



The Commission on
Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity

CWCSEO

Connecticut General Assembly

2024 Annual Report

Connecticut General Assembly's
Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity

January 1st, 2025

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Mission

To inform and engage all policy makers about constituent needs for women, children and their families, seniors, and the African American, Asian Pacific-American, Latino and Puerto Rican populations in Connecticut. We are a nonpartisan agency with a data driven cross-cultural approach to policy innovation. We work to eliminate disparities by identifying opportunities, building connections, and promoting change.



Commission Staff

Melvette Hill

Executive Director

Megan Baker

Asian Pacific American Legislative Policy Analyst

Denise Drummond

African American Legislative Policy Analyst

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Food & Nutrition Policy Analyst

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Rosemary López

Women's Legislative Policy Analyst

Thomas Nuccio

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Latino and Puerto Rican Policy Director

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Seniors' Legislative Policy Analyst



Commission Fellows & Legislative Interns

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Yale School of Public Health Fellow (Practicum)

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Hansika Lenkala

Legislative Intern East Granby High School

Maria Kelley

Legislative Intern

Adjoa Charisma Asamoah

Commission Intern, The Lawrenceville School, Ellington Resident



Commission Advisory Board Members

Co-Chairs

Alan Tan

Karen Jarmoc

Board Members

Joan Barere
Liz Bumgardner
Denise Cesareo
Ada Fenick
Madeline Granato
Jordan Grossman
Nancy Heaton
Tiana Victoria Hercules
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Sylvia Ho
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Bruni Pizarro
Gladys Rivera
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Tiheba Williams-Bain
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Non-Appointed Board Advisors/Volunteers

Regina Vermont
Donna Campbell
Pat Wilson-Pheanious
Luke LaRue



Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee,



It is with gratitude that I present the 2024 Annual Report of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity (CWCSEO), prepared in accordance with Sec. 2-127 of the Connecticut General Statutes. This report reflects a year of progress, resilience, and unwavering commitment to advancing equity and inclusion and ensuring access and, opportunity for all Connecticut residents.

This year marked a transformative chapter for the Commission as we bid farewell to our former Executive Director, Steven Hernandez, whose leadership laid a strong foundation for our work. My appointment as Executive Director has been both an honor and an opportunity to build and envision the future of the Commission and the work ahead. Since assuming this role, I have undertaken a comprehensive strategic planning process to evaluate our deliverables, ensure alignment with the legislature's priorities and refine processes to enrich the impact of our work.

In 2024, the Commission addressed critical issues with innovative programming informing the legislature and public on challenges and solutions. Highlights include the Latino Summit, which explored housing affordability and equity, and the 2nd AAPI Education Symposium, a collaborative effort with the Asian Pacific American Coalition to advance the AAPI K-12 curriculum under Public Act 22-80. Our African American sub-commission elevated awareness of mental health challenges faced by Black men, while the Women's sub-commission hosted forums to combat female genital mutilation/cutting, further advancing protections for women and girls.

We also prioritized addressing food and nutrition insecurity, convening a forum at the State Capitol that brought stakeholders in the food system to explore challenges and solutions. Additionally, the Children's sub-commission led the Social Emotional Learning Collaborative in developing Connecticut's model School Climate Survey Standards and a School Climate Improvement Plan to promote positive learning environments across the state.

The Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) continued to empower parents, caregivers, and children through training in civic engagement and leadership, inspiring impactful projects that strengthened local communities. Building on the impact of over 30 years of capacity building for parents and children, the Commission is putting a greater focus on youth and young adult engagement fostering leadership opportunities and seeking funding for a curriculum that will prepare young people to shape their communities and their futures.

This report includes an overview of the work accomplished over the course of 2024, but it is not fully exhaustive.

Looking ahead, I am deeply grateful for the partnership of the Connecticut General Assembly, executive branch partners and our community collaborators. The accomplishments outlined in this report are a testament to the collective efforts of our board advisors, professional staff, and stakeholders, all of whom share our vision for a more equitable and inclusive Connecticut where residents can thrive.

Thank you for your continued support. Together, we can achieve another year of meaningful progress and lasting impact.

Sincerely,

Melvette Hill, Executive Director
Commission on Women, Children Seniors, Equity and Opportunity



Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee,

On behalf of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity (CWCSEO), we are honored to present our 2024 Annual Report, prepared in accordance with Sec. 2-127 of the Connecticut General Statutes. This report reflects a year of dedication to advancing equity, opportunity, and inclusion for all residents of Connecticut.

This year, CWCSEO experienced a pivotal transition with the departure of our Executive Director, Steven Hernandez, whose tenure left an indelible mark on our mission. While his departure was bittersweet, it presented an important opportunity to chart a new course. Following an inclusive and thoughtful search process, we were thrilled to welcome Melvette Hill, our former Director of Parent Leadership & Family Engagement, as the new Executive Director. Her leadership has already begun to guide the Commission toward new heights.

Throughout 2024, the Commission tackled pressing issues with innovative programming and legislative advocacy. This included a major Latino Summit, which highlighted critical issues such as housing affordability and equity and brought together diverse voices from across the state. Other initiatives included the formation of Connecticut's first AAPI Issues Caucus, a historic step for representation, and the African American sub commission's efforts to elevate awareness of mental health challenges faced by Black men. The Women's Initiatives program also made meaningful progress, including hosting forums on female genital mutilation/cutting to raise awareness and advocate for comprehensive laws, further advancing protections for women and girls in Connecticut.

CWCSEO expanded care for seniors, children, and families through its legislative efforts and advocacy, reflecting our commitment to equity and inclusion. The Children's sub commission developed Connecticut School Climate Survey Standards and created surveys for students, school employees, and parents, culminating in a School Climate Improvement Plan to promote positive learning environments statewide. We also incorporated important work in Food and Nutrition, hosting a forum at the State Capitol that brought together community organizations and residents to address the challenges of food insecurity. This event highlighted community perspectives and will inform a separate report offering detailed recommendations to the legislature to help tackle this pressing issue.

The Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) continued to empower parents and caregivers across the state by providing them with tools to advocate for their families and communities. Through training in civic engagement and leadership, participants undertook impactful projects that addressed local needs, strengthening both their communities and their capacity for change. Building on this success, the Commission is proactively expanding efforts to engage youth, responding to its mandate to promote youth leadership opportunities that foster active community involvement. By focusing on both parent and youth empowerment, we aim to create a more inclusive and engaged civic landscape.

As we reflect on a productive year, we are grateful for the continued support of the Connecticut General Assembly and our community partners. The activities highlighted herein demonstrate our commitment to the four main pillars of our mission: health and safety, educational success, freedom from poverty, and freedom from discrimination.

We look forward to another year of impactful collaboration and meaningful change.

Sincerely,

Karen Jarmoc

Karen Jarmoc
CWCSEO Co-Chair

Alan Tan
CWCSEO Co-Chair



The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity is mandated to:

1. **Focus Efforts:** Direct efforts towards achieving quality of life outcomes for women, children, their families, seniors, and members of the African American, Asian Pacific-American, and Latino and Puerto Rican communities in the state, ensuring they are:
 - Healthy, safe, and successful in educational pursuits.
 - Free from poverty.
 - Free from discrimination.
2. **Make Recommendations:** Guided by the executive committee, propose to the General Assembly and the Governor new or enhanced policies, programs, and services aimed at:
 - Embedding two-generational practices in program, policy, and systems changes on both state and local levels, pursuant to section 17b-112l.
 - Developing strategies to reduce family poverty, enhance parent leadership, and promote family and community civic engagement.
 - Promoting youth leadership opportunities to keep them actively engaged in their communities.
 - Implementing strategies and programs to ensure equitable access, reduce bias, and close the opportunity gap for the targeted populations. Recommendations may also reference state and national best practices and strategies for maximizing federal funding.
3. **Review Legislation:** With insights from the executive committee, review and provide feedback on proposed state legislation or recommendations impacting the specified groups and distribute comments to members of the General Assembly.
4. **Advise on Program Coordination:** Offer guidance to the General Assembly on coordinating and administering state programs affecting women, children, their families, seniors, and the specified ethnic populations.
5. **Gather and Maintain Information:** Collect and update information on the specified groups to better understand their status, conditions, and contributions. This data should support the desired outcomes listed in subdivision (1) and be included in the annual report as per subsection (b) and made available to legislators and other interested parties upon request.
6. **Maintain Liaisons:** Establish and maintain connections between the specified groups and government agencies, including the General Assembly.
7. **Conduct Outreach and Education:** Undertake educational and outreach activities to raise awareness and address key issues affecting women, children, their families, seniors, and the specified ethnic populations.



African American Sub Commission

This year, the African American Sub-Commission delivered a robust slate of initiatives to inform the Connecticut legislature, promote civic engagement, and address critical challenges faced by the Black community. Through targeted programs and community-centered events, the Sub-Commission highlighted pressing issues, celebrated cultural contributions, and shared actionable insights to guide legislative priorities.

Key efforts included:

- **Disability Justice:** Raising awareness of systemic barriers for disabled individuals in the criminal justice system and emphasizing the need for legislative action.
- **Health and Mental Well-Being:** Discussions such as “Getting Real About Black Men’s Mental Health” and “Black Women’s Health: Mental and Maternal Health” brought critical health disparities to light, fostering dialogue and encouraging informed policymaking.
- **Education and Youth Achievement:** Events like “HBCU Day” and the Ebenezer D. Bassett Student Achievement Award Ceremony showcased opportunities for youth empowerment and highlighted the importance of equitable education.
- **Civic and Cultural Engagement:** Celebrations such as “Winfred Rembert Day,” Juneteenth events, and Pride Day underscored the community’s contributions and cultivated greater awareness of historical and cultural significance.

The Sub-Commission also provided valuable data on demographic, economic, educational, and healthcare disparities within Connecticut’s Black population. These insights serve as a vital resource for legislators, emphasizing the importance of equitable policies and resource allocation.

Through these initiatives, the African American Sub-Commission demonstrated its commitment to fostering civic engagement, informing legislative efforts, and addressing systemic inequities. This work equips the legislature with the tools needed to drive meaningful, inclusive progress for Connecticut’s Black community.

“Disability Justice” Panel Discussion

The legal system is intricate, and insufficient access can lead to numerous injustices. Deaf individuals within the criminal justice system often face the denial of crucial accommodations throughout the legal process. Similarly, autistic individuals lack essential support during law enforcement interactions and court. The overall marginalization of people with disabilities in the criminal justice system is worsened by a shortage of qualified advocates. The African American Sub-Commission gathered an expert panel to discuss Disability





Justice. Through sharing and gathering information, our goal was to stimulate legislative engagement and support for potential bills.

During Black History Month, the African American Sub-Commission paid tribute to Black Americans who have made significant contributions to our state and our country. We highlighted individuals whose influence has been pivotal in shaping our world and whose legacies continue to inspire future generations.

Additionally, the African American Sub-Commission hosted events to increase awareness and educate our communities on significant issues impacting the Black community.

Winfred Rembert Day

The African American Sub-Commission presented “Winfred Rembert Day” at the Capitol to commemorate the life and legacy of New Haven’s Winfred Rembert, the nationally recognized activist, and Pulitzer Prize winning artist whose artwork depicted the breadth of Black life in America with extraordinary richness and honesty. Special guests reflected on the significance of Mr. Rembert’s journey and its place in the Black experience, and the nation’s history.



Ujima African American Alliance Black History Month



The African American Sub-Commission participated in Ujima African American Alliance’s third annual Black History Event at the Enfield Public Library. Policy Analyst Denise Drummond participated in an African American History Month discussion. The event also showcased the footprints of early African American Enfield residents, accompanied by demographic information about African American families. The display provided insight into the rich history and contributions of the African American community in Enfield.

HBCU Day at the State Capitol

The African American Sub-Commission hosted “HBCU Day” at the State Capitol during Black History Month to celebrate and bring awareness to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The Sub Commission highlighted the significant contributions of HBCUs in shaping leaders across various professional fields. High school students were educated about the role these schools play in shaping leaders in Connecticut and across the country.





Getting Real About Black Men's Mental Health



The African American Sub-Commission presented "Getting Real About Black Men's Mental Health." This event tackled the hardships and mental health obstacles faced by Black men, dispelling the prevalent negative stereotypes surrounding mental illness and depression. It served as a forum for acquiring insight and learning effective strategies to cope with trauma and unmet mental health needs. Presenters shared valuable tools, resources, and networks dedicated to supporting the mental well-being of Black men. Through sharing and gathering information, the event stimulated legislative engagement and support for upcoming legislation.

Black Women's Health: Mental and Maternal Health



The African American Sub-Commission presented "Black Women's Health: Mental and Maternal Health." This engaging discussion shed light on the mental and maternal health of Black women, raising awareness, educating the community, and addressing health-related issues impacting Black women and girls. Through sharing and gathering information, the event stimulated legislative engagement and support for potential bills affecting the health of Black women and girls.

Girl Scouts in Government Day



During Women's History Month, the African American Sub-Commission hosted "Girl Scouts in Government Day" at the State Capitol. Connecticut Girl Scout delegates began their experience with a tour of the State Capitol and the Legislative Office Building. They then attended a panel discussion featuring women from the Commission and female legislators, who shared insights into state government and the legislative process. Each delegate received citations in recognition of their engagement in the democratic governing process and their commitment to building a strong future for Girl Scouting in Connecticut and beyond.



Autism: Raising Awareness at the Capitol



The African American Sub-Commission hosted "Autism: Raising Awareness at the Capitol," to increase understanding and address the challenges faced by the autism community. By facilitating dialogue and sharing information, the Commission included legislative engagement and advocated for potential legislation to support the autism community.

This event also provided an opportunity for individuals with autism and their families to empower themselves as advocates and access available resources and services. Families were invited to listen to personal stories from individuals with autism and parent advocates who have navigated the journey of raising children on the autism spectrum, as well as to hear from legislators on current legislation.

Ebenezer D. Bassett Student Achievement Award Ceremony

The African American Sub-Commission hosted Central Connecticut State University's Brotherhood Initiative at the State Capitol for the annual Ebenezer D. Bassett Student Achievement Award Ceremony. This inspiring event celebrated the accomplishments of exceptional male students, recognizing their dedication and hard work as they received this prestigious award. The ceremony reflects our commitment to "Honoring the man, supporting the student, and continuing the legacy" of Ebenezer D. Bassett, CCSU's first African American scholar.

Pride Day at the Capitol: "Queer Joy & Queer Resilience"



The African American Sub-Commission, in collaboration with the CT LGBTQ+ Justice Opportunity Network and Access Health CT, hosted Pride Day at the Capitol: "Queer Joy & Queer Resilience". This inspiring event honored the LGBTQ+ community through a day focused on celebration, education, and empowerment. Attendees enjoyed a range of activities, including a resource fair and a panel discussion featuring experts and advocates who explored the theme "Queer Joy & Queer Resilience." Connecticut legislators shared reflective remarks on the importance of LGBTQ+ rights and the ongoing fight for equality and inclusion. The day concluded with vibrant drag performances, celebrating the creativity and culture of the LGBTQ+ community.



Juneteenth Night with The CT Sun



The African American Sub-Commission partnered with Anthony Sanders, Account Executive for the Connecticut Sun (WNBA), to host the inaugural "Juneteenth Night with the CT Sun" networking event. This gathering brought together Black organizations and associations to share information and resources highlighting their contributions to the community. The Commission was recognized for its impactful work and dedication to community empowerment.

Juneteenth Flag Raising and Panel Discussion

The African American Sub-Commission hosted a Juneteenth Flag Raising and Panel Discussion to celebrate and educate the community about the significance of Juneteenth. The event featured elected officials, legislators, a panel of experts, and three local students, all sharing insights on why Juneteenth should be recognized and celebrated. Before the event, the Sub-Commission organized a special experience for the students at the WFSB Channel 3 television news studio. They toured the studio and were interviewed by Eric Parker for his Sunday morning show, CT'24.



