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Testimony in support of RB 873: An Act Concerning a Two-Generational Initiative

Good Afternoon Senator Moore, Senator Markley, Representative Abercrombie and Members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Elizabeth Fraser, and I am the Policy Manager for the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS). CAHS is a statewide nonprofit agency that works to reduce poverty and promote economic success for children and families through both policy and program work. I am speaking today in support of RB 873: An Act Concerning a Two -Generational Initiative.

Through both our program and policy work, CAHS recognizes the value and efficacy of developing strong and robust two generation strategies which are based on our belief that children live in the context of their family, and to help the family succeed we must help parents and children together. We believe this type of integrated approach to changing systems and for service delivery shows great promise for disrupting the intergenerational cycle of poverty and strengthening the resilience of families.

In Connecticut we are fortunate that policy makers recognize the importance and value of two generation strategies. Bi- partisan legislation that became statute passed in 2015 and put Connecticut on the front lines of national two generational work. The statute requires looking at statewide systems and working to coordinate both local and statewide opportunities, services and policies that will enhance and encourage a family approach to success. We support the changes in RB 873 which seek to update and clarify the original legislation.

Our Connecticut initiative has garnered national attention. We are one of a growing number of states fleshing out how a two generation lens on systemic change can make a difference in the lives of families and provide efficacy for our state systems. This project is fortunate to have the support of a national funder, the W.K.Kellogg Foundation, which is providing a supportive match for the state funding. The Kellogg Foundation funding is specifically intended to provide any technical assistance needed for the project both at the state and local levels, and to provide support for a process of assessment and evaluation for the project. (An abridged description of the grant deliverables is attached.)

This work is not easy; changing systems, practice and sensibilities takes time and patience. Since the legislation was originally passed, and with direction from the Interagency Workgroup, (of which CAHS is a member), local communities have begun a process of identifying , coordinating and utilizing local systems, programs and services to provide for families as a unit. Along the way, the barriers they discover that impede integrated service delivery are being documented. This information will inform the interagency workgroup, which can then address barriers from a state system level.

To achieve success, it is particularly important to have a functional system of assessment and evaluation in place. Kellogg Foundation funding has been used to develop a rigorous process for assessment and evaluation. The interagency workgroup had input into the content, as did the communities and families. It has been designed to: inform the project through its initial trajectory, allow for short term results to inform the work, provide technical assistance to be offered as needed, and for adjustments to be made to the project when warranted. (We would like to be clear that it is too early to evaluate long term family outcomes or project results) CAHS suggests that the assessment and evaluation process be included more explicitly in the language of RB 873, giving weight and credence to the work being done.

In closing, Connecticut has strong two generational legislation in place, WKKF grant funding that supports the development of the two generation work, and a means of assessing the initial progress of the initiative. CAHS strongly supports this project, the clarifications in Bill 873 and the continuation of this initiative, which we feel allows Connecticut to pioneer new pathways from poverty to opportunity and from financial insecurity to capability and success



Funding from the W.K.Kellogg Foundation is available to support this initiative with:

Long-Term Goals: To improve child and parent economic and educational outcomes by influencing state and local systems of service to include parent and child together.

Short-Term Goals: To improve efficiencies and capacity to serve families at the state, local, and project levels.

Systems Planning and Coordination:

- Improve service delivery by encouraging state and local government agencies to work together.
- Collaborate with a planning team that includes the CoC, Interagency Council Co-Chairs, philanthropic partners and consultants to develop a unified system that reduces state and local silos.
- Mapping of 2 gen resources.

Model Development:

- The model will develop national and state best practices and services, providing a road map for future projects.
- Collaborate with the planning team to design the structure for a statewide two-gen system.
- Design will include the core values, components, framework, collaborations, and guidelines that allow each local pilot to be flexible, while sharing common measurements and outcomes.

Implementation Support:

- Build competency and develop leadership and organizational capacity at the state and local levels.
- CAHS will collaborate with partners to coordinate technical assistance for pilots and learning communities.
- This will assist in the implementation and results, and create ready communities for future scaling.

Evaluation:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive developmental evaluation, including formative and summative components, to track the progress and assess the outcomes of our two-gen approach statewide and the pilots.
- Reporting will use shared, consistent and replicable measures, standards, and outcomes, with a focus on racial equity.

Scaling:

- Based on evaluation and analysis, develop recommendations to expand the system statewide, including a framework that can serve as a national model for two-gen policies that drive better outcomes for children, parents, and families through public-private partnerships.