Second 20%</th>
<th>Middle 20%</th>
<th>Fourth 20%</th>
<th>Next 15%</th>
<th>Next 4%</th>
<th>Top 1%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Income in 2019</td>
<td>$14,000</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
<td>$60,000</td>
<td>$101,000</td>
<td>$195,000</td>
<td>$496,000</td>
<td>$3,190,000</td>
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</table>

**Creating the Connecticut CTC at 30%: Total Cost of $376 Million**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tax Change (% of income)</th>
<th>-0.4%</th>
<th>-0.5%</th>
<th>-0.3%</th>
<th>-0.3%</th>
<th>-0.2%</th>
<th>-0.1%</th>
<th>-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Tax Cut</td>
<td>$49</td>
<td>$162</td>
<td>$207</td>
<td>$255</td>
<td>$430</td>
<td>$277</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Receiving Tax Cut</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Tax Cut for Recipient</td>
<td>$484</td>
<td>$850</td>
<td>$818</td>
<td>$821</td>
<td>$984</td>
<td>$933</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of Total Tax Cut</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Creating the Connecticut CTC at 40%: Total Cost of $501.3 Million**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tax Change (% of income)</th>
<th>-0.5%</th>
<th>-0.6%</th>
<th>-0.5%</th>
<th>-0.3%</th>
<th>-0.3%</th>
<th>-0.1%</th>
<th>-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Tax Cut</td>
<td>$66</td>
<td>$216</td>
<td>$276</td>
<td>$340</td>
<td>$573</td>
<td>$369</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Receiving Tax Cut</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Tax Cut for Recipient</td>
<td>$645</td>
<td>$1,133</td>
<td>$1,091</td>
<td>$1,095</td>
<td>$1,312</td>
<td>$1,244</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of Total Tax Cut</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Creating the Connecticut CTC at 50%: Total Cost of $626.6 Million**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tax Change (% of income)</th>
<th>-0.6%</th>
<th>-0.8%</th>
<th>-0.6%</th>
<th>-0.4%</th>
<th>-0.4%</th>
<th>-0.1%</th>
<th>-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Tax Cut</td>
<td>$82</td>
<td>$270</td>
<td>$344</td>
<td>$426</td>
<td>$716</td>
<td>$461</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Receiving Tax Cut</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Tax Cut for Recipient</td>
<td>$807</td>
<td>$1,417</td>
<td>$1,364</td>
<td>$1,368</td>
<td>$1,640</td>
<td>$1,555</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of Total Tax Cut</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Cost estimates and distributional analysis are provided by the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy*

Table 20. Creating the Connecticut CTC at 30, 40, or 50 Percent of the Federal Credit
In support of both the EITC and the CTC, there are two additional key points to highlight:

_The cost of increasing the Connecticut EITC and creating the Connecticut CTC could be covered entirely by raising taxes both on millionaires in the top 1 percent of the income distribution and on multi-million-dollar estates in the top 5 wealth distribution, all of which would help to make Connecticut’s tax system less regressive._ As Table 21 shows, the millionaire income tax component and multi-million-dollar estate tax component are estimated to raise an additional $602.3 million a year—or a 3.5 percent increase in the state’s general fund tax revenue. That is sufficient to cover various combinations of the tax credits to strengthen working- and middle-class families. For example, increasing the Connecticut EITC to 50 percent of the federal credit and creating the Connecticut CTC at 30 percent of the federal credit is estimated to cost $510 million a year—or a 2.9 percent decrease in the state’s general fund tax revenue. To take another example, increasing the Connecticut EITC to 40 percent and creating the Connecticut CTC at 40 percent is estimated to cost $585 million a year—or a 3.4 percent decrease in the state’s general fund tax revenue.96

_Increasing the Connecticut EITC and creating the Connecticut CTC would help to offset the negative impact of rising income and wealth inequality, especially in the areas of education, health, and economic opportunity._ For example, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities explains, “The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) … provide work, income, educational, and health benefits to its recipients and their children, a substantial body of research shows. In addition, recent ground-breaking research suggests the income from these tax credits leads to benefits at virtually every stage of life. For instance, research indicates that children in families receiving the tax credits do better in school, are likelier to attend college, and can be expected to earn more as adults.”97 Additionally, the Urban Institute reports, “Two tax credits—the child tax credit (CTC) and the earned income tax credit (EITC)—provide substantial assistance to low- and middle-income families. Together, they lift more families out of poverty than any government program outside of Social Security.”98
What is Connecticut’s Estate Tax?

- The estate tax is a tax imposed on wealth at the time of death. Beginning in 2020, Connecticut taxes only estates that exceed $5.1 million. This exemption will increase each year until it reaches the federal $11.4 million exemption in 2023. Current rates range from 7.8 percent to 12 percent based on the estate size and will be a flat 12 percent when the exemption reaches $11.4 million. The total tax that any estate must pay is capped at $15 million.

- The estate tax raises hundreds of millions of dollars in state revenue every year. The Office of Policy and Management (OPM) reports that the estate tax raised $225.2 million in FY 2019. Moreover, even with this year’s increase in the exemption level, OPM projects that the estate tax will raise $180.8 million in FY 2020. These revenues are more than four times the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy’s estimate of the cost of restoring Connecticut’s EITC to its 2011 level of 30% of the federal credit.

The estate tax is the only tax in Connecticut that directly addresses wealth inequality.

- The estate tax helps to address Connecticut’s wealth and income disparity. Connecticut is the third most unequal state in the country in terms of income distribution, with 1% of families taking home 27.3% of all income, and with a dramatic increase in the share of income going to the top 1% of earners in recent decades. Connecticut also has the third highest concentration of millionaire households of any state (including DC). The wealth distribution in Connecticut is also consistent with national racial disparities.
• The estate tax helps to limit the advantage that the heirs of wealthy people enjoy from unearned wealth transfers. When unrealized assets are transferred upon death, they get a “stepped-up” basis equal to their fair market value at the time of the decedent’s death. Then, when the heirs sell the asset, the cost basis for the calculation of capital gains tax is based on the value of the asset when the inheritor received it, not the original cost of the item when purchased years before. Without the estate tax that increase in value would never be taxed. Such unrealized capital gains account for 32 percent of estates worth between $5 million and $10 million and 55 percent of the value of estates worth more than $100 million.

Connecticut’s estate tax is more generous to heirs inheriting wealth than our peer states.
• All of Connecticut’s peer states in the Northeast except New Hampshire have an estate or inheritance tax.
• If Connecticut’s estate tax exemption continues to increase as scheduled, Figure 1 shows that by 2023, when Connecticut’s estate tax exemption is scheduled to match the federal exemption of $11.4 million, most of these states will have exemption levels that are significantly lower than the exemption level in Connecticut.
• Connecticut is the only state in the country that caps the total amount of estate taxes paid. As Figure 2 shows, estates larger than $128 million paid no additional estate taxes due to this cap.

Figure 1. Projected Estate Tax Exemption Levels*
Connecticut’s estate tax provides much needed revenue, and simple reforms could further increase these revenues

- Connecticut’s estate tax provides valuable revenue. Rolling back the exemption to $3.6 million would raise an additional $92 million a year relative to the 2023 scheduled exemption of $11.4 million.
- If Connecticut repealed its $15 million cap on the payment of the estate and gift tax, it would yield an estimated $12.5 million a year.
- CT Voices recommends freezing the exemption and removing the cap, and using the revenue to support working- and middle-class families.
- All of Connecticut’s peer states in the Northeast except New Hampshire have an estate or inheritance tax.
As noted in the tax policy section, the U.S. officially entered a recession in February and the economy is projected to shrink by five-plus percent this year, which would be the largest contraction since the late 1940s. At the intersection of the economy and spending policy, there are three primary, related problems for the state government to address: (1) rising economic inequality and slowing economic growth are harming Connecticut’s families and children; (2) Connecticut’s restricted spending system exacerbates rising economic inequality and slowing economic growth; and (3) the coronavirus pandemic and recession are generating a major shortfall in tax revenue that funds government spending.