Fatherhood: The Next Level



The African American Sub-Commission hosted a free, two-day conference in partnership with the CT Department of Children and Families Fatherhood Division, Central Connecticut State University's Brotherhood Initiative, and the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative. The conference educated communities and mental health professionals on effectively engaging men of color while exploring resources and strategies to address mental health challenges. It included training sessions on culturally competent care and intervention methods for mental health professionals and community stakeholders, as well as discussions on the intersections of race, gender, and mental health to help participants navigate systemic barriers. Additionally, safe spaces were provided for boys and men of color to share experiences and access healing resources. Insights from the event were



shared with state leaders to support policy efforts aimed at enhancing mental health outcomes and access to care, underscoring the importance of a collaborative approach to addressing mental health within Connecticut's communities.

African American Sub-Commission – Relevant Data

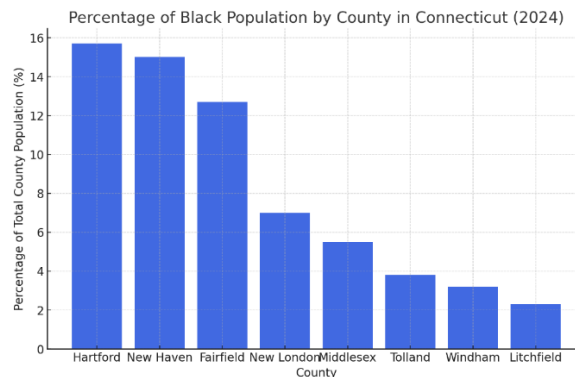
1. Population Demographics and Growth Trends

Population Size and Distribution: Current estimates of the Black population in Connecticut, segmented by county or urban versus rural areas.

As of 2024, the estimated Black population in Connecticut is approximately 385,407, making up 10.67% of the state's total population. This demographic distribution varies significantly across counties:

- Hartford County has the highest percentage, at 15.7%.
- New Haven County follows closely with 15.0%.
- Fairfield County has a Black population percentage of 12.7%.
- Other counties such as New London (7.0%), Middlesex (5.5%), Tolland (3.8%), Windham (3.2%), and Litchfield (2.3%) have lower percentages of Black residents

These figures provide a snapshot of the distribution across urban and more rural areas. The majority of the Black population resides in urban counties like Hartford and New Haven, aligning with larger city centers that have historically had higher minority populations.

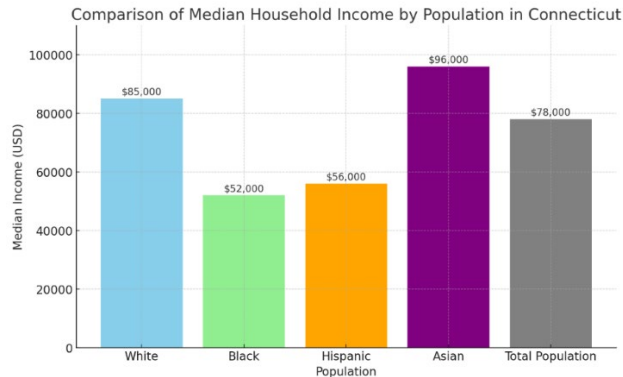


Here's a bar chart depicting the percentage of the Black population by county in Connecticut for 2024. Hartford and New Haven counties have the highest representation, indicating a concentration in more urbanized areas.



2. Economic and Employment Statistics

Income Levels: Median household income of Black families compared to other racial groups.



The graph above compares the median household income for different populations in Connecticut. Here are the key points:

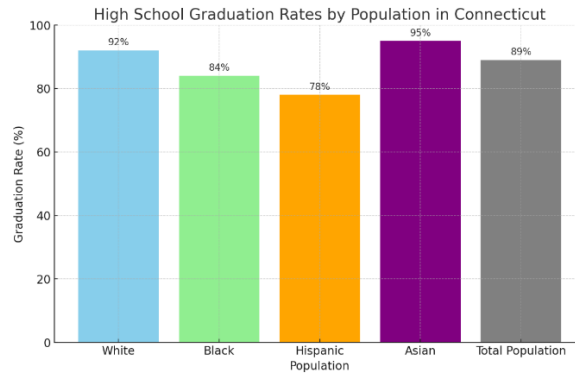
- **White:** \$85,000
- **Black:** \$52,000
- **Hispanic:** \$56,000
- **Asian:** \$96,000
- **Total Population:** \$78,000

This comparison highlights the income disparities, with Black and Hispanic households earning significantly less than their White and Asian counterparts. This income gap underscores economic challenges faced by the Black community in achieving parity in earnings and financial security in Connecticut.

3. Educational Attainment and Access

Graduation Rates: High school graduation rates compared to state and national averages.

Higher Education: Enrollment and graduation rates in colleges and universities; barriers such as financial aid and academic support.



The graph above shows the high school graduation rates for different populations in Connecticut. Here are the details:

- **White:** 92%
- **Black:** 84%
- **Hispanic:** 78%
- **Asian:** 95%
- **Total Population:** 89%

Key Insights:

- The graduation rate for the Black community is lower than that of White and Asian populations but higher than that of the Hispanic community.
- These figures indicate gaps in educational achievements, which are influenced by socioeconomic factors, access to educational resources, and support systems.

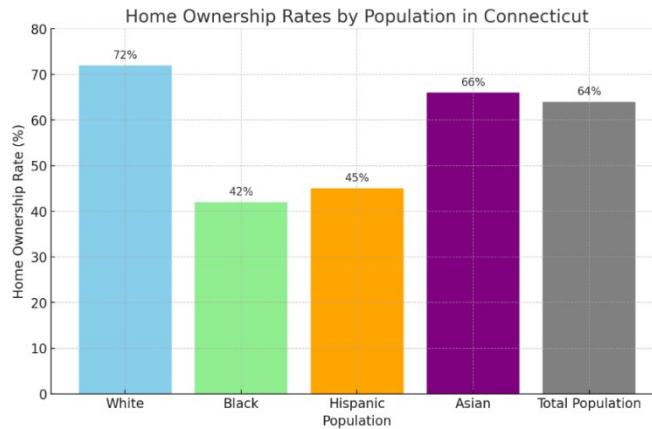
Access to Early Childhood and Higher Education:

- **Early Childhood Education:** Access for Black children can be limited by economic and geographic barriers. Participation rates in pre-K programs may be lower compared to higher-income communities.
- **Higher Education:** While enrollment has increased over time, Black students often face challenges related to financial aid, retention, and support services in higher education settings.

This data emphasizes the need for targeted programs to improve educational access and achievement for the Black community in Connecticut.

4. Housing and Community Trends

Homeownership Rates: Percentage of Black homeowners in Connecticut compared to other racial demographics.



The graph illustrates home ownership rates for various populations in Connecticut:

- **White:** 72%
- **Black:** 42%
- **Hispanic:** 45%
- **Asian:** 66%
- **Total Population:** 64%

Key Insights:

- The home ownership rate for the Black community (42%) is significantly lower than that of the White (72%) and Asian (66%) populations, indicating disparities in housing access.
- This gap suggests challenges such as:
 - **Housing Affordability:** Black households often face barriers like limited access to affordable mortgages, higher interest rates, and lower credit scores on average.
 - **Community Development:** Neighborhoods with higher Black populations may have fewer investments in infrastructure and public services, impacting overall living conditions.
 - **Economic Constraints:** Lower home ownership rates are tied to income disparities, wealth accumulation challenges, and discriminatory practices in the real estate market.

Efforts to close these gaps are vital for improving housing stability and promoting equity in community development for Black residents in Connecticut.

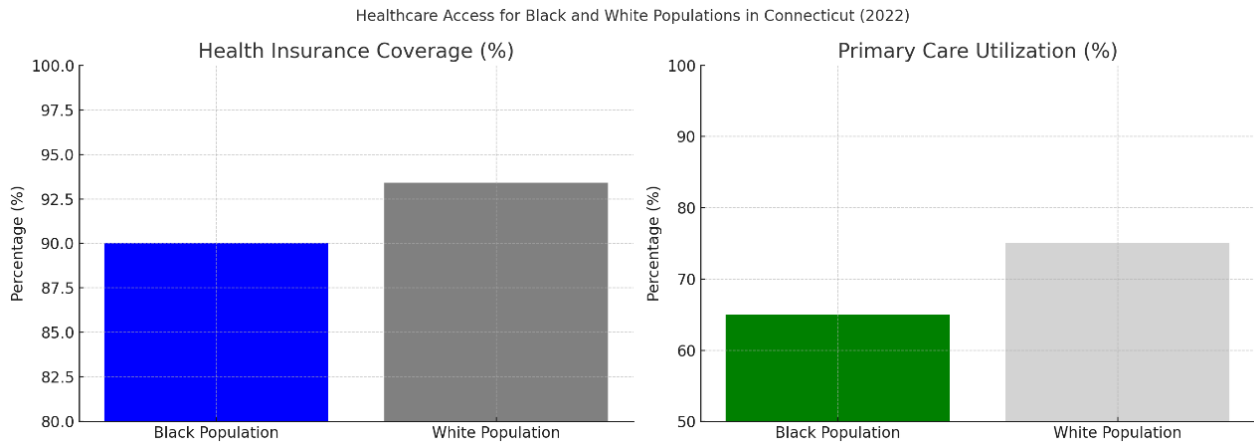
5. Health and Well-being Indicators

Access to Healthcare: Percentage of the Black population with health insurance, utilization of primary care services.

In Connecticut, the health insurance coverage rate for the Black population showed improvement in recent years. By 2022, approximately 10% of nonelderly Black individuals in the U.S., including Connecticut, were uninsured. This is higher compared to 6.6% for their White counterparts, highlighting a persistent disparity in health coverage. Factors influencing these disparities include variations in private insurance coverage and reliance on Medicaid and CHIP, which help mitigate but do not completely bridge these gaps.



Regarding primary care utilization, Black residents in Connecticut face challenges accessing consistent medical care, influenced by systemic issues such as socioeconomic disparities and geographical distribution. Such barriers contribute to worse health outcomes, like higher rates of emergency room visits and increased risk for chronic conditions.



The chart displays:

1. **Health Insurance Coverage (2022):** Approximately 90% of the Black population in Connecticut had health insurance, compared to 93.4% of the White population.
2. **Primary Care Utilization (Hypothetical):** Illustrative values show a comparative gap in primary care utilization between Black and White residents, reflecting underlying access challenges.

These visualizations highlight persistent disparities in healthcare access and coverage.



Asian Pacific American Sub Commission

2024 marked a promising trajectory to the work that has been and continues to be done for Connecticut's AAPI communities. Legislatively, the AAPI Sub-commission worked across silos with the Seniors Sub-commission to assist the Office of the State Comptroller's Healthcare Cabinet Urban Equity and Disparities Sub-committee on policy priorities surrounding family and senior care. Public Act 24-39 An Act Supporting Seniors and the Improvement of Nursing and Home-Based Care, which included these priorities such as presumptive eligibility and studying rates of compensating grandparent caregivers was passed by the CT General Assembly.

During this past legislative session and Asian Heritage Month, the newly formed AAPI Issues Caucus was officially created and introduced. Without a corresponding committee of cognizance on solely AAPI issues, the creation of this caucus will help legislatively advocate for bills and policies that most directly affect the AAPI demographic. This is the first AAPI Caucus in Connecticut's legislative history, and it affirms the legislature's dedication to ensuring that the AAPI perspective is represented in the policy-making process.

Beyond the implementation efforts of the bills that passed this session, the upcoming year also brings additional opportunity to expand on intersectional efforts. While significant strides were made for helping older adults age comfortably in the home, the AAPI Sub-commission also worked on various efforts in tandem with the Women's Sub-commission. From this work, the AAPI Sub-commission Lead Analyst Megan Baker was invited to join the newly created Underserved Advisory Board under the Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) to strengthen service provision to underserved communities. The Board worked to engage community partners to share information, strategies, and best practices to help develop enhanced outreach and services.

With these initiatives and more, the Commission continues to expand the breadth of its outreach both in the legislature and in the community. As we transition from 2024 and turn to prepare for the year ahead, we will continue to navigate through a community- and data-driven lens in our strive for increasing equity and opportunity for the state's vulnerable and underserved populations.



Community Engagement

Lunar New Year Celebrations

The Commission attended two Lunar New Year celebrations, one hosted by the Vietnamese Mutual Assistance Association of Connecticut, and another hosted by the Asian Pacific American Coalition. At both events, a Governor’s Proclamation was presented that recognized the cultural importance of Lunar New Year.



Startup Yale 2024

In continuation of the work around family caregiving and senior services and supports, the Commission supported the work of its Yale School of Public Health Fellows Wendy Jiang and Kiley Pratt, as they presented with their team on “Upkeep Care” at Startup Yale.



Upkeep Care is an artificial intelligence platform that connects older adults and caregivers to resources. The startup won the Thorne prize, awarded annually to the best student-led venture focused on social innovation in health or education within underserved communities in the U.S. or low-resource countries.



Pride Month Spotlight: Book Talk with Curtis Chin

The Commission partnered with the Yale Office of LGBTQ Resources and the Asian American Cultural Center to host a Pride Month Spotlight featuring author and alumni Curtis Chin for a reading and conversation of his memoir “Everything I Learned, I Learned in a Chinese Restaurant.”

From filmmaker and co-founder of the Asian American Writers' Workshop, Curtis Chin's memoir about coming of age and coming out traces the author's journey through 1980's Detroit as he navigated rising xenophobia, the AIDS epidemic, and the Reagan Revolution to find his voice as a writer and activist — all set against the backdrop of his family's popular Chinese restaurant.



Legislative 101 Series – Virtual Workshop: How Do You Pass a Bill in CT?

The Commission co-hosted a virtual workshop with the Asian Pacific American Coalition with community attendees where we discussed how to navigate the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) website, track a specific bill using the CGA website, the roles of the three state branches of government, the elected officials in each governmental branch, and the general pathway of a bill as it goes through the legislative process in Connecticut.

AAPI Issues Caucus Press Conference

A press conference was held in early May at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford to announce the formation of an Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Issues Caucus under the CT General Assembly, supported by the Commission AAPI Sub commission.

The Caucus was created to address stereotypes and generalizations of the Asian American community, working to better support critical educational, social and economic support needs, and ensure equitable treatment and support among the general population. Its focuses will include economic disparities – some segments of the AAPI community experience poverty rates higher than the national average – and community vulnerability to hate crimes.



The Caucus will focus on representation and advocacy, with further policies aiding the lived experience of the AAPI and strengthening ties between state legislators in the community. Its policy priorities will include cultural recognitions, language accessibility, mental health support, safety, justice, economic and healthcare equity, immigration reform and infrastructure development, among others.



Legislative 101 Series – Capitol Tour

In continuation of the Legislative 101 Series to promote Asian American civic engagement and education, the Commission assisted in providing an in-person, guided tour to community members of the Legislative Office Building and State Capitol in Hartford.

In addition to a walk-through of both buildings and viewing discussions in both chambers on various bills being voted on, members of the Commission and Asian Pacific American Coalition were recognized on the Senate Chamber floor for their advocacy and in recognition of cultural community organizations during Asian Heritage Month.





RTX ASPIRES Pratt & Whitney Asian Heritage Month "Visible Together" Event



CWCEO Co-Chair Alan Tan and Lead AAPI Analyst Megan Baker joined RTX ASPIRES for their 2024 Asian Heritage Month Signature Event "Visible Together."

This event captured the growth and strength of the AAPI community in their efforts to fight for equity and inclusion.

Asian Heritage Month Film Screening & Post-Screening Discussion Panel

The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) and the CWCEO hosted a movie presentation of "Ghost Mountain: The Second Killing Fields of Cambodia" as part of Asian American and Pacific Islander History Month.

The event included a screening of the award-winning documentary about Bunseng Taing, a Cambodian refugee who made his way to Connecticut in 1980 after surviving both the Killing Fields and a second horror never before documented. He was among 45,000 refugees who managed to escape to what they believed was safety in Thailand, only to be forced back over the Cambodian border in an area heavily infested with landmines.

Following the screening, AAPI Policy Analyst Megan Baker joined Bunseng Taing, James Taing, and Mike Keo for a post-viewing panel discussion on the importance of recorded histories and the biographies of our lineage.





