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**Testimony to the Labor and Public Employees Committee in Support of:  
S.B. 5 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A WORKFORCE PIPELINE AND JOB CREATION TASK  
FORCE**

Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, ranking and other members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. 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.

CAHS supports S.B. 5, which will establish a workforce pipeline and job creation task force to prepare the state's future workforce for well-paying manufacturing and technical jobs located in Connecticut. In supporting this innovative piece of policy, CAHS would like to ask the Committee to consider two additional elements that may amplify the potential impact of such a career pipeline and workforce taskforce.

First, we would ask that the Committee 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. Data from the Working Poor Families Project estimate that 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.<sup>i</sup> Still, 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.<sup>ii</sup> 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.

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, before feeding into a workforce pipeline. With an eye toward the over 10,000<sup>iii</sup> youth aged 16-19 who are not in school or working, CAHS would ask that as the design of the workforce pipeline is responsive to the needs of young adults who may have become disconnected from education and employment. Including experts from the field of higher education and adult remedial education in appointments to the taskforce would be one way to consider the needs and potential of this population.

Second, CAHS would ask that the Committee consider our next generations. 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,<sup>iv</sup> and future earnings potential.<sup>v</sup> The conditions of low-wage work and poverty, which may be intensified by a lack of paid parental leave, unpredictable and non-standard scheduling<sup>vi</sup>, 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.<sup>vii</sup> 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.<sup>viii</sup> 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.<sup>ix</sup>

However, the ability of parents to move toward greater economic stability through workforce development, education, and training is dependent upon the well-being of their children. Without consistent access to affordable, high-quality care, parents may be forced to stay out of the workforce, or place their children in unregulated, potentially unsafe care. In order for workforce pipelines to work for families, the taskforce should consider the expertise of the Office of Early Childhood and other early childhood policy experts and practitioners, who can advise on the importance of blending workforce training with accessible, high-quality child care.

Providing high quality training and education is essential to ensuring Connecticut has the skilled workforce needed to grow the economy, just as ensuring parents have access to high-quality child care is key to expanding opportunity for all of Connecticut’s employable citizens. Investing in two-generational workforce policies that allow 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, and this workforce pipeline and the accompanying taskforce represent a step in the right direction.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 5, which would take steps to strengthen Connecticut’s workforce. I am available for any questions or further information at [efraser@cahs.org](mailto:efraser@cahs.org)

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<sup>i</sup> Working Poor Families Project 2018 data

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

<sup>iii</sup> ACS data, 2016, available at <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#CT> from the Annie E. Casey Foundation

<sup>iv</sup> 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.

<sup>v</sup> 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>.

<sup>vi</sup> 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)

<sup>vii</sup> "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>.

<sup>viii</sup> 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>

<sup>ix</sup> ACF Region 1, NCSL, Colorado