To address these problems, Connecticut Voices for Children proposes the following: (1) the state government should fully employ the Budget Reserve Fund to maintain spending; (2) the state government should raise progressive taxes to maintain spending; and (3) the state government should fully and permanently transition from a regressive tax system to a progressive tax system. The program proposed here incorporates both tax policy and spending policy and it therefore spans two sections in the briefing book. This section provides an overview of the primary, related problems and spending policy solutions, and the tax section provides an overview of closely related primary problems and the tax policy solutions.

**Rising economic inequality and slowing economic growth are harming Connecticut’s families and children**

As detailed in the tax policy section, economic inequality has increased substantially over the last four decades in the U.S. in general and in Connecticut in particular. This is important because economic inequality negatively impacts the children from lower- and middle-income families in several ways, especially in the areas of education, health, and economic mobility.

At the same time that the economy’s pre-tax income and wealth shares have increasingly gone to the top 1 percent of the population, the growth in the overall size of the economy has increasingly slowed. In particular, as displayed in Figure 1, growth in real Gross Domestic Product—the value of the goods and services produced in the U.S. and one of the primary measures of the economy’s strength—has steadily declined from an average of more than 4 percent during the 1950s and 1960s to between three and four percent during 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s and to less than three percent during the 2000s and 2010s. Even more notable, economic growth in Connecticut has declined from an average of 2.1 percent during the 2000s to 0.1 percent during the 2010s, which is the third slowest of all the states. This is important because weaker economic growth generally slows the increase in the material standard of living for a state’s residents and it also diminishes fiscal conditions, meaning in order to balance the budget the government generally has to either cut spending or increase tax rates to raise the same amount of tax revenue that a faster growing economy would produce.
Connecticut's restricted spending system exacerbates rising economic inequality and slowing economic growth

Connecticut has five major fiscal restrictions: a constitutional and statutory spending cap, a volatility cap, an appropriations cap, a bond cap, and a bond lock. The statutory component of the spending cap first went into effect in 1991 and the other restrictions went into effect in 2018. For the purpose of this section, the spending cap is the most relevant restriction.

In practice, the constitutional and statutory spending cap limits the state’s spending to the level of appropriated spending in the previous year plus a percentage increase based on the greater of either the average growth in the state’s personal income over the past five years or the growth in the consumer price index (CPI) over the last year. Importantly, because the budget base is defined as “appropriated” spending rather than allowed spending under the cap or total actual spending, spending cuts made to balance the budget in response to a recession-induced decline in tax revenue will reduce the budget base in subsequent years for each successive recession, which in turn will increasingly reduce public investment and quality of life in the state.309
To better understand this process, consider the hypothetical example displayed in Figure 2. For context, in year one, the economy is “normal;” in year two—a recession year—there is a 10 percent decline in total revenue, comparable to the Great Recession; in year three, total revenue recovers to where it was in year one; and in year four, the economy is booming and total revenue increases. Further, the first bar for each year represents the total revenue received that year; the second bar for each year represents a hypothetical spending cap based on allowed spending; and the third bar for each year represents the current cap based on appropriated spending. Notably, the current cap adjusts based on spending in the previous year and limits spending after a recession, even after the state’s revenues has recovered (year three), permanently adjusting the base going forward. In other words, the cap treats the budget like Connecticut is still in a recession, forcing unnecessary spending cuts and slowing economic growth.

Fiscal & Economics: Budget and Spendingm Figure 2. Connecticut’s Spending Cap Ratchets Down Spending After a Recession

To understand further the impact of Connecticut’s restricted spending, consider the multi-state comparison displayed in Figure 3. From 2013 through 2017—the most recent years available—state and local government spending in Connecticut averaged 16.9 percent of the state’s total personal income, the second lowest level in the U.S. and well below the average of 22.8 percent for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. This means that Connecticut already had a low level of spending under its statutory spending cap and the other components of the restricted fiscal system that went into effect in 2018 will only reinforce that trend. This also explains in part Connecticut’s position as the state with the third slowest growth rate over the last decade.
The coronavirus pandemic and recession are generating a major shortfall in tax revenue that funds government spending

As detailed in the tax policy section, the most recent consensus revenue estimate shows a major tax revenue shortfall over the next several years due to the coronavirus pandemic and recession. This means that in order to balance the budget each year, as the Connecticut Constitution requires, the government will primarily have to either cut spending to offset the shortfall in revenue, increase taxes to maintain spending, or some combination of the two approaches.

The government also has the option of employing the Budget Reserve Fund (BRF). By law, Connecticut is required to deposit into the BRF all revenue exceeding $3.15 billion from the combination of two sources, the business entity tax and the estimates and final payments of the personal income tax.

Following substantial deposits over the last two years, the BRF is projected to have a balance of $2.2 billion to start fiscal year 2021. This is sufficient to cover part but not all of the projected multi-year shortfall in tax revenue, which funds government spending.311
The state government should employ the Budget Reserve Fund to maintain spending, which will support Connecticut's economy in general and will allow the State to more effectively support its neediest families and children in particular

Although the Connecticut Constitution requires the state to balance its budget, it is possible to use the Budget Reserve Fund (BRF) to support the state’s economy in general during a recession. In particular, the state should use the BRF to increase government capacity and accountability and to fund an emergency relief program to support the neediest families and children.

To understand the economic argument for using the BRF, it is essential to consider the fiscal multiplier effect, which is the ratio of the change in economic output to the change in government spending or taxes that causes that change in economic output. A fiscal multiplier greater than one indicates that economic output increases by more than a dollar for each additional dollar in government spending or tax cuts. This is due to a combination of the direct effect on economic output and the positive indirect effects that arise when the direct effect spreads throughout the economy. To take one example, government spending on infrastructure projects directly increases economic output and it also increases wages for construction workers, who in turn increase their consumption of goods and services and thereby further boost economic output.\(^{312}\)

For a leading estimate of this dynamic, the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office finds that when the economy is weak a $1 increase in government spending has a cumulative effect on output equal to an increase in spending of $1.50 on average, meaning the positive impact is amplified. Conversely, when the economy is weak a $1 decrease in government spending has a cumulative effect on output equal to a decrease in spending of $1.50 on average, meaning the negative impact is amplified.\(^{313}\)

Put simply, using the BRF during a recession and its aftermath will provide the greatest boost—or “bang for the buck”—in support of Connecticut’s economy in general, which will benefit all of the state’s families. At the same time, this policy will allow the state to more effectively support its neediest families in particular by preventing or limiting cuts in key programs, such as spending on health care, child care, education, food and cash assistance, and various social services, all of which are essential to combat rising economic inequality.\(^{314}\)

The State Government should raise progressive taxes to maintain spending, which will further support Connecticut's economy in general and will further allow the State to more effectively support its neediest families and children in particular

Implementing the progressive tax program to maintain government spending will support Connecticut’s economy because the economic boost of a dollar in government spending is greater than the economic drag of a dollar in taxes. Specifically, whereas a dollar in government spending directly increases economic output by a dollar, a dollar in tax increases directly decreases economic output by less than a dollar because the reduction in income results in a reduction in both savings and consumption. Moreover, tax increases on the wealthy have the smallest economic drag because the wealthy tend to have a higher savings rate and a lower consumption rate.\(^{315}\)

For a leading estimate of this dynamic, the non-partisan CBO finds that on average a $1 increase in government spending has a cumulative effect on economic output equal to an increase in spending of $1.50, whereas a $1 increase in taxes on the wealthy has a cumulative contractionary effect on economic output equal to or less
than $0.50. This means that for each $1 increase in taxes on the wealthy used to fund government spending economic output increases by at least $1.316