Yoga In Our City Middletown Launch Press Conference

The Middletown delegation held a press conference to celebrate state funding for Yoga In Our City (YIOC), an organization that provides free yoga classes throughout Connecticut. YIOC received \$10,000 to expand their program to Middletown.



The CWCSEO has been a recognized partner in the YIOC program, and this expansion into Middletown was fostered through connections made to the legislature by the Commission through the shared emphasis on inclusive community wellness and the importance of accessible services and resources.

Let's Vote! Voter Registration Kick Off & Tabling

In late 2022, the Asian Pacific American Coalition (APAC) was awarded a grant by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving to support efforts to increase civic related knowledge amongst local Asian populations in an effort to increase voter participation among the AAPI community.



In collaborative efforts with the CWCSEO, Connecticut Asian Pacific American Bar Association, Registrars of Voters Association of Connecticut, Trinity College, and other volunteers, APAC hosted voter registration drives across the state at naturalization ceremonies, Asian community events, and outside of Asian night markets – translations of voter education materials into eight AAPI languages that are most commonly spoken in Greater Hartford were also made for these drives.



2nd Annual AAPI Education Symposium

CWCSEO, in collaboration with University of Connecticut Asian and Asian American Studies Institute and the Asian Pacific American Coalition (APAC) hosted its 2nd AAPI Education Symposium. This event was a continuation of the education symposium co-hosted between CWCSEO and APAC last year around the creation and implementation of the AAPI K-12 curriculum passed through Public Act 22-80.

While last year's symposium focused on teacher and administration perspectives, this year pivoted to center around AAPI youth to hear firsthand about student experiences, needs, and perspectives on the implementation of AAPI studies. The event featured a series of student-led panels and workshops.





Riverfront Dragonboat & Asian Festival

For the first time, the Commission tabled at Riverfront Recapture's 2024 Riverfront Dragon Boat & Asian Festival. In addition to day-long dragon boat races along the Connecticut River, this event was a celebration of Asian and Pacific Island cultures through traditional music and dance, hands-on art activities, food, and art demonstrations. The Commission shared more about its work and heard from community on what policy issues are most important to them.



AAPI Mental Health Workshops

This event was a series of workshops all centered around different areas affecting mental health, with an emphasis on AAPI cultural considerations and experiences.



The event featured AAPI healthcare professionals – including the AAPI Subcommittee Chair Mui Mui Hin-McCormick – to navigate these vulnerable but critical conversations.

16th Annual Conference for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Lead AAPI Policy Analyst Megan Baker joined Lead Aging Policy Analyst Michael Werner, Women's Policy Analyst Rosemary Lopez, and African American Policy Analyst Denise Drummond at the 16th Annual Conference for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren hosted in Plainville Senior Center.

Senator Lisa Seminara provided an overview on state resources available to grandparents raising grandchildren. Michael and Megan then spoke to recent legislative efforts made on behalf of the Commission to advocate for family caregiving and providing financial and resourceful support for grandparents who assume this role.



Reproductive Healthcare on Campus



CWCSEO Women's Policy Analyst Rosemary Lopez and AAPI Policy Analyst Megan Baker worked with Representative Kate Farrar, University of Connecticut Student Health and Wellness, and other advocacy organizations to organize an event on reproductive healthcare on college campuses.

In 2023, the Connecticut General Assembly passed Public Act 23-41, which requires the development and implementation of a plan for residential campuses to provide access for students who live on said

residential campuses to reproductive health services from a healthcare provider licensed to provide such services.

As this plan becomes finalized for implementation, the Commission hosted this gathering for a day of collaboration to hear from students around the state, medical personnel, staff, administrators, elected officials, policy experts, and campus and community advocates.



University of Connecticut Student Racial Data & Minority-Serving Institution Eligibility

Lead AAPI Policy Analyst Megan Baker participated as a panelist for the Transformation, Equity, Access and Sense of Belonging (TEAS) Project's panel discussion entitled "Student Racial Data and Minority-Serving Institution Eligibility" in the Asian American Cultural Center at the University of Connecticut's Student Union.



The panel featured a discussion led by Dr. Kristine Jan Cruz Espinoza with her research on Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), racial data collection, and enrollment implications on MSI designation eligibility. On the panel, Megan was joined by CT Data Collaborate Executive Director Michelle Riordan Nold and University of Connecticut Undergraduate Admissions Director Vern Granger.



Rocky Hill Diwali Celebration



The Commission joined the Diwali Celebration in Rocky Hill to present a state citation recognizing the wonderful work of the state's multicultural community organizations.



Virtual AAPI Mental Health

In response to the AAPI Mental Health Workshops the Commission hosted in partnership with the Asian Pacific American Coalition and other AAPI organizations, one of the AAPI community health experts that had participated in this event in August worked to organize a virtual AAPI mental health session to diver deeper into cultural nuances surrounding mental health issues within the AAPI cohort – such as multigenerational and immigrant trauma.

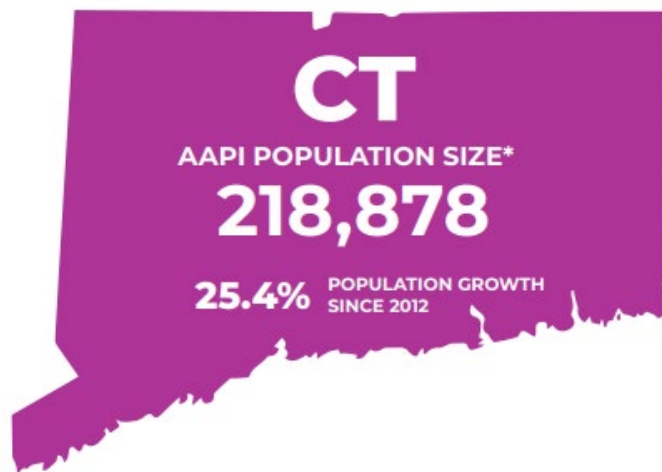
AAPI Population Statistics & Trends

Overview

According to 2024 Connecticut population data, there are more than 200,000 Asian American Pacific Islanders (AAPI) in the state (including multi-racial individuals).¹

Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPI) collectively represent one of the country’s fastest growing racial cohorts – a trend that is reflected at the state level as well. The national population growth for AAPIs increased at a rate of 39% from 2010 to 2020.² In this same timeframe, Connecticut’s AAPI community also grew by over 30%.³

As the presence of the AAPI community continues to rapidly grow in Connecticut, so does the awareness around their needs and lived experiences, thus spotlighting opportunities to close gaps and disparities that further inequities and inaccessibility.



Civic Engagement & Participation

Between 2000 and 2020, mono-racial, non-Hispanic Asian Americans made up the fastest-growing racial or ethnic group wi electorate.⁴ The number of Asian American eligible voters and their share of the U.S. eligible voter population increased substantially between 2020 and this year.⁵

¹ See, 2024 AAPI Voter Demographics | Connecticut, <https://aapidata.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Connecticut.pdf>.

² See, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Communities 2024 National Overview, <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/whiaanhpi-aapi-data-national-factsheet.pdf>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ See, Key Facts About Asian American Eligible Voters in 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/01/10/key-facts-about-asian-american-eligible-voters-in-2024/>.

⁵ Ibid.



Statewide 2024 voter data reveals that there are almost 110,000 eligible AAPI voters in CT (including multi-racial AAPI individuals).⁶ Over the past 10 years – from 2012 to 2022 – AAPI voter eligibility experienced a 14.3% growth.⁷ With this increase, AAPI voters now hold over a 4% share of the electorate in Connecticut.⁸

Nationally, 11% of Asian Americans that speak non-English languages at home reported language barriers to voting, and 42% stated that they would utilize voting assistance in their language if available.⁹ 60% of Asian American adults in CT speak a language other than English at home; almost 30% of Asian American adults in CT have limited English proficiency (LEP).¹⁰

With expansions to civic participation already occurring with early and absentee voting,¹¹ opportunity exists to also increase access to voting through avenues like translated voter registrations and absentee applications.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence (DV) among the AAPI population is an unspoken, yet prominent issue. National data highlights that 10.2% of AAPI women report experiencing minor violence, such as pushing, and 1.5% report severe violence, including choking or hitting.¹² Studies demonstrate that while only 1% of AAPI individuals in Connecticut reported seeking assistance for domestic violence,¹³ between 21-55% of AAPI experience some form of intimate partner violence (IPV).¹⁴

CT Safe Connect is Connecticut's domestic violence resource hub, with certified advocates available 24/7 via text, call, chat, and email. Here are the most recent statistics of those who used CT Safe Connect:¹⁵

⁶ See, 2024 AAPI Voter Demographics | Connecticut, <https://apidata.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Connecticut.pdf>.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ See, Connecticut No-Excuse Absentee Voting Amendment (2024), [https://ballotpedia.org/Connecticut_No-Excuse_Absentee_Voting_Amendment_\(2024\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Connecticut_No-Excuse_Absentee_Voting_Amendment_(2024)).

¹² See, Intimate Partner Violence Among Asian American and Pacific Islander Women, https://aapaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/AA_IPV-final-web.pdf.

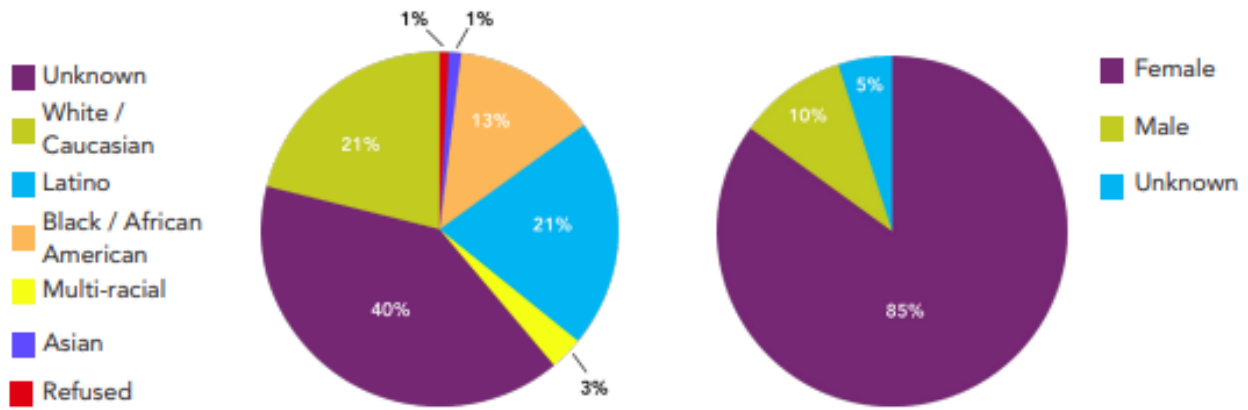
¹³ See, Connecticut Statewide Domestic Violence Service Statistics, <https://www.ctcadv.org/resources/publications/fact-sheets>.

¹⁴ See, Statistics on Violence Against API Women, <https://www.api-gbv.org/about-gbv/statistics-violence-against-api-women/>.

¹⁵ See, Connecticut Statewide Domestic Violence Service Statistics, <https://www.ctcadv.org/resources/publications/fact-sheets>.



Individuals who contacted Safe Connect for assistance self-reported that they were...



Some reasons why AAPIs were found to not report abuse from a partner include immigration-related stressors such as unemployment, language barriers, and not understanding or being aware of the resources available – all of which correlate with higher DV rates.¹⁶ Moreover, cultural stigma, taboos surrounding DV, and a fear of authorities who can help them (police officers, social workers, lawyers) further contribute to these crimes being underreported.¹⁷

More educational efforts around identifying DV and IPV must be taken, along with simultaneous increases to resource assistance for victims (housing, legal representation, financial and job security, and transportation stability) so that stressors surrounding the underreporting of DV and IPV can be eliminated.

Language Accessibility

Asian Americans have among the highest language access needs of any racial group, with almost 30% indicating language access needs in some capacity; this percentage is related to high rates of immigration amongst the AAPI population – 74.6% are foreign-born, and most foreign-born individuals arrived in the U.S. after the year 2000.¹⁸

A federal 2024 report published by the White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, & Pacific Islanders (WHIAANHPI) revealed the top 15 languages among U.S. residents who are LEP or speak English less than “very well.”¹⁹

¹⁶ See, Intimate Partner Violence Among Asian American and Pacific Islander Women, https://aapaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/AA_IPV-final-web.pdf.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ See, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Communities 2024 National Overview, <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/whiaanhpi-aapi-data-national-factsheet.pdf>.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*



TOP 15 LANGUAGES
Among U.S. residents who are limited English proficient, or speak English less than “very well”

Chinese	1,125,519
Vietnamese	883,222
Korean	556,637
Filipino/Tagalog	520,984
Mandarin	349,921
Cantonese	294,208
Japanese	179,101

Bengali	160,480
Hindi	156,112
Urdu	143,660
Gujarati	143,653
Punjabi	126,264
Nepali	105,575
Khmer	101,952
Hmong	94,373

Data Source: AAPI Data's analysis of U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). American Community Survey (ACS), 2022 Five-Year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS).

Connecticut is home to many people who speak numerous different languages. This table reflects the top 15 languages spoken in Connecticut in non-English speaking households, 6 of which are AAPI languages – Chinese (31,651), other Indo-European languages (17,320), Arabic (12,223), Hindi (11,607), Tagalog (8,353), and Vietnamese (8,069).²⁰

Language Spoken	Number of Households	Percent of households
Spanish	418,652	12.2%
Portuguese	44,252	1.29%
Chinese	31,651	0.923%
Polish	28,493	0.831%
Italian	24,180	0.705%
French	22,679	0.661%
Other Indo-European Languages	17,320	0.505%
Haitian	15,076	0.44%

²⁰ See, Connecticut State Profile, <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/connecticut/demographics/languages?viz=true>.



Arabic	12,223	0.357%
Hindi	11,607	0.339%
Russian	10,714	0.312%
Greek	8,692	0.254%
Tagalog (Inc. Filipino)	8,353	0.244%
German	8,345	0.243%
Vietnamese	8,069	0.236%

Many residents, especially those with LEP, need access to interpretation and translation services. While current solutions include the expansion of staffing and licensing for translators, other opportunities to increase language accessibility exist through creating translated materials such as applications for state benefits and educational pamphlets for state programs.

Mental Health

A notable rise in suicide rates among youth ages 10 to 24 pushed suicide into the second leading cause of death for people in this age cohort in 2021.²¹

Suicide was the leading cause of death for Asians 15 to 24 in 2022.²² Numerous studies show a relationship between poor academic performance in addition to parent-child conflict pose as major risk factors specific for Asian American youth.²³ Additionally, stresses seen in minority immigrant populations like alienation, discrimination, identity confusion, acculturation gaps between children and their parents,²⁴ and heightened risk for post-traumatic stress disorder associated with trauma experienced before and after immigration into the country²⁵ are all identified factors that affect suicide rates.

Death Rates for Suicide: ages 15-19, 2021²⁶

	Non-Hispanic Asian
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²¹ See, Suicide Prevention: Facts About Suicide, <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/facts/index.html>.

²² See, Mental and Behavioral Health – Asian Americans, <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/mental-and-behavioral-health-asian-americans>.

²³ See, Ethnic Differences in Adolescent Suicide in the United States, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2845977/>.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ See, Mental and Behavioral Health – Asian Americans, <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/mental-and-behavioral-health-asian-americans>.

²⁶ *Ibid.*



Male	12.4%
Female	5.7%
Both Sexes	9.0%

Students in grades 9-12 who seriously considered attempting suicide in the past 12 months, percentage, 2021²⁷

	Non-Hispanic Asian
Male	11.8%
Female	24.2%
Both Sexes	17.7%

Students in grades 9-12 who attempted suicide in the past 12 months, percentage, 2021²⁸

	Non-Hispanic Asian
Male	4.7%
Female	8.3%
Both Sexes	6.4%

Stigmas around mental illness that exist within Asian families and the overall community and systemic issues within the medical community prevent both AAPI adults and youth from accessing healthcare and mental health treatment;²⁹ in 2023, Asian American adults were 50% less likely to have received mental health treatment than non-Hispanic white adults.³⁰

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ See, Challenges Asian American and Pacific Islander Youth Face in Accessing Mental Health Services, <https://www.phi.org/press/challenges-asian-american-and-pacific-islander-youth-face-in-accessing-mental-health-services/>.

