

Opportunity Connecticut

In the face of a large state budget deficit, lackluster job growth, and rising inequality, **Connecticut can turn a crisis into an opportunity**. Working with business, labor, municipalities, and nonprofits, policymakers can work to create a growing economy that generates new jobs and sufficient revenue for the state to fund effective programs and services. The budget challenges for the state and some cities should spur **innovative thinking to reduce costs and produce better results, including increased equity**. Our wealthy state must **invest to ensure that *all* children and families can succeed** and share in Connecticut's high quality of life. CAHS supports the following:

HELP CHILDREN AND FAMILIES THRIVE

- ◆ Fund programs that enable families to meet basic needs and succeed, including the **Two-Generation Program, Care4Kids child care subsidies, and HUSKY health care**.
- ◆ Make work pay by protecting the state **Earned Income Tax Credit, raising the minimum wage, and providing family medical leave insurance**.
- ◆ Help unite and re-unite families with **criminal justice and re-entry reforms**, including elimination of bond requirements for non-violent drug offenses and automatic erasure of drug misdemeanors.

GENERATE JOBS

- ◆ Encourage business expansion, including permitting targeted use of **"stranded" research and development investment tax credits** to drive new capital investments and create permanent jobs (but not allowing expanded use to offset current tax liabilities).
- ◆ Incentivize businesses **to redevelop brownfield sites** with state tax incentives.
- ◆ Invest in **infrastructure, including accessibility of broadband**.
- ◆ Sustain and improve **workforce programs**, including adult ed, the Two Generation Pilot Program, Jobs Funnel, Second Chance Initiatives, and developmental programs at community colleges. Maximize federal SNAP E&T and apprenticeship funding, and re-open Care4Kids.

PROVIDE QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

- ◆ As a first step to ensure quality K-12 education, reconfigure the Education Cost Sharing formula to **direct more resources to high-need districts**. Develop a plan to **equitably and adequately fund outstanding education: early, vocational, adult, and post-secondary**.
- ◆ Adequately **fund early care and education**, allowing all children access to high quality programs and staff the ability to earn a living wage.
- ◆ Continue financial support for **remedial education reform in community colleges**, including direct funding for adult education programs.
- ◆ In the short term, use existing resources to promote “**debt-free college**” by encouraging FAFSA completion and financial education on paying for post-secondary education in high school and college.

MAKE GOVERNMENT WORK BETTER

- ◆ **Balance the state budget responsibly**, including maximizing federal funds, collecting all revenue due to the state, and generating new revenue that promotes fairness, such as broadening the sales tax to include more services.
- ◆ Promote **systems reform** among state agencies and between state and municipal government, including **two-generation strategies** that use collaborations to provide opportunity for both funders and their children from the same point of entry, **coordination of workforce programs** and agencies, and criminal justice reforms.
- ◆ Fund new **infrastructure improvements**, focusing on rail and public transportation, as well as broadband, and create apprenticeships for urban residents.
- ◆ **Regulate paid tax preparers** to protect tax filers and save the state money from overpayments of refunds and credits.

The Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS) is a statewide nonprofit agency that works to **engage, equip, and empower** all families in Connecticut to build a secure future.

The Family Economic Success (FES) Coalition shares information and mobilizes advocates, providers, and others on policy issues that improve the lives of low-income children and families. CAHS coordinates the FES Coalition.