Equally important, the progressive tax system-funded spending will provide the greatest economic boost if it is used to support the state’s neediest families and children. For example, Moody’s Analytics estimates, as displayed in Table 1, that an increase in food stamps or an extension in unemployment benefits provides the largest economic boost—an increase in output of $1.71 and $1.55, respectively, for each $1 increase in government spending. Moreover, the progressive tax system-funded spending will prevent or limit the decline in the budget base, which will strengthen the state’s ability to support the economy and its neediest families and children during each successive fiscal year.317

**Fiscal & Economics: Budget and Spending, Table 1.** Moody’s Fiscal Multipliers by Type of Policy
Source: Moody’s Analytics. *At Last, the U.S. Begins a Serious Fiscal Debate.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Policy</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tax Cuts (Temporary)</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Tax Credit (ARRA Parameters)</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Tax Credit</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payroll Tax Holiday</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned Income Tax Credit (ARRA Parameters)</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tax Cuts (Permanent)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extend Alternative Minimum Tax Patch</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make Dividend and Capital Gains Tax Cuts Permanent</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make Bush Income Tax Cuts Permanent</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut in Corporate Tax Rate</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spending Increases</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Increase in Food Stamps</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extending Unemployment Insurance Benefits</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Infrastructure Spending</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Aid to State Governments</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*ARRA is the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.*
As this section details, not all state spending achieves the same degree of economic impact during times of economic recession. To stabilize families and achieve the largest economic “bang for our buck,” Connecticut Voices for Children advocates that the state government should divest from policies that are harmful to children and families and instead direct government spending toward systems and policies that support family well-being. In particular, we advocate for the state government to invest BRF and revenue dollars through:

- supplying the Department of Social Services with funding to ensure 12-month of continuous Medicaid eligibility for families, and extending Medicaid care to immigrant families (see the Issue Brief Emerging Issues section on the Health of Communities of Color);
- increasing access to affordable housing and aid to struggling renters to avoid an eviction crisis (see the Issue Brief Housing sections on Affordable Housing and Evictions);
- extending and expanding safety net aid to youth in state care and immigrant families (see the Issue Brief Justice sections on Keeping Undocumented Families Together and Centering Children and Youth in State Care and Justice-Involved Youth);
- creating a universal early child care system in the state so that parents can participate in the workforce to the fullest extent (see the Issue Brief Employment section on Early Care);
- and subsidizing the pay of essential workers to ensure that they earn a living wage (see the Issue Brief Employment section on Essential Workers).

Implementing the progressive tax program to allow for government spending will support Connecticut’s economy in general, which will benefit all of the state’s families. At the same time, this approach will further allow the state to more effectively support its neediest families in particular by preventing or limiting cuts in key programs, such as spending on health care, child care, education, food and cash assistance, and various social services, all of which are essential to combat rising economic inequality.

**The State Government should create a “Connecticut COVID-19 Response Taskforce” to ensure that federal and state relief dollars are administered accurately, efficiently, and equitably**

As billions of federal dollars come to the state and potentially billions more federal dollars and state dollars are allocated to weather the COVID-19 storm, there must be measures in place to ensure these funds are being administered equitably. The Connecticut General Assembly should enact a “Connecticut COVID-19 Response Taskforce” that provides oversight and accountability and tracks decisions and dollars. Similar to other taskforces, members of the community should have a seat at the table along with legislators.

**The State Government should fully and permanently transition from a regressive tax system to a progressive tax system, which will better support Connecticut’s economy in general and allow the State to more effectively support its neediest families and children in particular.**

The benefits of this policy are detailed in the Tax Section of the Issue Briefing Book 2020-2022.
Additional enclosures to learn about the economy and tax policy in Connecticut

- “2020 Supporting Connecticut’s Economy—Introduction” by Connecticut Voices for Children outlines a program at the federal and state levels to manage the coronavirus recession and recovery.

- “2019 Connecticut’s Radical New Budget Rules—Introduction, Background, and Fiscal Restrictions” by Connecticut Voices for Children outlines the state’s restricted fiscal system, which harms the state’s families and economy.
SUPPORTING CONNECTICUT’S ECONOMY:
A PROGRAM TO MANAGE THE CORONAVIRUS RECESSION AND RECOVERY

PATRICK O’BRIEN, PH.D. RESEARCH AND POLICY FELLOW

APRIL 2020
Introduction

Following the longest economic expansion in U.S. history, a coronavirus recession now appears inevitable. For example, the Goldman Sachs economic outlook is forecasting an annualized economic growth rate of -24 percent during the second quarter of 2020, which would be far and away the largest quarterly contraction on record. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Labor reported that 3.28 million people filed for unemployment in a single week in March—more than four times the record—and the Economic Policy Institute projects that altogether 14 million people could lose their jobs by this summer, including more than 150,000 people in Connecticut.\(^1\)

Building upon an analysis of both the federal government’s primary instruments and Connecticut’s primary instruments, the purpose of this report is to outline a program for managing the coronavirus recession and recovery. To be sure, a recession triggered by a global pandemic is unique in American history, yet all recessions are unique to some degree. The focus of this report is therefore limited to the general economics of managing a recession and recovery.

As developed in detail in this report, CT Voices recommends the following program to support the U.S. economy in general and Connecticut’s economy in particular:

**Using Monetary and Fiscal Policy to Support the U.S. Economy**

To support the U.S. economy, which in turn will help to support the well-being of Connecticut’s children and families, especially those that have been historically disadvantaged and/or most directly impacted by the recession, CT Voices recommends the following at the federal level:

- In managing the recession, the Federal Reserve should keep its primary short-term interest rate target at zero and continue to aggressively employ its unconventional monetary policy instruments.

- In managing the recovery, the Federal Reserve should not raise its primary short-term interest rate target before the economy returns to full employment, which, as recent history shows, means an unemployment rate below 4 percent and possibly lower.

- In managing the recession, Congress and the president should provide significantly more fiscal support.

- In managing the recovery, Congress and the president should not move to reduce the deficit and debt before the economy returns to full employment. Moreover, when that move occurs, it should be accomplished through an increase in progressive taxes, not a reduction in spending.
Using Fiscal Policy to Support Connecticut’s Economy

To support Connecticut’s economy, which in turn will help to further support the well-being of the Connecticut’s children and families, especially those that have been historically disadvantaged and/or most directly impacted by the recession, CT Voices recommends the following at the state level:

- In managing the recession, the Connecticut government should immediately use the Budget Reserve Fund to establish a state emergency relief program, to increase government capacity and accountability, and to maintain government spending more generally.

- In managing the recession and recovery, the Connecticut government should increase taxes on the wealthy in order, first, to maintain spending and, second, to lower the disproportionate tax burden borne by working- and middle-class families.
Connecticut’s Radical New Budget Rules: Locking in Decreased Investment in our State for the Next Decade

I. Introduction

Faced with increasingly difficult decisions in crafting the FY 18-19 biennial budget, Connecticut’s General Assembly found itself at an impasse. In order to break the log jam, the legislature included drastic measures in the final budget deal. It is increasingly clear that the long-term effects of these measures will be deleterious to the well-being of Connecticut’s children and families and to our state’s economic prosperity.

Five fiscal restrictions, some new and some revised, were included in the budget:

- A spending cap;
- A volatility cap;
- An appropriations cap;
- A bond cap; and
- The “Bond Lock,” which requires a covenant in Connecticut bonds issued during a two-year period promising not to change these fiscal restrictions for at least five years from the date of the bond issuance.

We will discuss each of these restrictions in more depth below.