³⁰ See, Mental and Behavioral Health – Asian Americans, <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/mental-and-behavioral-health-asian-americans>.



The AAPI community needs accessible mental health resources that are culturally sensitive and aware. In 2021, only 11.3% of therapists in America were Asian.³¹ Cultural sensitivities and understanding of cultural contexts by healthcare professionals such as licensed therapists can build more holistic and intentional understanding in providing mental healthcare. Work must also be done within the AAPI community itself to normalize seeking support for one’s mental health.

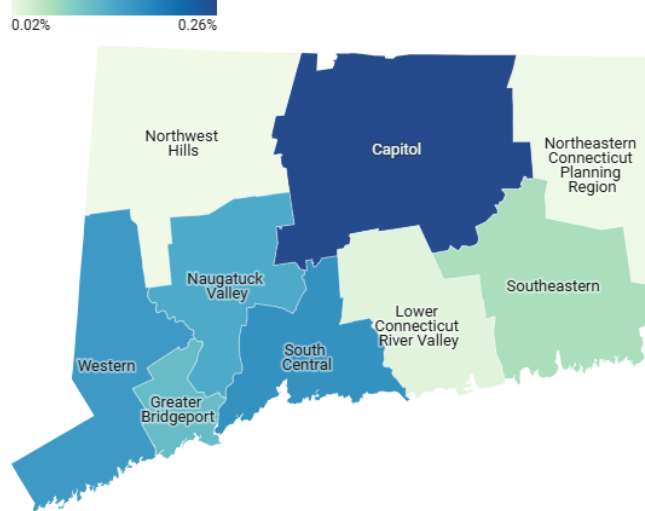
Family Caregiving & Senior Services/Supports

2020 decennial census data reports that over 55,000 of Connecticut households are multigenerational.³² Bridgeport, Hartford, Waterbury, New Haven, and Stamford are the top 5 CT cities with the highest share of multigenerational households, with almost 25% of all multigenerational households in CT in these cities.³³ In CT, around 20,000 grandparents care for their

grandchildren.³⁴ While this increase in multigenerational households is credited to concurrent increasing home prices and lack of affordable rent, cultural considerations and practices also lead to higher numbers of multigenerational households for the AAPI community. Asian children take on a caregiving role for elders – particularly for immigrant households – due to language barriers.³⁵ The notion of filial piety, values and practices that emphasize respect and care for one’s elders, is a foundational touchstone in the AAPI demographic; this cultural emphasis on filial piety further encourages Asian multigenerational caregiving.³⁶

Share of Multigenerational Households by Planning Region

Planning Region Share of State total multigenerational housing.



Map: CT Data Collaborative • Source: [census.gov](https://www.census.gov) • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islander individuals are more likely than the U.S. average to live in multi-generational households.³⁷ The infographic below shows that there are less one-generation

³¹ See, Challenges Asian American and Pacific Islander Youth Face in Accessing Mental Health Services, <https://www.phi.org/press/challenges-asian-american-and-pacific-islander-youth-face-in-accessing-mental-health-services/>.

³² See, Multigenerational Households in Connecticut, <https://www.ctdata.org/blog/multigenerational-households-in-connecticut#:~:text=According%20to%20the%202020%20decennial,1%2C683%20households%2C%20or%2023.5%25.>

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ See, The Loving Struggle of “Grandfamilies,” <https://www.fox61.com/article/life/family/connecticut-grand-families-struggle-finances/520-ac0c9560-8f60-4292-82d6-51e57f5f3856#:~:text=HARTFORD%2C%20Conn.,his%20wife%20Dad%2C%20and%20Mom.>

³⁵ See, AAPI Families: A Unique Experience from the First-Person Perspective, <https://kempe.org/2023/05/16/aapi-families-a-unique-experience-from-the-first-person-perspective/>.

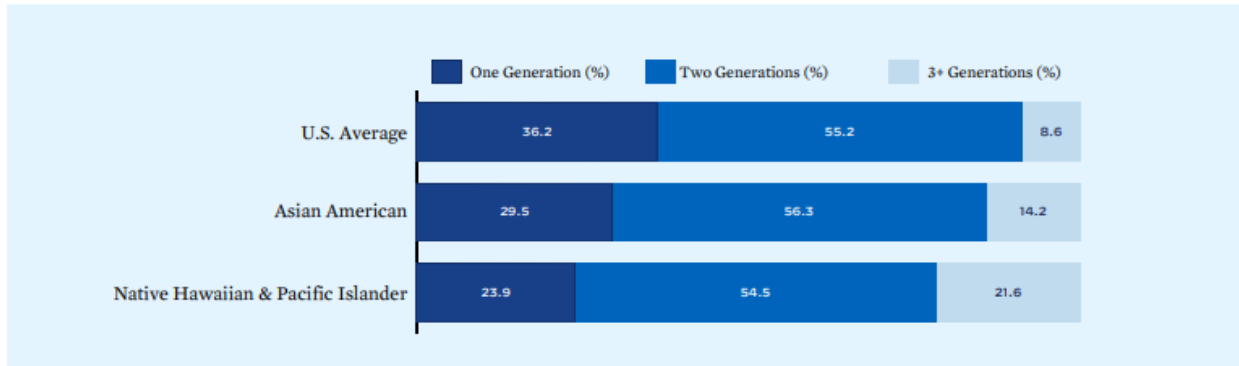
³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ See, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Communities 2024 National Overview, <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/whiaanhpi-aapi-data-national-factsheet.pdf>.



AAPI households than the national average, but more two or three (or more) generation AAPI households than the national average:³⁸

Another family caregiving dynamic that is notable present within the AAPI community is grandparents that care for their grandchildren – especially in the East Asian cohort. These East Asian grandparents, especially noncitizens, are more likely to care for their grandchildren.³⁹ The most significant factors in this and other Asian communities that rely on grandparent caretakers were language accessibility and cultural sensitivity.⁴⁰



Data Source: AAPI Data's analysis of U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). American Community Survey (ACS), 2022 Five-Year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) obtained from IPUMS USA. Includes race alone.

Research on the correlation between grandchild care and depression rates of older Chinese adults found that this specific dynamic of intergenerational support can drastically improve depression rates among grandparent caretakers – most prominently for female older adults and adults who do not have a spouse.⁴¹

While current state programs exist to support seniors and family caregiving, such as the Adult Family Living Program and Connecticut Home Care Program for the Elderly, such supports should be expanded to compensate grandparents and spousal caregivers.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ See, Asian American Grandparents Caring for Grandchildren: Findings from the Census 2010-2012 American Community Survey, <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1079&context=grandfamilies>.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ See, Research on Grandchild Care and Depression of Chinese Older Adults Based on CHARLS2018: The Mediating Role of Intergenerational Support from Children, <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-022-12553-x>.



Children's Sub-Commission

An accomplishment in the early months of 2024 was working closely with the Connecticut General Assembly and advising legislators and legislative staff on Public Act 23-45 in particular the sections regarding school climate, suspensions and expulsions, and grief and bereavement.

Noteworthy is that Thomas Nuccio, was co-chair of the suspensions and expulsions subcommittee. This critically important work has conducted meetings throughout this year and will likely have legislative recommendations by the end of this calendar year.

Several resources and official legislative reports were prepared on behalf of the Commission as follows:

1. Study of Community-based bereavement and grief counseling resource centers
2. Title IX Report
3. Title IX Student Toolkit
4. Title IX Parents/Guardians Toolkit
5. Title IX School Employee Toolkit
6. School Climate Survey Standards
7. School Climate Survey for Students
8. School Climate Survey for Parents/Guardians
9. School Climate Survey for School Employees
10. School Climate Improvement Plan

Sub-committee Meetings of the SEL Collaborative:

- Sub-committee focused on creating School Climate Surveys. From June to the end of the year the Children's Sub-commission has worked collaboratively to create the Connecticut School Climate Survey Standards which are a set of guiding principles that steer schools toward having effective school climate surveys.
- Following the development of the standards the Sub-Commission staff coordinated various efforts to develop School Climate Surveys. First, a 25-student survey pilot program was rolled out with the goal of measuring the views of students toward their school climate and have since created a school employee and then the parents/guardian survey.
- Following the development of the surveys the subcommittee created a school climate improvement plan which is a detailed chart highlighting some of the key areas of an effective school climate. This chart is designed to be based on some of the data collected from the school climate surveys we previously created.

Legislative Forum on Educator Diversity, April 23, 2024

During this forum we heard from educators, stakeholders, and administrators on the importance of k-3 early literacy programs. In essence, the Children's Sub Commission helped organize the Legislative Forum on Educator Diversity that took place April 23, 2024. The priority of the panel discussion focused on Connecticut's progress towards diversifying the educator workforce. Teachers and superintendents were



part of the conversation on the obstacles facing educators, as well as state leaders on the legislative solutions on how to make it easier to enter the teaching profession.

Population Demographics and Relevant Statistics:

- According to the U.S. Census Bureau 20% of the Connecticut population is under the age of 18, which is a smaller percentage of the Connecticut population than in 2000 (25%) and in 2010 (23%).⁴²
 - 12% of children younger than 18 live in households below the poverty threshold.⁴³
- According to the recently published Dalio Report, throughout Connecticut, many of the state's 615,000 young people between the ages of 14 and 26 experience a variety of adverse circumstances that negatively affect their life outcomes. 19% of Connecticut's 14–26-year-olds were either at-risk or disconnected in 2021-2022. Of these, 63,000 were determined to be “disconnected.”⁴⁴ Furthermore, 1 in 5 young people in Connecticut are being failed by the systems intended to support them.⁴⁵
- In Connecticut, 3.7% of children ages 6-18 do not have health insurance and 2.8% of children under age 6 do not have health insurance. This number has dropped from the 2008 level of 4.9% but has increased from 2.4% in 2021.⁴⁶ Furthermore, 96.5% of all eligible children currently participate in Medicaid.
- Four-year high school graduation rates have slightly varied by year:⁴⁷
 - 2018-2019: 88.5%
 - 2019-2020: 88.8%
 - 2020-2021: 89.6%
 - 2021-2022: 88.9%
 - 2022-2023: 88.4%
- In recent years rates of chronic absenteeism in Connecticut schools have seen variance. A student is chronically absent if they are absent for any reason for 10% or more school days.
 - In the 2023 to 2024 school year 87,397 students were chronically absent. This represents 17.7% of all K-12 students.⁴⁸

⁴² [Child population: U.S. Census 2000, 2010, and 2020 | KIDS COUNT Data Center](#)

⁴³ [Explore Children in Poverty in Connecticut | AHR](#)

⁴⁴ [Connecticut's Unspoken Crisis Dalio Education](#)

⁴⁵ [2024-08-27-CS-Final-Report.pdf Dalio Education](#)

⁴⁶ [Connecticut — Children's Health Coverage Report Card](#)

⁴⁷ [Four-Year Graduation Rates EDSIGHT](#)

⁴⁸ [Attendance Dashboard EDSIGHT](#)



- Further data below highlights this problem:
- 2,534 or 50.2% students experiencing homelessness were chronically absent.
14,112 or 24.3% of English Learners / Multilingual Learners were chronically absent in 2023-24.
- 24,014 or 27.2% of students with disabilities were chronically absent in 2023-24.
- 60,677 or 27.5% of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals were chronically absent in 2023-24.
- 62,020 or 23.3% of students of color were chronically absent in 2023-24.⁴⁹ Students of color are students who identify as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or Two or More Races.
- Below is a chart of the percentage of students who were chronically absent by year: ⁵⁰
 - 2022-2023: 20%
 - 2023-2024: 17.7%

⁴⁹ [Attendance Dashboard EDSIGHT](#)

⁵⁰ [Attendance Dashboard EDSIGHT](#)



Latino and Puerto Rican Sub-Commission

Thanks to your hard work and unwavering dedication, this year has been one of remarkable progress for the Latino and Puerto Rican Sub-Commission. Together, we've achieved meaningful milestones that underscore the power of collaboration and community engagement.

Our partnership with UConn on the **Latino Summit** was a standout success, selling out quickly and delivering profound insights from our community. The summit highlighted pressing issues such as housing affordability and allowed us to inform the legislature on these critical needs.

In collaboration with the **Connecticut Immigrant and Refugee Coalition (CIRC)**, we celebrated the achievements of immigrants at the State Capitol with an inspiring turnout, including the Lt. Governor, Speaker of the House, and numerous other leaders. This event served as a powerful reminder of the invaluable contributions immigrants make to our state.

Our commitment to **immigrant health equity** led us to collaborate with lawmakers like Representative Jillian Gilchrest, while Hilda Nieves brought crucial perspectives from our sub-commission to the table.

During **Hispanic Heritage Month**, we shone a spotlight on **environmental justice** through a pivotal event featuring advocates and leaders. Keynote speaker Nellie Gorbea inspired attendees, and Executive Director Melvette Hill skillfully moderated a panel that addressed critical issues like energy inequity and pollution. These conversations emphasized the vital role Latine voices play in shaping environmental policies.

We also responded to our **legislative mandate**, which calls on the Commission to testify before the legislature. Through this work, we addressed housing, poverty, youth disparities, and educational reforms—issues that directly impact our community's well-being and future.

As we reflect on all we've accomplished, it's inspiring to see the collective impact of our efforts. Together, we've not only advanced equity but strengthened the foundation for future progress. Thank you for being an integral part of this work.





Building a Better Future: 2024 Latino and Puerto Rican Policy Agenda Summit

In 2024, the "Building a Better Future: The Latino and Puerto Rican Policy Agenda Summit" emerged as a critical initiative aimed at elevating the socioeconomic status and addressing the key challenges facing Connecticut's Latino and Puerto Rican communities. This summit was organized through the combined efforts of the University of Connecticut's (UConn) Puerto Rican Studies Research Initiative, the Puerto Rican/Latino Studies Project at UConn's School of Social Work, and the Nancy A. Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work. Additionally, significant support was provided by the Latino and Puerto Rican Division of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, and Opportunity (CWCSEO). The summit reflected a strategic collaboration between community leaders, advocates, elected officials, and academic institutions to shape a nonpartisan legislative agenda that would resonate with the real needs of Latino communities across the state.



A key component of the summit's success was its reliance on a series of "Tu Voz, Tu Influencia" listening sessions, which were designed to gather firsthand insights from Puerto Rican and Latino communities throughout Connecticut. The first of these sessions, facilitated by the Hispanic Alliance of Southeastern Connecticut, was held in New London in October 2023, followed by additional sessions in Hartford at the Family Wellness Center of the Hispanic Health Council and in Waterbury at UConn's campus. Each session played an integral role in capturing diverse community perspectives, ensuring that the final legislative agenda was informed by those most impacted by the issues at hand. The listening sessions concluded with a final event hosted by Junta for Progressive Action in collaboration with State Representative Hilda Santiago, whose active participation was vital in amplifying the voices of those in attendance.

The 2024 Latino summit and its associated listening sessions tackled a wide array of critical issues, including housing inequalities, civic engagement, educational equity, health disparities, and linguistic justice. Throughout these discussions, it became evident that the Latino and Puerto Rican communities face significant barriers, and concerted efforts are required to address them. Housing emerged as a major concern, with many participants noting high rental burdens and limited access to affordable options. The recommendations from this sector stressed the need for comprehensive legislative reforms, increased investment in affordable housing, and partnerships with private developers to expand available housing units. The partners, including UConn and the Hispanic Health Council, emphasized the importance of addressing segregation through zoning reforms and encouraged towns and cities to adopt policies that prioritize housing as a human right.



Civic engagement also took center stage during the summit, particularly regarding Latina women’s participation in political processes. The collaboration between UConn and local organizations such as Junta for Progressive Action highlighted the need to dismantle barriers preventing Latina women from fully engaging in political leadership roles. The summit called for targeted efforts to increase voter registration and turnout within these communities, fostering greater involvement in the political process through education and outreach.

