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**Testimony to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee in Support
of:**

**HB 5001 An Act Ensuring that Students in This State Receive High Quality Skills Training
HB 5833 An Act Expanding Advanced Manufacturing Certificate Programs at Regional
Community Technical Colleges.
SB 799 An Act Concerning Workforce Development**

Good Afternoon Senator Haskell, Representative Haddad, Senator Hwang, Representative Hall and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee,

My name is Elizabeth Fraser and I am the Policy Director of the Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS). CAHS is a statewide nonprofit agency that works to reduce poverty and promote equity and economic success for children and families through both policy and program initiatives.

In Connecticut, 8.5% of adults 18-64 do not have a high school degree/GED, and 26.3% only have a high school degree.ⁱ Within the next 10 years, an estimated 70 percent of Connecticut jobs will require postsecondary education or specialized training, signaling higher wages and an uptick in economic activity which cannot be manufactured through corporate and upper-bracket tax cuts.ⁱⁱ However, in order to reap those benefits and enable working families to get ahead, our state must deliberately and courageously invest in policies that allow low-income earners and workers with lower levels of educational attainment to participate in our economy.

The initial context of these bills holds the promise of this type of investment in our next generation of workers, their families, and Connecticut's economy. We realize there will be much to add to the bill language. With December unemployment at 3.2% every available worker must be included in our workforce equation.ⁱⁱⁱ As these bills are considered and language is written we ask that your committee considers several points.

Consider those that have been left behind. Connecticut is home to many who graduated from high school, or achieved high school equivalency, but still lack the skills necessary get into the educational or training programs that will enable economic mobility. CAHS believes that additional “developmental education” opportunities should be made available to students who need to brush up on skills, or need more intensive remediation. Without the additional academic supports accessible through developmental education, once hopeful students are excluded from participating in higher education or quality training programs, and are often left to piece together a “survival income” in low-skill, low-pay jobs. Without upward movement into higher income brackets, families remain in need of state assistance, employers remain without a skilled workforce, and Connecticut suffers.

Consider the circumstances of being the working poor. In addition to academic proficiency, we know there are legitimate reasons that students leave community college without a degree, or without completing a training program. As students work in school to be successful, they often face challenges that are difficult to overcome without supports that are not within their reach. Managing unpredictable work

schedules, lack of childcare, undependable transportation, and surviving the daily struggles of poverty all contribute to the inability to be successful in higher education. This paradigm is inequitable, leaves our poor and low-income students behind, and needs to be addressed. There are ways to overcome these obstacles; some students might benefit from mentorship programs, a trained peer to guide them through the obstacles, find resources, and provide much needed encouragement. Other states have implemented mentorship programs, with a good example being the Tennessee Promise mentorship program.^{iv}

Consider the next generation.

Emerging scholarship emphasizes the importance of two-generational initiatives that specifically ensure children and adults in the same household receive targeted services, track and foster accountability for shared outcomes for children and adults, and incorporate stakeholders in both education and workforce development.^v This “whole family approach to work” is a model being looked at across the country, and much work is being done in our sister New England states.^{vi} The economic well-being and stability of parents is essential for children’s early development and long-term social-emotional, physical and mental health outcomes, educational attainment,^{vii} and future earnings potential.^{viii} The conditions of low-wage work and poverty, which may be intensified by a lack of paid parental leave, unpredictable and non-standard scheduling^{ix}, reduced access to educational training opportunities, reduced parent-and-child quality time, and increased parental-stress and morbidity, can negatively impact the development of young children.^x The ability of parents to progress toward greater economic stability is through workforce development, education, and training is dependent upon the well-being of their children. There are different ways to include childcare in the equation of workforce development. One option, which is up for consideration this this session, is to extend Care4Kids eligibility to include adult education, advanced education, and training opportunities.

Providing high quality training and education is key to ensuring Connecticut has the skilled workforce needed to grow the economy, and expand opportunity for all of Connecticut’s employable citizens. Investing in policies that allow low-income earners and workers with lower levels of educational attainment to participate meaningfully in our economy requires vision and intent. However, the time is right in Connecticut for that type of smart investment.

ⁱ Working Poor Families Project 2018 data

ⁱⁱ , <https://www.courant.com/business/hc-biz-connecticut-jobs-20180705-story.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/laus/lmi123.asp>

^{iv} <http://www.tnpromise.gov/volunteers.shtml>

^v Chase-Lansdale, P., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2014). Two-Generation Programs in the Twenty-First Century. *The Future of Children*, 24(1), 13-39. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23723381>

^{vi} ACF Region 1, NCSL, Colorado

^{vii} Shonkoff, J. P., Garner, A. S., Siegel, B. S., Dobbins, M. I., Earls, M. F., McGuinn, L., ... & Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption, and Dependent Care. (2012). The lifelong effects of early childhood adversity and toxic stress. *Pediatrics*, 129(1), e232-e246.

^{viii} Ascend at the Aspen Institute, Two Generations, One Future: Moving Parents and Children Beyond Poverty, The Aspen Institute, 2013, <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/ascend/Ascend-Report-022012.pdf>.

^{ix} Joshi, P., and Bogen, K. “Nonstandard Schedules and Young Children’s Behavioral Outcomes Among Working Low- Income Families,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 69 (2007)

^x “Working Conditions and Parents’ Ability to Care for Children’s Preventive Health Needs.” *Journal of primary care & community health* (2013); Alina Salganicoff et al.; Women and Health Care in the Early Years of the Affordable Care Act, 2014, Kaiser Family Foundation.

<http://kaiserfamilyfoundation.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/8590-women-and-health-care-in-the-early-years-of-theaffordable-care-act.pdf>.