While these fiscal rules were intended to stabilize our state budget and address the uncertainty caused by annual deficits, legislative stalemates, and lack of long-term budget planning, the result will be damaging to our state’s economic growth and competitiveness. Our economic well-being will be undermined by the required deep reductions to our capital investments, and long-term cuts to higher education, social services, transportation, and workforce development.

Connecticut Voices for Children advocates for policies that prioritize economic growth and equitable opportunity for all children and families. Public policies that prioritize children and families require a fair and adequate tax system and investments in public programs and services essential to providing the opportunity for every child in our state to thrive. Connecticut’s prosperity depends upon smart public investments in high-quality public schools in all cities and towns, economic development that creates good jobs, reliable roads and bridges, and twenty-first century infrastructure.

* Sam Whipple is a Yale Law School student and a participant in the Law School’s Legislative Advocacy Clinic.
The Bond Lock, and the fiscal rules it freezes in place, is in practice an austerity lock, ensuring that Connecticut remains in a permanent state of fiscal deprivation, starving our schools, health systems and infrastructure of crucial investments. Our state budget determines how well we care for infants and toddlers, educate our children from birth through college and career, care for the sick or disabled, and more. Our commitments to these shared values are measured by the allocation and level of spending devoted to supporting the programs and systems that provide these essential supports.

To ensure that all Connecticut families and their children have an equitable opportunity to reach their potential and participate fully in a growing and thriving economy, the following actions are necessary:

1. Repeal the Bond Lock;
2. Utilize one of the legal strategies described below to free the state from the Bond Lock in bonds that have already been sold; and
3. Amend the volatility cap to reflect the best practices volatility policy enacted in 2015.

Taken together, and absent the steps outlined above, these caps will result in the following:

- A forced ratcheting down of spending after an economic downturn or recession, exactly when we should be investing to grow our economy.
- A volatility cap that captures normal revenue, rather than one-time revenue, and requires us to deposit revenue into our Budget Reserve Fund even in years with projected deficits, causing deep and unnecessary cuts to essential programs like education and municipal aid.
- Long-term, annual reductions to “discretionary spending” (e.g., grants to municipalities for education, higher education, and human services) due to the spending cap’s impact when fixed costs (i.e., contractually obligated spending) as a share of allowable spending within the budget is growing.
- These fiscal restrictions at the state level will push costs for education and essential services to cities and towns. These increased costs will require municipalities to boost the regressive property tax that costs low- and middle-income families a larger share of their incomes than the top earners.

II. Background

Connecticut’s tight budget

Connecticut’s economy is smaller than it was before the 2008 recession, with state real economic output shrinking since 2008. It is also more unequal. From 2009 to 2015, income inequality grew: the income of the top 1 percent in Connecticut went up by an average of 22.9 percent, while incomes for everybody else dropped by an average of 1.8 percent. Connecticut is the third most unequal state in the country.

Connecticut’s government is significantly smaller than just 10 years ago. Between 2008 and 2017, the state lost over 23,000 public sector jobs, a 9 percent decrease. Within government jobs, Connecticut lost 13 percent of state government jobs, 8 percent of local government jobs, and 7 percent of federal jobs. Since 2011, state spending grew at an annual rate of under 2 percent.

When considering taxes as a percent of income, Connecticut is not a high tax state. Connecticut ranks seventh from the bottom in state and local taxes as share of state income and ranks second to last in total “own source revenue” (state and local revenues from Connecticut residents) as share of state income. The erroneous perception that Connecticut is a high tax state makes it difficult for government to sufficiently increase revenue and, even if revenue were increased, the spending cap means that the increased revenue cannot be spent.
As a result, our budget is tight, and children and families in the state have already experienced painful cuts to essential programs, from birth through higher education. We continue to underfund Care 4 Kids, our flexible child care subsidy program. Parents earning low incomes may be unable to access affordable child care. We have seen repeated cuts to higher education, including, most recently, a $4.5 million cut to the University of Connecticut’s operating budget.6

Low revenues make adequate funding difficult, and the budget is trim – there is little room for cuts without hurting people and cities in unacceptable ways. The recently enacted fiscal restrictions lock in this level of spending, despite how costs, revenues, or preferences may change in the future.

As we are beginning to see growth in Connecticut’s economy and tax receipts, the novel and untested budget rules will prevent us from making the necessary investments to maintain and expand our state’s high quality of life.

III. Connecticut’s fiscal restrictions

The following is a description of the fiscal restrictions (caps) adopted in 2017 and 2018 and their impact on our state budget, absent reform.

The Spending Cap

The spending cap limits certain appropriated spending to the level of spending in the previous year plus a percent increase based on either average income growth in the last five years or the consumer price index (CPI) over the last year, whichever is greater. Connecticut adopted a spending cap in 1991 as part of a compromise when the income tax was enacted. Due to over three-fifths of the legislature voting in favor of the FY 2017-2018 budget implementer, in which new definitional language was included, the spending cap is now constitutional, meaning it requires a three-fifths vote by the legislature to overturn.7

What is capped

The spending cap limits all “General Budget Expenditures.” These include all appropriated funds, except:

- Bond payments
- Transfers to the Budget Reserve Fund
- Federal funds
- Expenditures due to federal mandates or court orders and to federal programs where state receives matching funds in the first fiscal year of the program.
- Payments to fund the State Employee Retirement System (SERS) (through 2022), and
- Payments to fund the Teacher’s Retirement System (TRS) (through 2026)

Grants to “distressed municipalities” now under spending cap

Previously, grants to distressed municipalities6 were excluded from the cap, but now they are included under the cap. Grants that were excluded from the cap when they went to distressed municipalities included: Education Equalization Grants, School Based Health Clinics, Teen Pregnancy Prevention, Bilingual Education, and others. (See the Appendix for a full list.) As of 2018, these grants fall under the cap for all municipalities, which will make it harder to direct spending to where it is most needed and will put even more of a burden on distressed municipalities to fund their own services.
The spending cap calculation and the ratcheting down of spending after recessions

Because the base for calculating next year’s spending cap is this year’s appropriated (budgeted) spending, rather than this year’s allowed spending, one low-revenue year that leads to lower appropriations will ratchet down spending in future years.

Hypothetical Example: How spending cap ratchets down spending after a recession

Consider the following hypothetical example of four years under the spending cap. In year one, the economy is normal. In year two -- a recession year -- there is a 10 percent decline in revenue, comparable to the great recession. In year three, revenue recovers to where it was in year one. In year four, the economy is booming, and we see a revenue increase.

See the below figure. The first bars in each year are our revenue received in a given year. The second bars represent a hypothetical spending cap based on allowed spending. This cap grows at a certain percent, year to year, along with income growth.

Now consider the third bars, which represent the current spending cap based on appropriated spending. This cap adjusts based on spending in the previous year and limits spending after a recession, even after state revenues have recovered (year three), permanently adjusting the base going forward. In other words, it treats the state budget like Connecticut is still in a recession, even when revenues have recovered, forcing unnecessary cuts and slowing economic growth.

Figure 1: Connecticut’s spending cap (CT CAP) ratchets down spending after recession (hypothetical)

Note: Assumes spending cap is allowed to grow at a rate of 3% per year.

The ratcheting down that Connecticut’s new spending cap causes is badly timed and long-lasting. The forced ratcheting down of spending occurs after a recession, the worst time to cut public investment. During recessions, people from all walks of life struggle, and more people become eligible for state programs. Spending to create jobs and fund state programs allows people to continue to spend and participate in the economy, which helps contribute to the economic recovery. Cuts in these programs mean less spending and less money injected into the economy, which hampers our economic growth. Even when the recession has ended and there is plenty of money to reinvest, the tight calculation regarding how much appropriations can grow means that public investment will be diminished for years into the future, unnecessarily hampering our economic growth and making the lives of people earning low incomes harder.
This constitutional spending cap interacts with the volatility cap and the appropriations cap to ratchet down spending even further.