In the realm of education, the summit emphasized the importance of bilingual and dual-language programs as

essential tools for promoting educational equity. UConn’s School of Social Work and the Nancy A. Humphreys Institute were instrumental in advocating for professional development focused on culturally responsive teaching, ensuring that educators are equipped to meet the diverse needs of Latino students. The listening sessions underscored the critical need for increased funding for bilingual educators and programs that would allow students to thrive in both English and Spanish, bridging the gaps in educational attainment that disproportionately affect Latino youth.

Health disparities were another key focus, with attention drawn to the disproportionately high rates of chronic diseases such as diabetes and asthma among Connecticut’s Latino communities. The summit recommended the establishment of a Health Equity Fund to support targeted health initiatives and improve access to healthcare services in underserved areas. Additionally, legislative efforts were proposed to enhance community health outreach and ensure that healthcare services are culturally competent and accessible. Partners such as the Hispanic Health Council and UConn’s Puerto Rican Studies Research Initiative played a pivotal role in advocating for these health reforms, recognizing that systemic changes are necessary to address the long-standing health inequities faced by Latino communities.

A significant achievement of the summit was its emphasis on promoting linguistic justice. Many Latino and Puerto Rican community members face barriers when accessing government services due to inadequate interpretation and translation services. Partners such as UConn and CWCSEO led the call for improving access to dialectally and culturally appropriate interpretation services, ensuring that language does not continue to be a barrier to full participation in society. The summit also advocated for greater recognition of bilingual professionals, particularly in healthcare and education, by making it easier for immigrant professionals to transfer their credentials and contribute meaningfully to their fields. This effort to promote linguistic justice was seen as a key step toward fostering inclusivity and ensuring that all community members are able to access the services and opportunities available to them.

The success of the 2024 Latino and Puerto Rican Policy Agenda Summit was not only in its ability to gather valuable input from community members but also in the actionable recommendations it produced. The partnership between UConn, the CWCSEO, and community organizations like Junta for Progressive Action and the Hispanic Alliance of Southeastern Connecticut was critical in driving forward the summit’s objectives and ensuring that the issues most important to the Latino community were addressed comprehensively.



Through this collaborative effort, the summit has laid the groundwork for future advocacy and legislative efforts that will help to create a more equitable and inclusive Connecticut for all its residents.

As we move forward, it is crucial for these partnerships to continue their work in advocating for the implementation of the recommendations laid out during the summit. Ensuring housing as a human right, promoting civic engagement, achieving educational equity, addressing health disparities, and promoting linguistic justice will require ongoing dedication, legislative action, and community involvement. The leadership demonstrated by all partners involved in this initiative sets a strong foundation for future efforts to uplift and empower Connecticut's Latino and Puerto Rican communities.



The 2024 Building a Better Future: The Latino and Puerto Rican Policy Agenda Summit took place on Saturday, January 20, 2024, at the Hartford Marriott Downtown in Hartford, Connecticut. The summit attracted over 300 attendees, including community leaders, elected officials, advocates, and members of the Latino and Puerto Rican communities from across the state. This gathering provided a unique opportunity for participants to engage in meaningful dialogue, share their experiences, and contribute to the development of a comprehensive legislative agenda

that reflects the needs and priorities of Connecticut's Latino population.

2024 Annual Immigrant Day Celebration

On **April 25, 2024**, the Connecticut Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, and Opportunity (CWCSEO), in partnership with the Connecticut Immigrant and Refugee Coalition (CIRC), hosted the **Annual Immigrant Day Celebration** at the Connecticut State Capitol. This event, held at 2:00 PM, recognized the invaluable contributions immigrants make to the state's vibrant cultural and economic fabric.



The celebration honored immigrants across Connecticut who have made positive and lasting impacts in their communities and professional fields. Those recognized included entrepreneurs, cultural leaders, and long-serving public servants, showcasing the diversity and resilience of Connecticut's immigrant community. Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz reminded attendees of the significance of the state motto, "Qui Transtulit Sustinet," highlighting the enduring strength of immigrant communities.

In addition to the **Immigrant Day Awards**, three special memorial awards were presented to honor individuals dedicated to the welfare of immigrants and refugees, including the Angela R. Andersen Memorial Award.

The event concluded with a memorable violin performance by Adrian Sylveen Mackiewicz, honoring the contributions of immigrants to Connecticut's arts and culture.



Immigrant Health Equity Roundtable Discussion

The **Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, and Opportunity (CWCSEO)** hosted a roundtable discussion focused on immigrant health equity. The event was moderated by **Julia Leedy**, MPH Candidate at the Yale School of Public Health and legislative intern at CWCSEO. The discussion centered on access to health coverage for immigrants in Connecticut, with key contributions from **State Representative Jillian Gilchrest**, Co-Chair of the Connecticut General Assembly Human Services Committee.

Deputy Commissioner Peter Hadler from the State Department of Social Services (DSS) provided a detailed presentation on **HUSKY Health**, outlining the challenges and opportunities for immigrants to access health coverage. The discussion also included perspectives from **Muna Abbas** of the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health, **Dana Bucin**, Immigration Attorney and Honorary Consul of Romania, and **Jessica Vasile** from First Choice Health Centers.



Each participant offered valuable insights into the policy and social barriers affecting immigrant health.

The event also saw active participation from **Hilda Nieves**, Chair of the Latino and Puerto Rican Sub-Commission of CWCSEO, and **Alan Tan**, Co-Chair of CWCSEO, reinforcing the commission's commitment to advancing health equity for immigrant communities.



This roundtable served as a platform for advancing understanding and solutions to improve immigrant access to healthcare services, with a focus on advocacy and legislative action.

Latine & Puerto Rican Voices for Environmental Justice Roundtable

Hartford, CT – October 2024

The Connecticut Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, and Opportunity (CWCSEO), in collaboration with key partners, hosted the Latine & Puerto Rican Voices for Environmental Justice Roundtable at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford. As part of the conclusion of Hispanic Heritage Month, the roundtable brought together 40 environmental justice advocates, community leaders, legislators, and supporters to address the pressing environmental challenges disproportionately impacting Latine communities in Connecticut.

The event featured a keynote address from Nellie Gorbea, President and CEO of Puerto Rico’s Green Energy Trust, who emphasized the importance of Latine perspectives in shaping forthcoming federal greenhouse gas reduction funding. Following the keynote, CWCSEO Executive Director Melvette Hill moderated a rich panel discussion that explored various socio-environmental challenges, including energy inequity, pollution, and access to clean resources.

Key insights were shared by distinguished panelists, including Commissioner Katie Dykes of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, State Representatives Geraldo Reyes, Joseph Gresko, and Hilda Santiago, as well as leaders from the Acadia Center, Save the Sound, and the Long Island Sound



Study. Discussions focused on empowering Latine communities through participatory environmental policies, equitable access to resources, and ensuring that communities disproportionately affected by climate change are at the forefront of advocacy efforts.

This roundtable reinforced the need for continued collaboration to address environmental justice as an intersectional and non-partisan issue that affects housing, transportation, employment, and

the food system. As we look ahead, CWCSEO remains committed to engaging youth and community leaders to lead the charge for a healthier, more just future. We extend our gratitude to our partners—Save the Sound, Acadia Center, Connecticut Green Bank, and Restore America’s Estuaries—for their unwavering support and leadership. Together, we are building a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

Partners and Endorsing Organizations:

- Save the Sound



- Acadia Center
- Connecticut Green Bank
- Restore America's Estuaries
- Criollisimo Restaurant

Connecticut Latino/Hispanic Demographics:

- Hispanic/Latino: The Hispanic or Latino population accounted for 18.7% of the total population in 2020.
- Labor Force Participation:
 - Hispanic Women: 58.2% participation rate
 - Hispanic Unemployment Rate: 6.9%
- Life Expectancy (2019) Hispanics: 81.9 years
- Hispanic Health Insurance: 18.3% uninsured
- Hispanic High School Graduation Rate (2020): 88.5%
- Hispanic bachelor's degree or Higher: 19.8%
- Hispanic Homeownership Rates (2021): 48.4%
- Median Household Income (2021):\$55,321





Seniors Sub-Commission

In the wake of the pandemic and the conclusion of the Public Health Emergency (PHE), Connecticut has made critical advancements to protect and empower its older adult population. The CWCSEO Seniors' Sub-Commission played a key role in advising the General Assembly and fostering consensus on policies that promote aging well and safeguarding vulnerable populations.

Key Achievements of 2024:

1. Policy Advancements for Long-Term Care and Family Caregiving

- Support for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman and Community Ombudsman programs to ensure quality assurance and protect older adults from fraud and abuse.
- Establishment of a Presumptive Eligibility program, enabling temporary healthcare coverage for individuals awaiting Medicaid approval, ensuring timely access to essential long-term care services.
- Spotlight on the Adult Family Living Program (AFL) to expand compensation for family caregivers, particularly spousal caregivers, strengthening support for home-based care and avoiding unnecessary institutionalization.

2. Investment in Senior Centers

- Historic allocation of \$6.5 million for municipal senior centers, distributed by the newly established Statewide Senior Center Coordinator, to enhance and innovate these critical local service providers.

3. Collaborative Planning and Policy Development

- Contributions to Connecticut's 3-Year Plan for Long-Term Services and Supports, the 5-Year Alzheimer's Plan, and the Office of the Comptroller Health Care Cabinet Report.
- Advocacy for dental health improvements among long-term care recipients, including recruitment initiatives for dental providers, mobile service pilots, and oral health literacy programs for caregivers and LTSS members.

Legislative Engagement and Future Goals:

The Sub-Commission collaborated with legislative leaders to advance policy pillars that prioritize quality assurance, family caregiving, and home-based care. While HB 5296, which sought to expand the Connecticut Home-Care Program for the Elderly, fell short of passage in 2024, it remains a key focus for the upcoming session.

Looking ahead, the Sub-Commission is committed to addressing workforce shortages, enhancing long-term care supports, and advocating for innovative approaches to meet the evolving needs of Connecticut's older adults. From strengthening home-based care systems to promoting culturally aware services, we aim to ensure older adults can age with dignity, independence, and in the least restrictive settings.



Statutory Mandates & Appointments

Long-Term Care Advisory Council (LTCAC)

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statute §17b-338, we administer the Long-Term Care Advisory Council, which meets quarterly to advise and make recommendations to the Long-Term Care Planning Committee, directly impacting the shape of Connecticut's 3-year plan for the delivery of Long-Term Services and Supports. Recently, our advisory role led to the establishment of the Statewide Senior Center Coordinator and Statewide Dementia Care Coordinator, housed at the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS). In 2024, we helped to shape the policy priorities surrounding Family Caregiving, Supporting the Long-Term Care Ombudsman & Community Ombudsman programs, and explored the importance of elevating the dental health of Older Adults receiving Long-Term Services and Supports.

Age Well Collaborative

Steering Committee Member – Livable Communities Initiative. The Collaborative is an initiative of Connecticut Community Care. Delegated by CWCSEO, they are leading the state's Livable Communities Initiative (Pursuant to CGS §17b-420a). The Collaborative co-creates, educates, innovates, celebrates and evaluates best practices, projects and policies to shape inclusive, vibrant, intergenerational places where we all can thrive across the lifespan. Such places include physical infrastructure, services, and opportunities for connection for all residents. They are intentional in planning with an aging, dementia and disability lens.

Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD) Coalition

Administered by the Connecticut Department of Public Health. Co-Chair of the Statewide Coordination and Policy Workgroup. In 2021, the CT Department of Public Health (DPH) received a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) titled, Building Our Largest Dementia Infrastructure (BOLD grant) to develop a state plan for ADRD using the Healthy Brain Road Map series. DPH worked in partnership with the Alzheimer's Association CT Chapter to convene a CT ADRD Coalition to assist with the statewide strategic planning process under the CDC grant award. The Coalition is ongoing and includes over 50 representatives from approximately 40 organizations, including those that were involved in previous ADRD planning efforts, long-term care advisory body members, other state agencies, and health care, non-profit, and community-based organizations. The CWCSEO's collaboration with the ADRD Coalition has led to the development of the 2023-2028 5-Year Connecticut State Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias.⁵¹

⁵¹ See, Connecticut State Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (2023-2028).
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/dph/chronic-disease-adrd-heart-diabetes/ct-adrd-state-plan_final-82023.pdf



Panel Presentations

Lt. Governor's Social Connection Roundtable for Men's Mental Health Awareness Month

Invited as a panelist by Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz to discuss older men's mental health as part of a larger conversation regarding Men's Mental Health Awareness Month in June. During the roundtable discussion it was revealed that as many as 15% of men report having no friends. Lack of strong social connections leads to isolation and higher amounts of completed suicide attempts among older men. Last year, the Surgeon General of the United States put out a study showing lacking social connection can increase the incidents of premature death just as much as smoking up to 15 cigarettes per day.⁵²



Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) Careers in Aging Panel (POSTER & PHOTO)

Invited by the Chair of the Psychological Science Department of CCSU to participate in a panel discussion on diverse and innovate careers in aging to a class of Gerontology students. This event was part of a larger recognition of March as Careers in Aging Month. The conversation covered a wide array of professional pathways anticipating the future needs of the growing population of older adults in Connecticut and the United States.



Innovating Elder Justice Conference, Yale Law School

This symposium brought together legal and medical experts and thought leaders from across the country to discuss the root of the problem of elder abuse, sharing some of the most promising and innovative responses to date (including interventions that can be employed by medical professionals in clinical settings), and discussed strategically about how law, technology, and medical expertise can be leveraged to address America's elder abuse epidemic.

The 16th Annual Conference for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, The "Not-So" Empty Nest, Plainville Senior Center – (PHOTO)

Invited presenter, along with Sen. Lisa Seminara and Commission Analyst Megan Baker, to discuss programs, resources and legislation to help uplift grandparent caregivers. We set up a table with CWCEO colleagues from the AAPI, African American and Women's Sub commissions to engage directly with the community of grandparent caregivers and services providers. Topics discussed included family caregiving, kinship programs through the probate court and the Department of Children and Families, as well as recent legislative

⁵² See, *Men's loneliness a growing crisis*, WTNH News 8, <https://www.wtnh.com/video/mens-loneliness-a-growing-crisis/9817804/>



proposals before the Connecticut General Assembly.

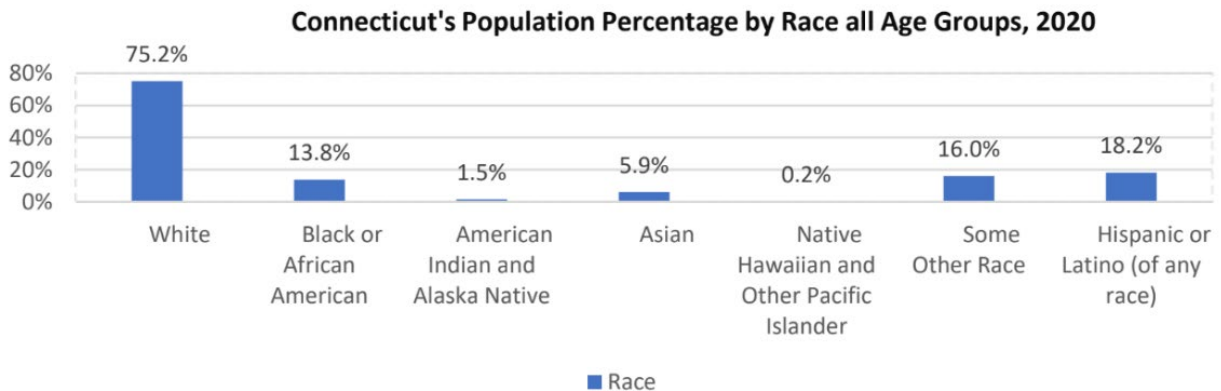
Population Statistics and Trends

Overview

The following statistics can be found from the 2024 Connecticut State Plan on Aging, as reported by Commissioner Porter of the Bureau on Aging. Connecticut’s aging population is growing rapidly, with older adults aged 60 and above now comprising 23% of the state’s population or approximately 823,529 individuals.⁵³ Among them, those aged 65 and older make up 17.4% of the overall population, which is projected to grow by 57% by 2040.⁵⁴

Connecticut stands as the 7th oldest state by median age at 41.1 years. The state also boasts one of the nation’s highest life expectancies at 80.9 years, significantly surpassing the U.S. average of 76.4 years.

