



**Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Testimony in Support of
House Bill 5003, An Act Concerning Education Funding in Connecticut**

**Education Committee
Appropriations Committee**

February 3, 2022

Good afternoon, Senator Osten, Representative Porter, Senator Berthel, Representative Nuccio, Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Representative McCarty and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Education Committees.

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving applauds the extensive provisions in House Bill 5003, An Act Concerning Education Funding in Connecticut, which address the historic disparities in state education funding and now support Connecticut's highest need and most under resourced districts.

While philanthropic funding can fill gaps, public sector funding is required to ensure that all residents have quality educational experiences that increase post-secondary degree and credential completion, employment and economic mobility. **The state must lead in providing education funding to support students, particularly those students attending Alliance District schools.**

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for the 29-town Greater Hartford region. As a community foundation, we manage approximately \$1 billion in assets. In the past two years, the Foundation has distributed a record-breaking \$99 million in grants to promote equitable opportunity for all residents in our region. Made possible by the gifts of generous individuals, families and organizations, the Foundation has awarded grants of more than \$940 million since 1925.

As part of our efforts to dismantle structural racism and improve social and economic mobility for Black and Latinx residents of Greater Hartford, the Hartford Foundation seeks to **increase stable employment opportunities for adults and youth in our region facing barriers to employment.**

Through its work in support of Hartford's Community Schools and six of our region's Alliance Districts (Bloomfield, East Hartford, Manchester, Vernon, Windsor, and Windsor Locks), the Foundation has seen how stronger school partnerships with families, nonprofits and the community help students feel increased connectedness to school, leading to increased attendance, academic engagement and persistence to graduation. Providing additional resources to higher-need school districts allows them to implement their own strategies for leveraging partnerships with community-based providers and families to introduce a variety of vital supports for students, including school absenteeism prevention programs, early childhood programs, before- and after-school programs, health and mental health services, summer learning opportunities, student internships, and other extended learning opportunities that ultimately lead to student success. **The costs of these critical school-community-family partnership staff, programs and activities should be considered as part of equitable public education funding.**



Recognizing the need to include parent, teacher and community voices in school financing discussions, the Foundation also has provided grant support to [FaithActs for Education](#), [Educators for Excellence CT](#), [Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now \(ConnCAN\)](#), and [The School and State Finance Project](#). These organizations have each been working to support grassroots advocacy for equitable distribution of education resources. **We urge the Committee to listen and learn from these organizations as you consider increased and more equitable school funding.**

By fully funding Education Cost Sharing grants, expanding ECS weighted funding for students attending public schools of choice (magnet, Agriscience and Open Choice program), and eliminating general education tuition billing for magnet and Agriscience schools, this legislation will create a more equitable funding system to support all Connecticut students, no matter where they live. By providing substantial increases to those districts with the highest need, we can finally make meaningful reductions to the estimated \$700 million gaps in Connecticut education funding. These gaps have created systemic barriers to opportunities for economically disadvantaged students and students of color.

The Hartford Foundation is ready to partner with legislators, the administration, advocates, philanthropy and other stakeholders to improve education and employment opportunities for our youth. We also invite policymakers to meet with us to understand and discuss how philanthropic dollars can fill gaps in equitable education strategies that may not be best suited for public dollars.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Chris Senecal at csenecal@hfpg.org or 860-548-1888