**State Spending Caps**

More than half of the states have tax or spending limits, but there is little evidence that these limits are productive. The limits likely do not improve state economies, especially in high-income states like Connecticut.\(^\text{10}\)

However, there is clear evidence that these limits have negative side effects.\(^\text{11}\) They squeeze the budget when investment is needed most. They make government less transparent and therefore less accountable, as lawmakers find ways, outside of normal appropriations, of exceeding the caps, such as through non-appropriated accounts, borrowing, and shifting costs to local governments. The lack of transparency and oversight decreases efficiency, because regular and public cost-benefit analyses are not performed as they are during the budgeting process. Overall, tax and spending limits limit the ability of lawmakers to prioritize spending based on need and make government less efficient and less accountable to constituents.

**The Volatility Cap**

The volatility cap requires that all revenues from the Estimates and Finals portion of the personal income tax above a certain threshold be deposited in our Budget Reserve Fund (BRF) and excluded from budget making. Estimates and Finals taxes are one of several volatile sources of revenue because they are based, in part, on investments and capital gains, which vary widely from year to year. The volatility cap is indexed to average income growth over the past five years.

Best practices volatility caps are good policy, and Connecticut adopted a well-designed plan to capture and save volatile revenues in 2015 (PA 15-244) that was set to go into effect in 2021. Best practices volatility caps encourage responsible budgeting based on reliable revenues rather than one-time influxes, and they encourage saving revenues that can be used later to dig the state out of recessions. But, unlike best practices volatility policies, our current cap forces us to deposit revenues into the BRF even when we are facing deficits (which is akin to depositing money into your savings account when you cannot afford rent or to pay your medical bills).

Connecticut’s current volatility cap, adopted without public notice, public hearing, or public knowledge, was inserted in the 2017 and 2018 budget implementer bills. It requires revenue transfers to the BRF even when there are projected deficits, as projected in 2020 and in 2021. In these years, the Office of Fiscal Analysis projects deposits of more than $550 million into the BRF, despite projection of almost $4 billion of deficits. These are years where we likely will not have enough revenue to pay for current services, and we are restraining ourselves further by forcing deposits into the BRF.\(^\text{12}\) Eliminating budgetary access to these revenues will have real consequences for people’s lives and force unnecessary cuts to programs upon which children, families, and communities rely.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Volatility transfers even in deficit years projected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Projected Volatility Transfer to Budget Reserve Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- $648,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projected General Fund Surplus/Deficit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+$330,200,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: November Consensus Revenue Projections, Gov. Malloy’s Transition Budget
The volatility policy that this cap replaced was developed in conjunction with academics and policy experts, and explained in detail in a report that can be found here: https://www.osc.ct.gov/brf/. Here are some reasons why our original volatility policy was better than the cap Connecticut has now:

- The original volatility policy did not require deposits to the BRF in years with projected deficits, avoiding a situation where the state of Connecticut diverts money that is needed to pay its bills and causes unnecessary and harmful cuts.
- The original volatility policy indexed the volatility threshold to economic growth over the past ten years rather than over the past 5 years. This is preferable, because ten years more fully encompasses a full economic cycle, with a recession and a recovery, whereas five years may make the threshold too low after a recession or too high after a boom period.
- The original volatility policy indexed the threshold to revenue growth rather than income growth. Although revenue and income are related, they are not perfectly related. A report from the Office of the Comptroller cites the example of Massachusetts, where income grew faster than revenue and the state ended up diverting too much revenue into the Rainy Day Fund.
- The current volatility threshold is too low, capping normal revenue growth rather than volatile revenue.

**Figure 2: Current threshold diverts normal revenue not just above average revenue**

Notes: The dotted line indicates the linear trend of estimates and finals and pass through income since 2000. Revenue above this line is above average. The current threshold captures revenue below this line.

After pausing or repealing the Bond Lock, we encourage the legislature to return to the original, research-based volatility policy so that we can save in a way that is responsible and not impossibly burdensome to children and families who rely on programs that would be cut under the current policy.
The Appropriations Cap

The appropriations cap requires that the legislature only appropriate a certain proportion of revenue to allow for unanticipated needs. In FY 2020, legislators can only appropriate 99.5 percent of revenue, and this amount declines gradually to 98% starting in FY 2026 (PA 17-2, Sec. 705).

Interaction of Spending, Volatility, and Appropriations Caps

Combining the current spending cap with the volatility cap and the appropriations cap ratchets down spending after a recession even more. The volatility cap and appropriations cap lower the amount of revenue available for appropriation. First, the volatility cap diverts revenue into the BRF. Then, the appropriations cap only allows us to appropriate a percent of the remaining revenue. It is uncertain whether the revenue cap will be used when rebasing the spending cap the following year. However, looking at the Governor’s Proposed Budget for FY 20 and FY 21 it appears that our spending cap will be calculated in the following way:

\[
\text{Spending Limit in Year 2} = \text{Year 1 Base} \times (1 + \text{Allowed Growth Rate})
\]

\[
\text{Year 1 Base} = \text{Appropriations Cap Percent} \times [\text{Revenue in Year 1} - \text{Volatility Transfer in Year 1}]
\]

Notes:

- **Year 1 Base** is spending that falls under the spending cap in Year 1.
- **Allowed Growth Rate** is average income growth rate or the growth of the Consumer Price Index, whichever is greater.
- **Appropriations Cap Percent** is the percent of revenue available for budgeting, gradually declining to 98 percent in 2026.
- **Volatility Transfer in Year 1**: is the required transfer of revenue from Estimates and Finals to the Budget Reserve Fund.

In other words, the volatility cap and the appropriations cap interact with the spending cap to further ratchet down spending after a recession. If a recession causes low revenue one year, this could affect spending in future years because of the spending cap. The volatility cap and the appropriations cap lower the amount of revenue available for spending in a given year and thus lower the next year’s spending limit further.

The fiscal restrictions are supposed to encourage saving revenue from spikes or one-time revenue sources, but, as designed, they prevent spending normal growth of revenue and limit economic growth.

The Bond Cap

The bond cap is a constraint on the state's annual borrowing. Under the bond cap, the Treasurer may not issue general obligation or credit revenue bonds in excess of $1.9 billion per fiscal year, which grows as indexed to the CPI.\(^{13}\) It comes amidst concerns that Connecticut has been borrowing unsustainably, especially in light of the state’s unfunded pension liability.\(^{14}\)

Despite its goal of responsible bonding, the hard bond cap risks crowding out resources for municipal school construction, other capital projects, and economic development.\(^{15}\) Any bonding under the cap reduces, dollar for dollar, the state’s capacity to bond for other purposes. We return to this crowd-out problem with the case study in Part IV, next.

Connecticut Voices for Children
These are unprecedented times. As such, unprecedented measures are required, and Congress has responded in kind, passing $3.6 trillion—the largest relief legislation in the nation’s history—to address the public health and economic crisis. Still, federal monetary and fiscal policy actions, while swift, have been wholly inadequate and inequitable, for the all the reasons laid out in the other sections of this Issue Briefing Book 2020-2022.

The U.S. has temporarily stopped the proverbial bleeding. However, as Europe and other parts of the world reopen their economies, we, in the U.S., seem to be reopening the COVID-19 wound. Some states are seeing the first wave winding down, while others are beginning to see its peak. This overall health regression could easily set the country into an economic depression, and without substantial changes in our monetary and fiscal policies, we may not ever recover in any reasonable time period, let alone equitably recover.