The older adult population also reflects the state’s diversity- **75.2%** of the population is White, while Hispanic/Latino individuals make up **18.2%**. Black/African American residents represent **13.8%**, and Asian residents comprise **5.9%**.⁵⁵



Connecticut’s Population Percentage by Race. Source: ACS 5-year Estimates (2020)

As this demographic grows, so too do the demands for equitable access to resources, highlighting gaps in affordability, health equity, and care services.

Economic security

Connecticut’s older adults face widening economic disparities. In 2019, the median income for a household head aged 65 or older was \$47,357, yet the cost of living continues to rise. The **Elder Index** estimates that

⁵³ Census population estimate as of July 1, 2023.

⁵⁴ CT State Plan on Aging 2020-2023, page 14.

⁵⁵ Connecticut’s Population Percentage by Race. Source: ACS 5-year Estimates (2020)



annual living expenses reach \$45,624 for an elderly couple renting, \$57,756 for homeowners with a mortgage, and \$43,344 for homeowners without a mortgage.

While **24% of households aged 65+** have annual incomes exceeding \$100,000, **8.6% of adults in this age group** live below the federal poverty level.⁵⁶

Housing affordability remains a significant challenge for older adults in Connecticut, despite high rates of homeownership. While 77% of older adults own their homes, financial strain is still prevalent: 17% of individuals aged 60+ report stress over paying their rent or mortgage, and 33% spend more than 35% of their income on housing costs.⁵⁷

For those requiring long-term care, the financial burden is even greater. Annual expenses for institutional care continue to rise, increasing by 1.88% to 3.8% annually, further exacerbating economic challenges for older adults and their families.⁵⁸

Care Needs

Connecticut's aging population also has a growing need for long-term care services. As of September 2023, approximately 19,599 individuals were residing in nursing homes across the state. The average annual cost of nursing home care is \$179,300, which translates to a daily rate of \$491. These rising costs place significant financial strain on families and care partners, many of whom already face challenges in managing caregiving responsibilities.

Health and Equity

Older adults in Connecticut also face a range of health challenges and equity barriers. Among residents aged 65 and older, 4.7% report experiencing cognitive difficulties, 2.4% report challenges with self-care, and 5.3% report difficulties with independent living.⁵⁹

There have been efforts to address these challenges with increasing focus on equity. Programs aimed at underserved populations, including LGBTQ+ older adults who make up 2.5% of the 65+ population, are working to close gaps in access to care and resources.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ 2023 Senior Report State Summaries

⁵⁷ 2023 Senior Report State Summaries

⁵⁸ Kaiser Permanente: Caring for an Aging Nation

⁵⁹ The American Community Survey 2020 5-year data

⁶⁰ See, Connecticut Healthy Aging Data Report 2021. https://healthyagingdatareports.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CT-Healthy-Aging-Report-2020_final.pdf



Women's Sub-Commission

The Women's Sub-Commission achieved significant milestones this year, addressing critical issues affecting women in Connecticut and fostering collaboration among experts, policymakers, and community leaders. Through impactful programming and data-driven insights, the Sub-Commission continued its mission to improve equity and empower women statewide.

A key accomplishment was the panel discussion on **Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C)**, which highlighted the prevalence of this practice in the U.S. and the need for comprehensive state legislation to eliminate it. Featuring survivors and national experts, this event shed light on the issue's complexities and underscored the importance of legal protections for women and girls.

The Sub-Commission also partnered with Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz and CT Paid Leave to celebrate **International Women's Day** under the theme "Inspiring Inclusion." This event highlighted advancements in paid leave policies and their transformative impact on women and families throughout Connecticut.

During **Women's History Month**, "Girl Scouts in Government Day" inspired the next generation of leaders by connecting young women with female legislators and introducing them to state government operations. The event emphasized the importance of civic engagement and leadership development.

In October, the Sub-Commission organized a day-long discussion on **reproductive health care on college campuses**, involving students, healthcare providers, policymakers, and experts. Supported by UConn's InCHIP, this convening fostered collaboration to address reproductive health challenges, improve healthcare access, and promote education for young adults across Connecticut.

The Sub-Commission's work also extended to analyzing women's demographics, economic participation, health outcomes, and housing stability, identifying disparities that require legislative attention. These insights provide a foundation for policy development to address systemic inequities and improve the lives of women across the state.

This year's accomplishments demonstrate the Sub-Commission's commitment to addressing critical issues, fostering informed dialogue, and ensuring all women in Connecticut have the opportunity to thrive. Looking ahead, the Sub-Commission will continue working with experts and leaders to advance policies that support and empower women at every stage of life.



January 25, 2024 a moderated panel discussion to provide information and resources about female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) in the United States and the need for comprehensive state laws to end the practice. The conversation was moderated by Hon. Jillian Gilchrest, State Representative, Steven Hernández, Esq. Executive Director of

CWCSEO. The speakers were; Zehra Patwa FGMC Advocate/Survivor, Mariya Taher, Sahiyo, Simenesh Comollo, DV Advocate, FGM/C Survivor, Jill Thompson, Equality Now and Caitlin LeMay, US End FGM/C Network.

CWCSEO, Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz, and CT Paid Leave united to honor International Women's Day at the Connecticut Legislature under the banner of 'Inspiring Inclusion.' Chaired by Lt. Governor Bysiewicz, in her role as the head of the Governor's Council on Women and Girls, and joined by dedicated CT Paid Leave advocates, State Representative Robyn Porter, and CWCSEO members, the panel discussion underscored the significant progress made in advancing CT Paid Leave, heralding a new era of empowerment for women and families throughout the state.



During Women's History Month, we hosted "Girl Scouts in Government Day" at the State Capitol. Connecticut Girl Scout delegates began their experience with a tour of the State Capitol and the Legislative Office Building. They then attended a panel discussion featuring women from the Commission and female legislators, who shared insights into state government and the legislative process. Each delegate received citations in recognition of their engagement in the democratic governing process and their commitment to building a strong future for Girl Scouting in Connecticut and beyond.

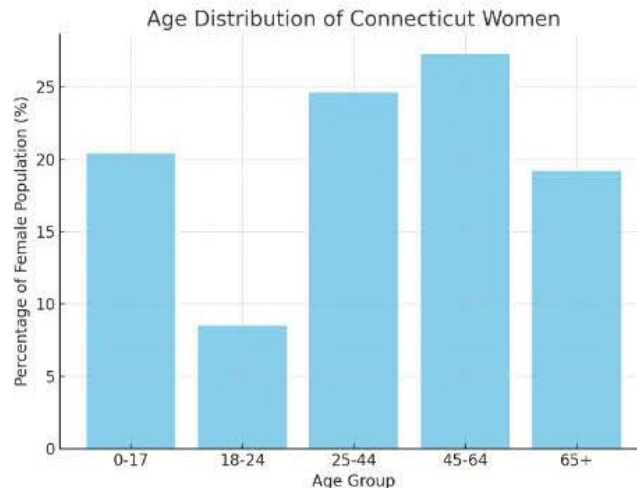
On October 2, 2024 we held a day-long convening of collaboration and learning around reproductive health care on our college campuses with students around the state, medical personnel, staff, administrators, elected officials, policy experts, and campus and community advocates. Also, CME credits were offered to



medical providers, healthcare providers who work in school/college/university health centers and it was supported by a foundational grant from UConn’s Institute for Collaboration on Health, Intervention, and Policy (InCHIP).

Women’s Population Demographics and Growth Trends Statistics

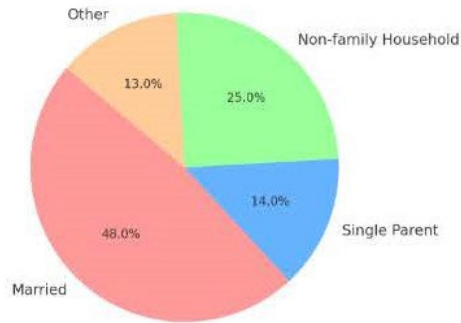
1. **Population Growth:** Connecticut's total population is around 3.6 million, with women slightly outnumbering men at 51% of the population. Women in Connecticut have seen relatively stable population growth.
2. **Age Distribution:** The female population has a higher median age (42.2 years) than males, with a substantial portion over 65. Among women, 18-64-year-olds make up the majority, while 736,000 people in the state are under 18. Connecticut’s older demographic (65+) continues to grow, reflecting national trends of an aging population.
3. **Family Composition:** Women in the state are more likely to be single parents than men, and a significant number of women-headed households experience economic instability. The average household size is about 2.48, with married households comprising a large share, followed by single, non-family female households.



Age Distribution: A bar chart illustrating the percentage of women across different age groups, showing a balanced spread with notable concentrations in the 45-64 and 25-44 age groups.



Family Composition of Connecticut Women



Family Composition: A pie chart highlighting family structures, where married households represent the largest share, followed by non-family households and single-parent households.

Sources include:

- **U.S. Census Bureau:** Provides detailed population estimates, age distribution, and family composition data for Connecticut.
- **Connecticut Data Collaborative (CTData):** A valuable resource for Connecticut-specific demographic data, including age, household, and family statistics.
- **Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) and City Population:** Both offer Connecticut population data and demographic breakdowns that inform recent trends in family composition and age distribution.

Women’s Economic and Employment Statistics

Recent data on Connecticut women's economic and employment metrics reveal insights into income levels, workforce participation, industry representation, and disparities. In Connecticut, women continue to make notable contributions across various industries, yet disparities persist, especially among women of color.

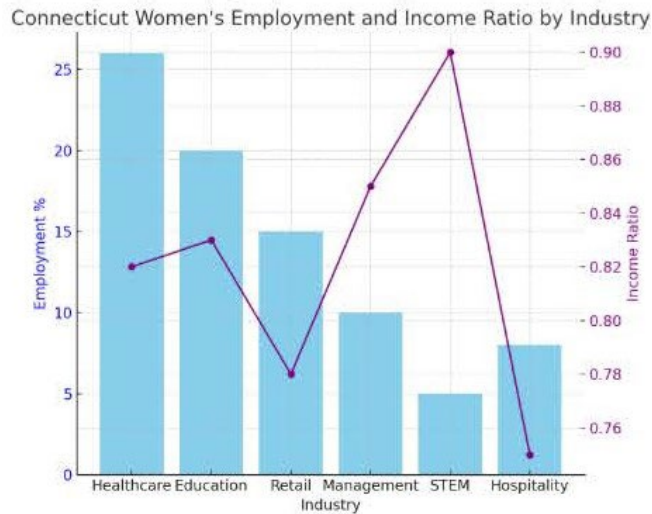
1. **Employment and Earnings:** Connecticut ranks high in female employment, with steady labor force participation; however, there are substantial income gaps. In 2021, Connecticut women earned around 82% of what men earned in similar roles, and women of color often earn even less. Women in management roles have relatively higher median incomes, yet fewer than 5% of women in Connecticut work in STEM fields, which offer the highest pay on average.
2. **Industry Representation:** Many Connecticut women work in education, healthcare, and retail, sectors that are slower to recover from pandemic disruptions. Employment in hospitality and retail, which employs a significant number of women, is down post-pandemic, especially for women without college degrees, who face more barriers to reentry into the workforce. Additionally, Connecticut’s high cost of living has made it challenging for women to achieve economic self-sufficiency, particularly single mothers.
3. **Women-Owned Businesses:** In 2017, Connecticut had over 113,000 women-owned businesses, contributing \$16.4 billion to the state’s economy. However, women-owned businesses are



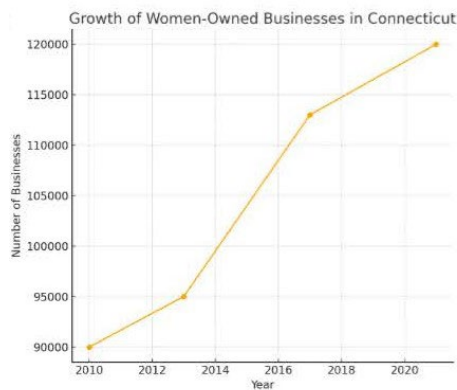
predominantly in lower-paying sectors like retail and food services, while fields with higher revenue potential (like STEM) have fewer female entrepreneurs.

These findings indicate progress but highlight areas where support, such as affordable childcare and equitable wages, could further improve economic outcomes for Connecticut's women, particularly for those in marginalized groups.

Here are two graphs illustrating Connecticut women's economic and employment statistics:



Employment and Income Ratio by Industry: This bar and line chart shows women's employment percentage by industry and their income ratio compared to men. Women are highly represented in healthcare and education, but STEM fields show a smaller share, although with a relatively higher income ratio.



Growth of Women-Owned Businesses: This line chart tracks the increase in women-owned businesses in Connecticut over time, showing steady growth and economic contributions from female entrepreneurs.



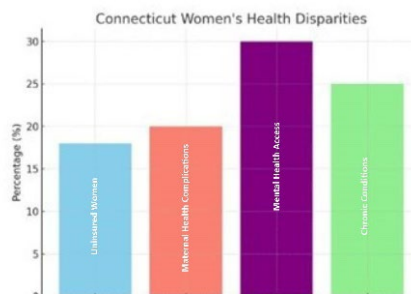
Sources include:

- **U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS):** These agencies provide data on industry representation, employment rates, and income disparities between men and women.
- **Connecticut Women's and Girls Data Platform:** This offers specific state-level data on employment, education, and economic contributions of women in Connecticut.
- **Center for American Progress (CAP) and the Connecticut Data Collaborative:** These sources offer analysis on economic disparities, trends in women's labor force participation, and the impact of factors like caregiving on employment.

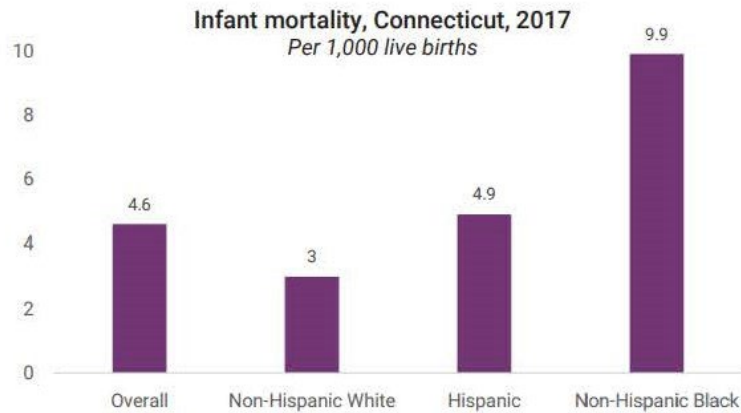
Women's Health and Well-Being Statistics

Recent data on Connecticut women's health and well-being highlights several critical trends, particularly in healthcare access, mental health, and disparities that affect various demographic groups. According to the 2023 Health Equity report from DataHaven and the Connecticut Health Foundation, access to healthcare remains uneven, with specific challenges in areas such as mental health, maternal health, and chronic disease prevalence.

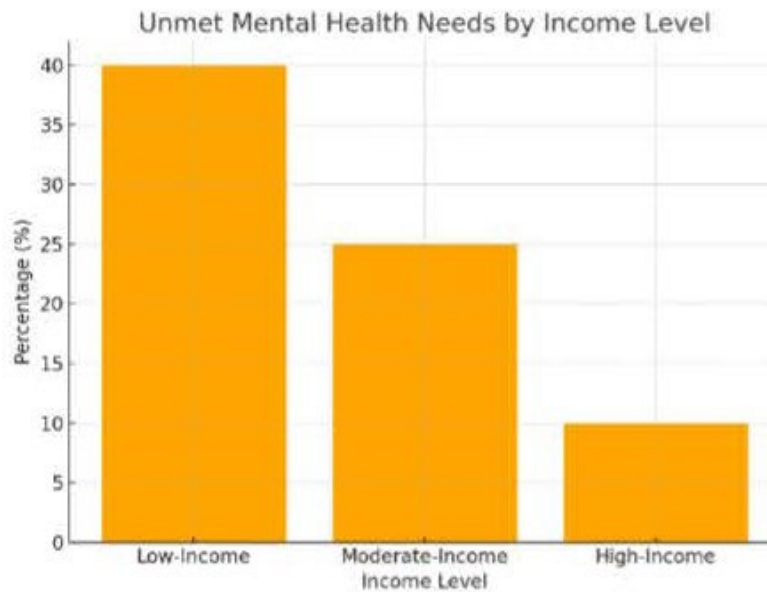
1. **Access to Healthcare:** The rate of women's access to primary and specialized care shows notable disparities by income and race. Low-income adults are significantly more likely to report chronic depression, with low-income women five times more likely to experience this compared to higher-income counterparts. Barriers to accessing healthcare services, including mental health services, are prominent among Black and Hispanic communities. Notably, 15-20% of Black adults and low-income adults report experiencing discrimination in healthcare settings.
2. **Health Outcomes and Mortality:** For Black women in Connecticut, health disparities are particularly severe, with infant mortality rates over three times higher than for white infants, and fetal mortality rates more than twice as high. Additionally, firearm mortality is disproportionately high among young Black men, indirectly impacting communities and families.
3. **Mental Health Services:** A concerning trend in mental health includes the increased incidence of depression, especially among young adults and low-income populations. This population's heightened mental health needs are often unmet, exacerbating health disparities.



Health Disparities: This chart shows approximate rates of uninsured women, maternal health complications, issues in accessing mental health services, and the prevalence of chronic conditions.



Infant Mortality: Black babies born to Black women in Connecticut are significantly more likely to die before their first birthday than babies born to white women. Black babies are twice as likely as white babies to be born weighing less than 5½ pounds, which can put them at higher risk for serious health and developmental consequences.



Unmet Mental Health Needs by Income Level: This chart highlights the variation in unmet mental health needs across income levels, with low-income women experiencing significantly higher rates of unmet needs compared to higher-income groups.

Sources include:

- **DataHaven's 2023 Health Equity Report:** This report offers detailed insights into healthcare access, health outcomes, and disparities within Connecticut, focusing on issues like uninsured rates,



maternal health complications, and chronic conditions. The report uses data from statewide surveys and mortality records, analyzing disparities across income and racial demographics.

- **Connecticut Department of Public Health:** Fact sheet on the Health Disparities in Connecticut: Infant & Maternal Health.
- **Connecticut Health Foundation Reports:** These reports focus on health equity, particularly highlighting the challenges that low-income women and women of color face in accessing mental health services and managing chronic health conditions. The foundation's research emphasizes the barriers to equitable healthcare and documents cases of discrimination in healthcare settings.
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and U.S. Census Bureau:** Broader statistics on income-related health disparities and access to mental health services also inform the trends reflected in these visualizations, providing context on national health disparities that mirror Connecticut's state-level challenges.

Women's Housing and Community Trends Statistics

For women in Connecticut, housing and community trends show significant disparities, particularly in poverty, housing stability, and employment. Here are some key points:

1. **Poverty Rates:** About **12%** of Connecticut women live below the poverty line, with single mothers and women of color disproportionately affected. Female-headed households without a spouse are more likely to receive food assistance, especially those with children.
2. **Housing Tenure:** Homeownership among women in Connecticut is lower than that among men. Approximately **32%** of women are homeowners, while **55%** of men own their homes. Women, particularly women of color, face challenges with housing affordability and stability, as rental costs remain high across the state.
3. **Economic Participation and Wages:** Connecticut women experience a larger gender wage gap than the national average, which affects their ability to afford housing independently. Full-time female workers earn **14%** less than male workers, impacting housing affordability, especially in urban areas.

Sources include:

- Connecticut Women & Girls Data Platform
- American Community Survey (ACS)
- U.S. Census Bureau



Parent Leadership and Family Engagement

Parent leadership plays a vital role in strengthening democracy by ensuring active participation in civic life and policy development. Through programs like the Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI), the Connecticut Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, and Opportunity (CWCSEO) equips parents with the skills to advocate effectively for their children and communities.

CWCSEO's initiatives, including PLTI's evidence-based curriculum and collaboration with the 2Gen Advisory Board, amplify parent voices in decision-making spaces. These programs align with core democratic values—ensuring representation, inclusivity, and equity across Connecticut.

As we continue to foster parent leadership, additional investments in funding and truth-telling are essential. Budgets must reflect the value of civic engagement, enabling parent leaders to drive meaningful change in schools, government, and beyond. Together, we can build a healthier democracy where all voices are heard and valued.

The Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) and Children's Leadership Training Institute (CLTI)

In 1992, the Commission on Children (now CWCSEO) launched the Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) as a statewide family civics initiative focused on prevention and capacity building. PLTI, the premier leadership training initiative for parents and other adults in Connecticut, enables participants to become skilled change agents for children's well-being. During the 20-week leadership initiative, participants will:

- Explore and understand lived experiences.
- Enrich their leadership skills—public speaking, consensus building, problem analysis, etc.
- Interact with public policy, laws, and budgets to understand these decision-making processes.
- Practice how to engage with systems to impact outcomes through a Community Civic Project.

The Children's Leadership Training Institute (CLTI) is a parallel course to the Parent Leadership Training Institute. CLTI is:

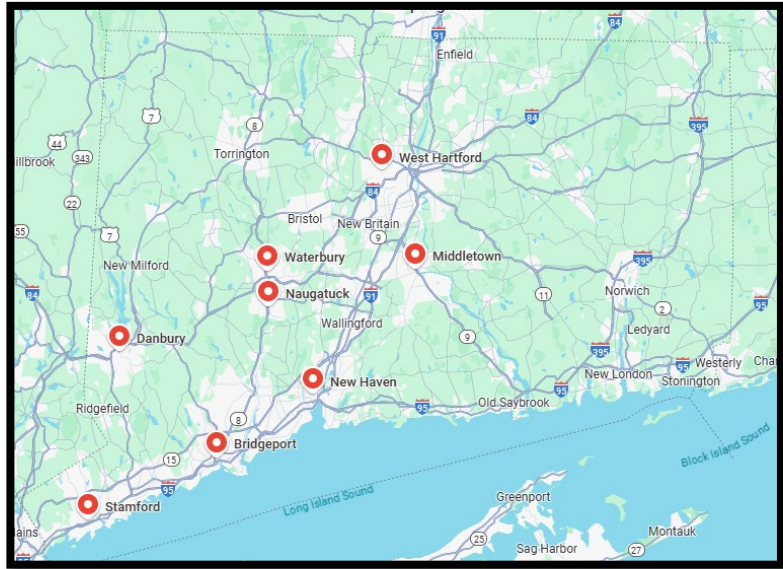
- An age appropriate, literacy-based curriculum that mirrors the themes of the Parent Leadership Training Institute.
- A multigenerational approach to civics.
- To educate and excite children about their participation in civic life as school and community leaders.

In 2024, Sponsoring Organizations at the following 8 communities supported PLTI, with 4 communities also supporting CLTI*.

- **Bridgeport**—Catalyst CT*



- **Danbury**—Families Network of Western CT*
- **Middletown**—Middletown Public Schools
- **Naugatuck**—CT Partnership for Children, Inc*
- **New Haven**—United Way of Greater New Haven, Workforce Alliance
- **Stamford**—Stamford Public Education Foundation*
- **Waterbury**—The Leadership Inc, Bridge to Success, and Rivera Memorial Foundation
- **West Hartford**—The Bridge Family Center

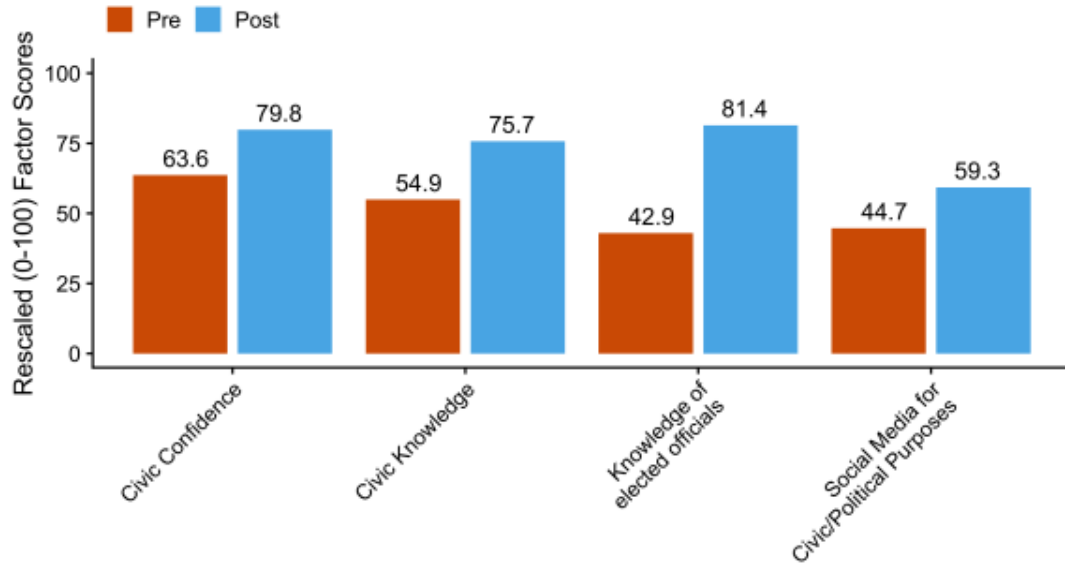


PLTI is evidence-based, and session evaluations are done by participants on a weekly basis for continued improvement. Additionally, parents complete a pre- and post-survey conducted by The Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools at New York University to measure and assess how the initiative has impacted parents' civic skills, knowledge, community engagement, and overall experience with PLTI. While PLTI is a family civics initiative, participants took action in various aspects of their personal lives for improved outcomes. The following data shows the impact and outcomes of the 2024 cohorts which is collected via pre/post surveys as reported by our third-party evaluator NYU Metro Center.



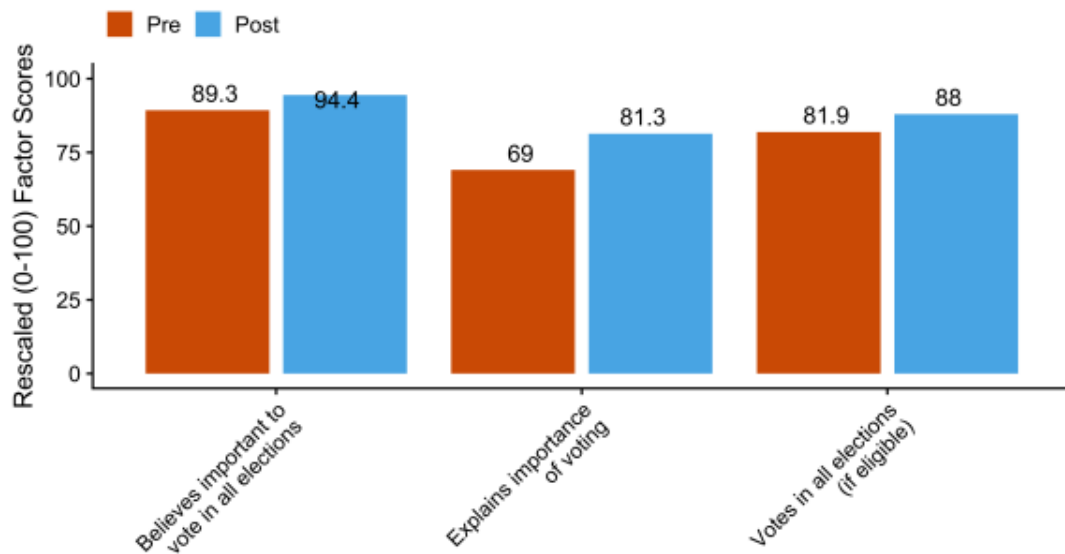
Results: Civic Outcomes (n=106)

The graph below shows the pre and post score for each construct. Original scores have been weighted and converted to 0-100 for easier interpretation and comparison between constructs.



Parents showed growth in 4 of the 4 civic outcome areas.

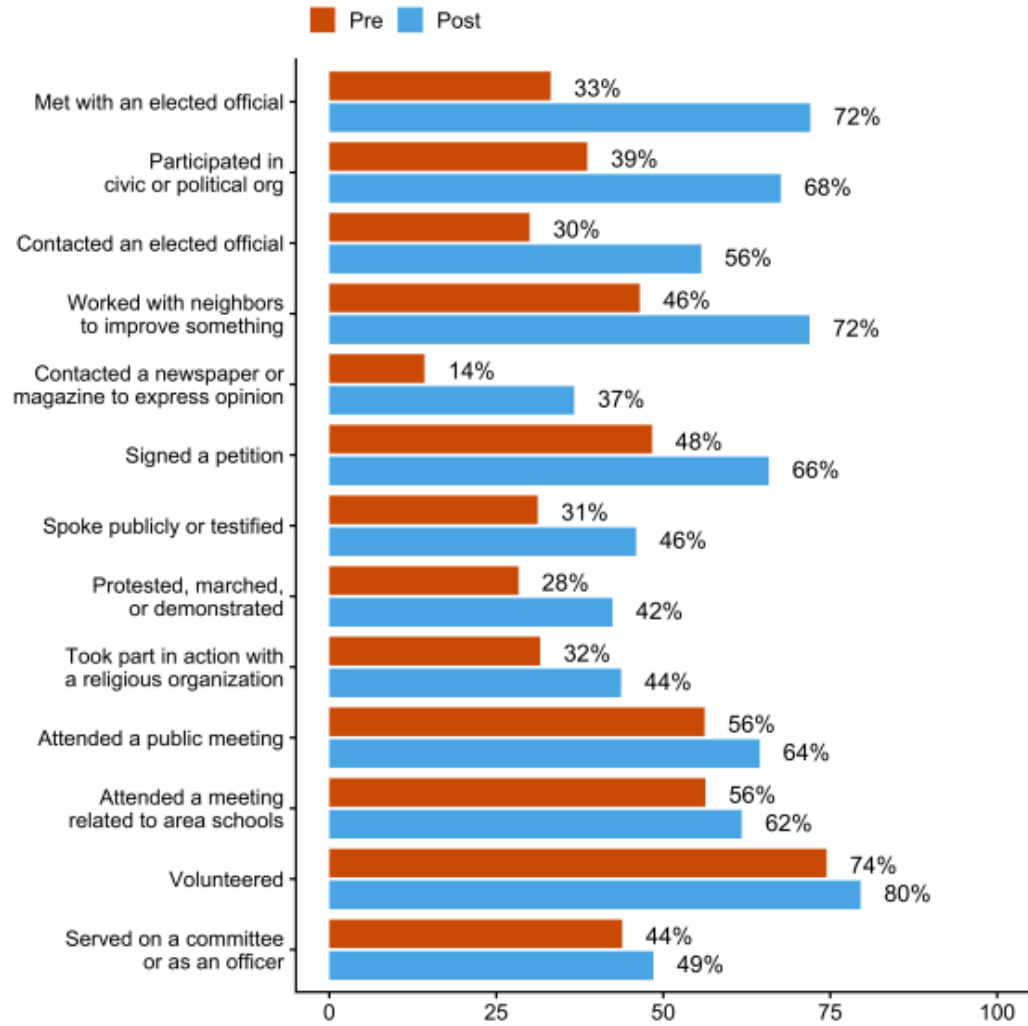
Voting Attitudes and Behaviors





Changes from Pre-Post on Civic Action Questions

*Actions are shown in order from largest amount of change to least amount of change.