Mass unemployment in the U.S. was a choice we collectively made
As of June, approximately 30 million people in the U.S. were collecting either state or federal unemployment insurance benefits. Although we have not hit the predicted 20 percent unemployment rate, we are still experiencing ongoing double-digit jobless rates, something we have not seen since the aftermath of the Great Depression of 1932. While overall U.S. unemployment claims have decreased, albeit still in the double digits, this progress is precarious, and even more so considering that recent employment gains in the U.S. have once again left out people of color and Black workers in particular. What’s more, states are starting to hit the proverbial pause button on reopening their economies more fully. How did we get here?

While other countries chose to compensate workers fairly to shelter-in-place during the height of the public health crisis in March—in effect freezing the economy to stem the spread of coronavirus—we chose a different path. To be clear, the U.S. chose mass unemployment, and we forced people to choose between their livelihoods and their lives. As a result and due to the systemic and structural inequities of how income is earned and wealth is accumulated in the U.S., a disproportionate number of people of color have experienced unnecessary suffering and death. Furthermore, for those who have lost loved ones whose families counted on them, our collective choices have also financially debilitated these families for generations.

As a result, the Federal Government had to provide historic aid to states
When mass unemployment in the U.S. set in earlier this year, people were left wondering how they would pay for basic needs like rent, food, healthcare, and in this particular health crisis, cleaning supplies and the internet. The U.S. has relatively weak automatic stabilizers (e.g. UI benefits, SNAP, TANF, Medicaid, etc.), or what some might call social safety net programs, compared to Europe and other advanced parts of the world, thus, requiring us to enact more discretionary fiscal relief and stimulus in this economic downturn. Enter Congress and the passage of the historic Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES)
Federal actions have been good but wholly inadequate and inequitable

Congress has passed, and the president has signed the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act (PPPHCEA). The trillions of dollars passed by Congress are indeed historic, and recent reports have even found the federal dollars in the CARES Act, which includes the $600 increase in weekly UI benefits, worked in counteracting any dramatic increases in poverty. However, and again due to our country’s systemic and structural inequities, the federal relief funds never made it to a vast number of people of color. What’s more, these dollars only provided relief, not recovery. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office predicts the economic consequences of COVID-19 to exceed $8 trillion; meaning, a good deal more money will need to be passed by Congress if we are to ever truly recover. Moreover, if we are to recover equitably, we must ensure a substantial amount of any newly legislated funds are directed towards communities of color.

The Federal Government must act again, but intentionally race forward this time

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) predicts the economy will not fully recover until 2030. That is ten years from now. To make matters worse, too many states are trending in the wrong direction, signaling that we are far from flattening the COVID-19 curve in the U.S. This is relevant because the states where the coronavirus is still spreading, are also (and not surprisingly) the states seeing a slowing down in economic activity. The rush to reopen our economy now, given how poorly we have managed the coronavirus containment, and how we have done so all but guarantee that CBO’s ten-year-to-recovery prediction will be elongated. The question is how much longer?

“Normal” never was and equity never existed. Racial discrimination has long played a role in the unemployment rate for Black workers and still does today. Irrespective of the educational attainment argument, “the labor market faced by Black [worker]s is permanently slack. Recessionary conditions are the norm here.” Our so-called equitable policies are built on sand. So much so that economists Jared Berstein and Janelle Jones believe it is quite possible that in two months, the gains made over 10 years for Black workers in the U.S.—when employment rates climbed from 66 percent to 76 percent—will be wiped away completely. Equity has been a catchword for some time; however, whatever we have been doing and calling equitable clearly is not. If we needed proof of this, we need only look at the fact that ten years worth of work can disappear in just a few months. Thus, the Federal government must take intentional race forward steps that ensure recovery is truly equitable.
The Federal Government should act in two main ways

The U.S. Federal government should act in two main ways: 1) legislate more relief and stimulus funds and 2) ensure economic equity for Black Americans.

The Federal Government should legislate more relief and stimulus funds

We currently face the deepest economic downturn since the Great Depression. Children and families are experiencing unprecedented food insecurity seen in “modern times,” and hundreds of thousands in the U.S. alone are sick or dead. Record unemployment has sent states and municipalities in a tailspin trying to plug budget gaps left by plummeting tax revenues, and Connecticut is no exception. While the precise toll of the coronavirus recession on the state and local government budgets is still to be determined, we know Connecticut’s fiscal situation is bad enough for core public services like education and health care to potentially hang in the balance.

Many economists believe the Great Recession’s slow recovery was due to a wholly inadequate federal fiscal response in 2008. (For reference, it took seven years for the U.S. to reach pre-recession GDP numbers and it took Connecticut even longer than that.) As Connecticut residents scramble to pay rent, put food on their tables and find the money for other basic needs, Congress is flushing out a fifth legislative action, potentially the last one for the year, or at least the last one before the November election. Unless Congress makes changes to the CARES Act and legislates another historic relief package, the recovery period could be much longer and much more painful for children and families this time around.

Congress should pass the HEROES Act.

In June, over 150 economists signed a statement pushing Congress to pass another relief bill; urging “an adequate response must be large, commensurate with the nearly $16 trillion nominal output gap our economy faces over the next decade.” The U.S. House of Representatives passed the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act on May 15, 2020. The most important piece of the $3 trillion plus bill, which is unbelievably not exhaustive, includes $520 billion for states, localities, territories, and tribal governments, $7.07 billion of which would go to Connecticut. In addition to the hundreds of millions of dollars Connecticut would receive for health care and education, the bill also includes housing supports and extends the unemployment benefits for residents as well as prevents the collapse of the early child care industry, provides undocumented immigrants with needed relief, and proposes roll backs to the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Connecticut desperately needs these funds. The State faces an estimated $2.5 billion deficit this year and municipalities have projected a $407 million revenue loss. While it is possible the HEROES Act does not go far enough, we understand compromise is a prerequisite for the passage of a fifth Congressional action. As such, Connecticut Voices for Children endorses the HEROES Act in its entirety.

The HEROES Act also amends language regarding the federal 5-year net operating loss carryback provision and the excess business loss limitation applicable to non-corporate taxpayers under I.R.C. § 461(1) that was passed in the CARES Act. These often overlooked parts of the CARES Act temporarily suspended various limits (retroactively to tax year 2018) on the ability of corporate and non-corporate businesses to use losses to offset profits and non-business income, respectively. While it is unclear what the specifics of the revenue losses are to Connecticut, decoupling from the federal legislation could potentially keep millions of dollars in the State’s coffers—money that is critically important to the state in this recession.
The Federal Reserve or Congress should make changes to the Municipal Liquidity Facility (MLF) program to make it more practical for states to leverage as a tool

In April, the Federal Reserve (the Fed) announced a Municipal Liquidity Facility (MLF) with the ability to loan $500 billion to state and local governments to prevent budget cuts, helping them tide the coronavirus pandemic. Connecticut is eligible for $4.1 billion. While loans such as those provided by the MLF cannot replace grant assistance, adequate credit assistance is one part of helping states and localities avoid cutbacks, which only deepen our current economic crisis. Loans, particularly at this magnitude, can be an invaluable tool for states and localities looking to be innovative in their recovery. Unfortunately, the MLF has too many restrictions; specifically, the lending period is too short, the cost of credit is too high, and the scope of eligible borrowers is too few. However, if the Fed Board or Congress were to enact changes, the MLF could be a viable recovery option for states and localities. The U.S. House of Representatives has included many good changes in Division K, Title VIII of the HEROES Act, but the Fed Board could also adopt these changes without Congressional action. Connecticut Voices for Children endorses Americans for Financial Reform’s proposed changes to the MLF, making it a more practical tool to help states and localities manage the looming fiscal crisis.

The Federal Government should ensure economic equity for Black Americans

Since we have been able to catalog unemployment for Black workers in 1972, the unemployment rate has consistently been “about twice that of both the white rate (by about 2.2 to 1) and the overall rate (by about 1.9 to 1.).” Fast forward to today. Economists Jared Berstein and Janelle Jones expect Black unemployment to peak at about 30 percent and Latinx unemployment to peak at about 22 percent; similarly, they expect Black underemployment—inclusive of part-time workers who are unable to find full-time work but want to—to peak at about 42 percent, and Latinx underemployment to peak at about 41 percent. These hard truths are compounded by the fact that people of color, even those with mid-level incomes, have less accumulated wealth than white people. This is, of course, by design.

The U.S., since its formation, has systematically and pervasively shut out communities of color. Black people, in particular, have been consistently denied an ability to accumulate wealth—from the first enslavement of Africans to the rescinded order of Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman to give formerly enslaved people 40 acres of land in 1865, from the Jim Crow laws rooted in 1865 to the 1921 massacre at the Greenwood district of Tulsa, from the establishment of the Federal Housing Administration and the institution of redlining in 1934 to what legal scholar Michelle Alexander calls “the New Jim Crow” laws that are responsible for the incarceration of millions of Black people today. Author and novelist Ta-Nehisi Coates has said that “no statistic better illustrates the enduring legacy of our country’s shameful history of treating black people as sub-citizens, sub-Americans and sub-humans than the wealth gap.” This matters for an array of reasons, but in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the coronavirus induced recession, this matters because the ability to accumulate wealth has meant the difference between life and death.
The Federal Reserve should initiate “Black Women Best”

The Federal Reserve (the Fed) oversees monetary policy; its charge is to promote “maximum employment” and “stable prices.”\(^{354}\) It lowers or increases the interest rate depending on whether it seeks to stimulate or slow the economy. However, what if the Fed was intentionally race forward and legally required to be so? Connecticut Voices for Children endorses the policy by Bernstein and Jones called, “Black Women Best,” the idea that if the Fed puts into place the conditions for the most marginalized workers to flourish (i.e. Black women), then that means the conditions are in place for all people to flourish, which is ultimately good for the economy.\(^{355}\) Specifically, they propose that Congress add language requiring the Fed chair to report on the extent of racial unemployment and wage gaps so that everything is broken down by demographics. Additionally, the Fed chair would disclose to Congress how they will act when inequalities persist.\(^{356}\) Connecticut Voices for Children supports this policy because if Black women are doing well, it is impossible for everyone else not to be doing well, and that is what an inclusive economy should do.

Congress should consider viable ways to make reparations to Black Americans

We live in cities and towns and a country that has built white wealth on the backs of Black people. While we cannot erase history, we can repair the harm. That starts with a public acknowledgement of our racist past and a national apology. According to economist Fred McKinney, simple math shows a rising tide will not lift all boats—in fact, the racial wealth gap will get worse—which means that if there is any hope of attaining equality for all, the country needs to have a serious discussion about reparations.\(^{357}\) Harvard Law School professors Charles Ogletree and Randell Robinson believe reparations should focus on the healing, repair, and restoration of the victim, which ultimately means an emphasis on education and economic development.\(^{358}\) Connecticut Voices for Children agrees; whether it’s cold hard cash as McKinney argues or a job training and public works program as Ogletree and Robinson argue, it is time for the U.S. to reckon with its racist history and provide reparations to Black Americans. However, if we are indeed about “liberty and justice for all,” it cannot end there. Our institutions need a dramatic overhaul if they are to work for all Americans. We offer the policies within this Issue Briefing Book 2020-2022 as a place to start.
Connecticut Town-Level Data
The COVID-19 pandemic presents a unique challenge to Connecticut, a state with substantial economic and racial disparities across several critical areas, including health, housing, food insecurity, and others. These disparities extend to children, youth, and families. We present town fact sheets divided into three sections: Emerging Issues Indicators, Family Economic Security Indicators, and Fiscal & Economic Indicators. As detailed below, each section contains indicators that provide an overview of the health, family stability, and economic well-being of each town. Please refer to the endnotes for information on data sources.

**The Emerging Issues section of the fact sheet provides the following indicators:**

- Percentage of people enrolled in public health insurance which includes Medicare, Medicaid, and healthcare for veterans.\(^{359}\)
  - Ages 0-17
  - Ages 18-65
- Percentage Uninsured\(^{360}\)
- Percentage of Children Eligible for Free & Reduced Price Meals during the 2018-2019 school year.\(^{361}\) This can be interpreted as an imperfect proxy for the ability of families in a town to afford and access the healthy food they need.
- Life Expectancy—Life expectancy refers to the average estimated span of years from birth to death that individuals within a defined geographical region might expect to live.\(^ {362}\) Recent data, collected and provided by DataHaven, shows that although Connecticut as a whole has a higher life expectancy than the national average, troubling differences arise from one town to the next. Between towns, life expectancy can vary by more than ten years.\(^ {363}\)

**The Family & Economic Security section of the fact sheet provides the following indicators:**

- Number of Children in Families Receiving Care4Kids child care assistance—Connecticut’s child care subsidy program that helps parents work and access child care to meet their family’s unique needs. We display February data as it most accurately reflects Care4Kids at fully-functioning capacity, prior to closures resulting from COVID-19.\(^{364}\)
- Number of Children Substantiated as Abused/Neglected—These data, which are compiled by our partners at the Connecticut Data Collaborative, represent the number of unique (unduplicated) children who were the victims of *substantiated* abuse, neglect, or both. They should be interpreted as an indicator of family stress.\(^ {365}\)
- Percentage of Households with Cost Burden—Generally, cost-burdened households spend at least 30 percent of their income on housing costs.\(^ {366}\)
- Percentage of Pre-K Experience—This indicator measures the percentage of enrolled kindergarten students whose guardians report them as having attended preschool.\(^ {367}\)
- Number of School-Based Arrests—This measure helps illuminate where town policies and socioeconomic conditions are contributing to students becoming disengaged from school and entering the justice system.\(^ {368}\)
The Fiscal & Economic section of the fact sheet provides the following indicators:

- Number of Children Below the Federal Poverty Level—Note that because Connecticut’s cost of living is far higher than the national average, this measure does not capture the full extent to which families live in poverty in a town.\(^{369}\)

- Median Household Income—A measure of what the average household in each town earns.\(^{370}\)

- GINI Coefficient—A measure of the income distribution of an area or, in other words, a measurement of inequality. The coefficient is generally read as: closer to 1=greater income inequality, closer to 0=greater income equality. \(^{371}\)

- Number of EITC Credits Claimed—The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is regarded as one of the most successful anti-poverty tools and claimed by low- and moderate-income families.\(^{372}\) It is a tax credit equal to a certain percentage of workers’ earnings that reduces the amount of taxes a worker owes or provides a refund, helping put more money in the pockets of working people. This measure reports the number of tax returns filed within a town in which filers claimed an Earned Income Tax Credit.

- Percentage of people enrolled in SNAP—This measures how many people are enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to purchase nutritional groceries. Connecticut Voices for Children computed the percentage of people in a town enrolled in SNAP by utilizing the number of people enrolled in SNAP as the numerator and the number of people living in a town as the denominator.\(^{373}\)

- Unemployment Rate—This measures the percentage of people in the labor force that are unemployed, eligible for employment, and actively looking for employment. It does not take into account individuals who have given up looking for employment for various reasons.\(^{374}\)
## Emerging Issues Indicators

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## Emerging Issues Indicators

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## Family Economic Security Indicators

The table below provides town-level data on various indicators related to family economic security. The data includes the number of children in families receiving CareKids Child Care Assistance, the number of children substantiated as abused/neglected, the percentage of households with cost burden, the percentage of Pre-K experience, and the number of school-based arrests.

### Town-Level Data

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<th>Percentage of Households with Cost Burden***</th>
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**Data not available

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## Family Economic Security Indicators

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<th>Number of Children Substantiated As Abused/Neglected*</th>
<th>Percentage of Households with Cost Burden***</th>
<th>Percentage of Pre-K Experience†</th>
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**Data not available
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## Family Economic Security Indicators

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<th>Number of Children Substantiated As Abused/Neglected*</th>
<th>Percentage of Households with Cost Burden***</th>
<th>Percentage of Pre-K Experience†</th>
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<th>Percentage of Households with Cost Burden***</th>
<th>Percentage of Pre-K Experience†</th>
<th>Number of School-Based Arrests‡</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Number of Children Below Federal Poverty Level</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
<th>GINI Coefficient</th>
<th>Number of EITC Credits Claimed</th>
<th>Percentage of People Enrolled in SNAP</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
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## Fiscal & Economic Indicators

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<th>Number of Children Below Federal Poverty Level</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
<th>GINI Coefficient</th>
<th>Number of EITC Credits Claimed</th>
<th>Percentage of People Enrolled in SNAP</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
The team at Connecticut Voices for Children has compiled this *Issue Briefing Book 2020-2022* with the help of many, many partners.

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- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
- Connecticut Association for Human Services
- Connecticut Cancel Rent Now
- Connecticut Data Collaborative
- Connecticut Health Foundation
- CT Early Childhood Alliance
- DataHaven
- Desegregate CT
- Economic Policy Institute
- Elm City Communities / Housing Authority of the City of New Haven
- Health Equity Solutions
- Housing and Community Economic Development Clinics of the Jerome N. Frank Legal Services Organization at Yale Law School
- Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy
- Juvenile Justice Alliance
- New Haven Legal Assistance
- Open Communities Alliance
- Partnership for Strong Communities
- Tow Youth Justice Institute
- Unidad Latina en Acción
- United Way of Connecticut

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- Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
- Grossman Family Foundation
- Melville Charitable Trust
- Stoneman Family Foundation
- Tow Foundation
ENDNOTES


25 Ibid.


63 Ibid.
64 What is an ADU? Accessory Dwelling Units explained. (n.d.). Retrieved from: https://www.buildinganadu.com/what-is-an-adu; An ADU is a secondary housing unit built on a single-family residential lot. ADUs include detached new constructions on the lot, garage conversions, an apartment built on top of a garage, or a basement unit.
65 Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development. (2019). Guidance on Implementing the


69 Missing Middle Housing. (n.d.). Retrieved from Opticos Design: https://opticosdesign.com/missing-middle-housing/; Missing Middle Housing is the housing for middle income families that is missing in communities, and is a transformative concept that highlights the need for diverse, affordable housing choices in suitable, walkable places.

70 Open Communities Alliance. (n.d.). Opening Housing Choices through Expanded Housing Authority Jurisdiction [PDF file]. Retrieved from x.cloudfront.net/opencommunitiesalliance/pages/668/attachments/original/1582309786/Housing_Authority_Jurisdiction_Fact_Sheet_.pdf?1582309786.


80 Ibid.


85 The Eviction Lab. (n.d.). Top Evicting Areas. Retrieved from https://evictionlab.org/rankings/#/evictions?r=United%20States&a=0&d=evictionRate&lang=en; This is likely is an undercount as this data does not include informal evictions which occur outside of formal court proceedings.
86 The Eviction Lab. (2018). National Estimates: Eviction in America. Retrieved from https://evictionlab.org/national-estimates/; This is likely is an undercount as this data does not include informal evictions which occur outside of formal court proceedings.
95 A landlord must have an independent party deliver an official written Notice To Quit asking the tenant to vacate the property within 3 full days and indicating the reason why. If the tenant has not vacated the premises after the 3 full day time period has expired, then the landlord can formally enter a Summary Process Eviction action by having a Summons and Complaint served on the tenant. If the tenant defaults and does not go to trial, then in about 45 days after the Summary Process eviction has been filed, a Judgment is entered in favor of the Plaintiff, and an Execution is issued. As a result, a Marshal can be sent within 24 hours to remove the tenant’s belongings.


130 Ibid.


145 Ibid.

146 Ibid.

147 Ibid.

148 Ibid.


151 Ibid.


154 Odone, D. (2020, June 12). CDC predicts 130,000 US coronavirus deaths by July 4, with more new cases

155 Eligibility for the $1,200/$2,400 Recovery Rebate is as follows: • Individual filers and couples filing jointly must have been issued SSNs that are valid for employment by the time they file their qualifying return. (There is an exception if at least one spouse filing jointly was in the armed forces last tax year, as long as one spouse has a valid SSN.) • Children claimed as dependents for the $500 rebate must also have valid SSNs. • If both partners in a married couple used an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) to file their taxes, no one in the household is eligible for the return, regardless of whether they file jointly. • For mixed-immigration status married taxpayers (where one taxpayer has an SSN and the other taxpayer has an ITIN), the couple would need to file separately in order to claim the rebate for any eligible household members. However, filing separately may render a person ineligible for Affordable Care Act subsidies that may be larger than the Recovery Rebate.


162 What is more, our judicial system is unnecessarily harsh to noncitizens. For example, Connecticut’s one-year maximum sentence for class A misdemeanors creates drastic, disproportionate consequences for noncitizens, effectively turning state misdemeanors into “aggravated felonies” under federal law. As such, a Green Card holder convicted of a single low-level, nonviolent misdemeanor offense can be subject to mandatory detention and deportation.


174  Ibid.
180  Ibid.


190 Ibid.

191 Ibid.


198 Ibid.


200 Ibid.


203 Ibid.

204 Ibid.


206 Connecticut Voices for Children Analysis of 2016 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata on Family Type and Employment Status (FES).


211 Ibid.


228 Ibid.


240 Ibid.

241 Ibid.


251 Ibid.


242

ISSUE BRIEFING BOOK: ENDNOTES

examining options to boost essential worker wages during the pandemic.


Revenue shortfalls are calculated as the difference between the January and April estimates.


Ibid.


U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (2020). SAGDP9N Real GDP by State: All Industry Total (Percent Change from Preceding Period). Retrieved from: https://apps.bea.gov/itable/drridownload.cfm?reqid=70&stepnum=40&Major_Area=3&State=09000&Area=XX&TableId=512&statistic=1&YearBegin=-1&Year_End=-1&Unit_Of_Measure=PercentChange&Rank=0&Drill=1.


247

326 Ibid.
351 Ibid.
352 Ibid.
356 Ibid.
360 Ibid.
364  CT Care4Kids (February 2020). Number of children paid by age category and service setting. Retrieved from https://www.ctcare4kids.com/care-4-kids-program/reports/.
370  Connecticut Data Collaborative (2018). U.S. Census estimates of median household income as compiled by the Connecticut Data Collaborative. Retrieved from http://data.ctdata.org/visualization/median-household-income-by-town?v=table&f={%22Town%22:%20%22Cornwall%22,%20%22Variable%22:%20%22Median%20Household%20Income%22,%20%22Margins%20of%20Error%22],%20%22Race/Ethnicity%22:%20%22All%22,%20%22Measure%20Type%22:%20%20%22Number%22,%20%22Year%22:%20%222014-2018%22}.
371  Connecticut Data Collaborative (2018). U.S. Census estimates of GINI ratios as compiled by the Connecticut Data Collaborative. Retrieved from http://data.ctdata.org/visualization/gini-ratio?v=table&f={%22Town%22:%20%22Naugatuck%22,%20%22Hamden%22,%20%22Cornwall%22],%20%22Variable%22:%20%22Gini%20Ratio%22,%20%22Margins%20of%20Error%22],%20%22Measure%20Type%22:%20%22Number%22,%20%22Year%22:%20%222014-2018%22}.