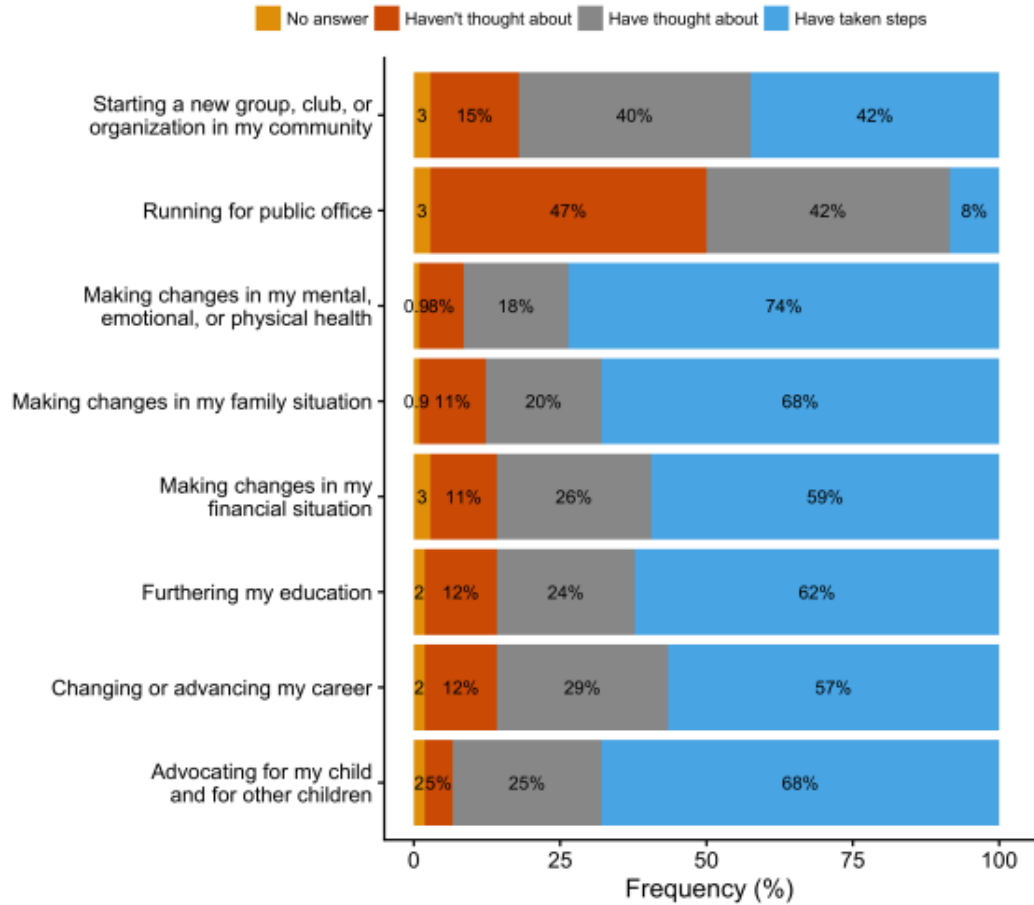


There was an increase in the percentage of parents who engaged in 13 of the 13 civic behaviors over the past 12 months.



Personal and Civic Action

The overwhelming majority of parents reported that PLTI inspired them to think about or take steps to change their personal and civic lives.



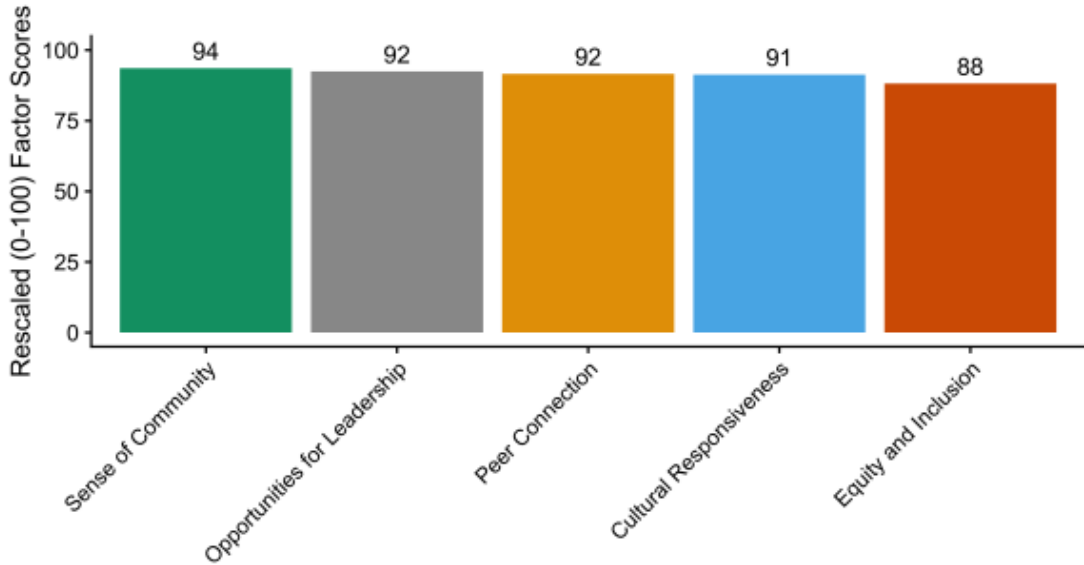


Results: PLTI Experiences (n=106)

This graph shows how PLTI participants felt about the sense of community, opportunities for leadership, peer connection, cultural responsiveness, and diversity and inclusion within the program.

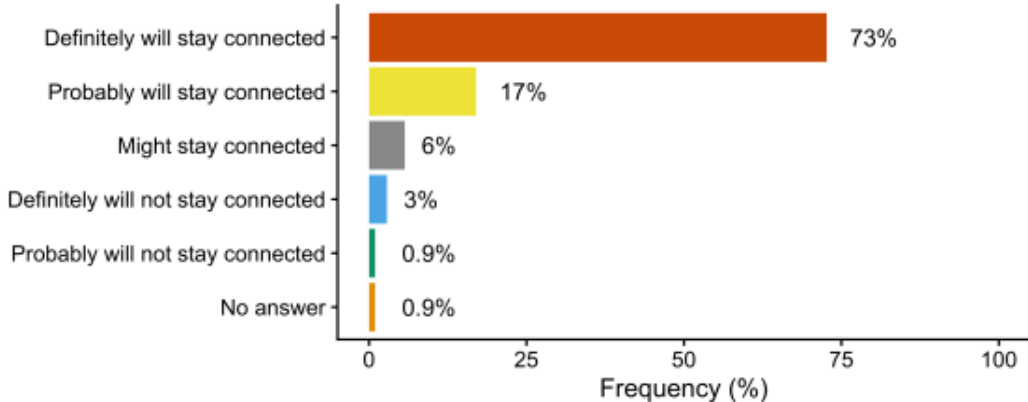
Original scores have been converted to 0-100 for easier interpretation and comparison between constructs. Overall, scores of show that parents experienced a strong sense of community; developed

strong connection and trust with peers; had opportunities to become a leader; and believed that the initiative was culturally responsive and honored diversity and inclusion.



Staying Connected with Parent Leaders and Staff

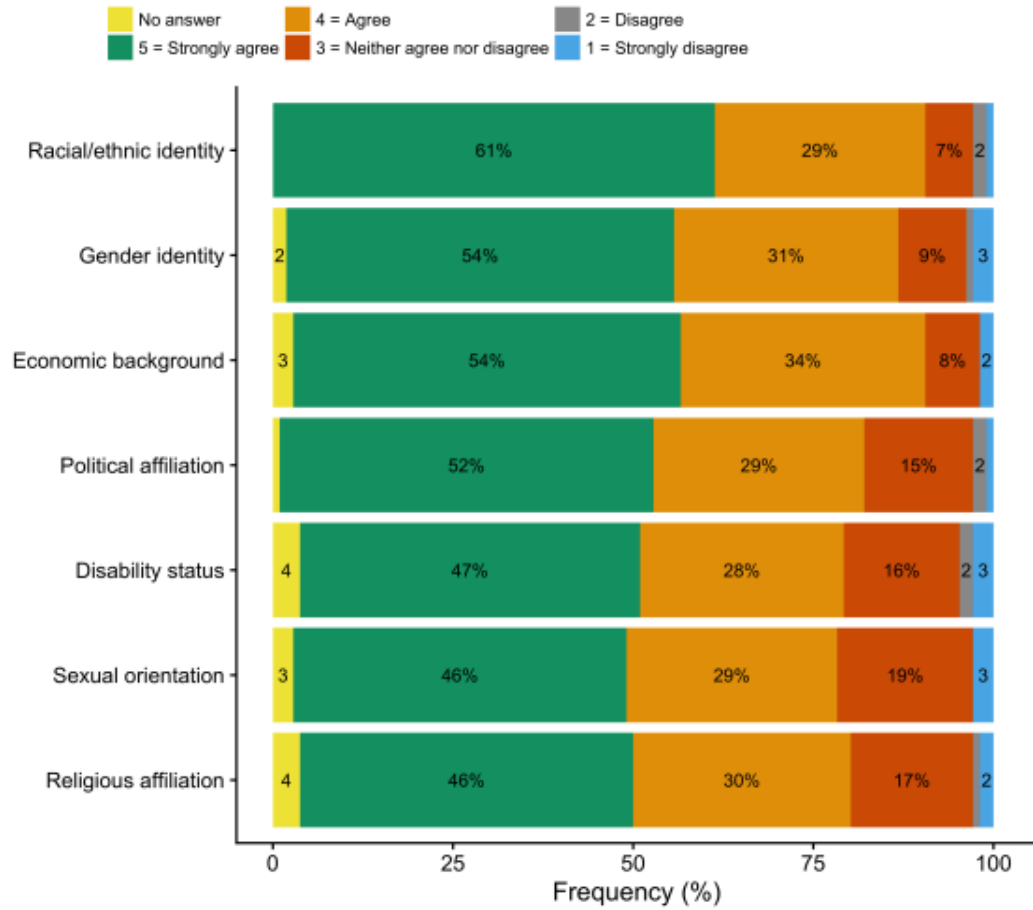
Parents were asked how likely they were to stay connected with parent leaders and staff from this program/initiative.





Inclusive Environment

Parents were asked how much they agree that PLTI provided an inclusive environment for the following identities.





2024 Statewide PLTI Graduation at the Legislative Office Building

On Monday, June 17, 2024, members of the PLTI Class of 2024 were honored at the Legislative Office Building. Site Coordinators, Facilitators, family and community members were in attendance to celebrate the graduating class, and heard from Keynote Speaker, Connecticut Secretary of the State Stephanie Thomas, and class speakers from each community who were selected by their peers.

National PLTI Training, Hartford, CT

National PLTI Training, held in partnership with National Parent Leadership Institute (NPLI) was held in Hartford, CT from August 7-11, 2024. 26 prospective Site Coordinators, PLTI Facilitators, and CLTI Facilitators from Connecticut joined others from across the nation to gain the skills and knowledge needed to engage and support learners and sites implementing PLTI.





Parent Leadership for a Healthy Democracy

By Melvette Hill, June 26, 2024

This article, originally published in the Hartford Times on June 26, 2024, by Melvette Hill, highlights the importance of parent leadership in fostering a healthy democracy.

In the midst of a global pandemic that has nearly affected every single person on the planet, health is something that is top of mind. We should not miss this opportunity to see health as only a state of being free from illness, we also need to examine health through the lens of democracy.

My colleagues and I were brainstorming on a new tag line that would embrace the story of our collective work and efforts to elevate the field of parent leadership in cities and towns, when my colleague Zulema had the most brilliant phrase that embodied our hopes and dreams for parents and their children – *Parent Leadership for a Healthy Democracy*.

Civically engaged parents leading for and on behalf of their children bring about the change — the much-needed change in Connecticut and through every neighborhood in the Capitol region. “Change” in this context is such a big word with enormous depth and complexity. Change may look like inclusive curriculum, community school models that support the whole child/student, open choice that has inclusive equitable transportation and scheduling, true language justice throughout our cities and state government systems that support all residents, housing equity, economic mobility and stability or something as simple as adding a stop sign on your block – the list goes on and on.

As we consider the complexity of change, oftentimes, key stakeholders are left out of the re-imagining or re-visioning. Often those voices are the voices of parents, whose voices should be valued and esteemed as key stakeholders in almost every system. Research tells us that engaged parents positively impact their schools and communities. Parents are not always given opportunity and access to the tables and environments where they can share their insights, opinions and lived experiences. And quite frankly, some parents don’t believe that their voices will be heard once there.

Almost 30 years ago, Elaine Zimmerman, Executive Director of the once existing Commission on Children, surveyed parents and hosted community discussions to better understand why parents were not engaged. Even though parents had good ideas and solutions, the number one response she received was, “but I’m just a parent.” Parents felt ill equipped to engage – not knowing how systems worked or how to communicate and partner with others effectively to be change agents.

In 1992, the Parent Leadership Training Institute was created. The Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) is a family civics initiative of the current CT Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity (CWCSEO). It is a 20-week evidence-based curriculum that facilitates a process whereby participants explore personal leadership and the tools of engaging in our democracy; by empowering parents with leadership and civic skills, community health is promoted through personal efficacy.

The 2021 evaluation of Connecticut PLTI conducted by Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools at NYU, indicated Parents showed growth in all four of the civic outcome areas measured: civic confidence, civic knowledge, knowledge of elected officials and use of social media for civic/political purposes.



Parent leadership is the capacity for parents to interact within society with purpose and positive outcomes for children. How does parent leadership encourage a healthy democracy? In a lecture titled “What is Democracy”? Larry Diamond (2004) gave an overview of what in his opinion is [a healthy] democracy. He describes four key elements of democracy: 1) A system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections; 2) Active participation of the people, as citizens, in politics and civic life; 3) Protection of the human rights of all citizens; and 4) A rule of law in which the laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens.

The field of Parent Leadership especially emphasizes number two: active participation of the people, as citizens, in politics, and civic life. The caveat here is that in parent leadership, no one is excluded – there is no citizenship requirement to engage in democratic process or practices. Parent Leadership initiatives like PLTI support and inspire parents to become change agents for their children and community with applied learning.

Connecticut is making strides in elevating the voices of parents and creating leadership opportunities for them within state government and agencies – but we need more of this in order to have healthy democratic processes in the State and the Capitol Region. There are bright spots though. Connecticut has a statewide, bipartisan 2Gen Advisory Board. It convenes members of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, as well as private sector partners and parents to collaborate across to drive down costs and promote economic success and stability for families. 25% of the 2Gen Advisory Board is comprised of parents. Big win!

Under the leadership of Commissioner Beth Bye, the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) recently created the OEC Parent Cabinet to engage parents as partners in decision-making and improve internal policies, programs and practices. Additionally, the Governor’s Workforce Council (GWC) has invited parents to be part of the existing sub-committees bringing their lived experience as those engaged in workforce development programs or seeking employment/training.

Finally, the CT State Department of Education, no newcomer to the party, has for many years worked to transform parent engagement and leadership through their Friday Cafés, The Commissioner’s Roundtable, their collaborative work with the CT Family and School Partnership (CFSP) Council and their nationally recognized framework for Full, Equal and Equitable Partnerships with Families. Commissioner Charlene Russell-Tucker continues to see the value parent leadership and continually seeks to support it. There are other initiatives and programs that support parent voice and leadership. However, while these all seem exciting opportunities for engagement, they only scratched the surface of what is needed.

To further support parent leadership for a healthy democracy in Hartford and beyond, two scarce commodities must be present – truth telling and funding. Funding may be the easier of the two. Municipal leaders must genuinely want to add more seats to the table for parent voices and they must be receptive to truth telling. They must be good listeners and receive truths from families that might be hard to digest. A seat at the table requires an invitation, a welcoming environment, and action. Second, school and community leaders as well as elected officials must join efforts to secure funding to implement parent leadership initiatives that encourage parent leaders to impact their community through civic projects and advocacy.

Budgets are a key indicator of what is important to organizations, school districts, and government entities. Budgets speak to what’s important and what is not. In order to get to the heart of a healthy democracy, civic



budgets need to reflect their intention to ensure true representative practice, allowing the voice of the people to be their guide.

A healthy democracy truly requires us to say less and do more. I encourage your best thinking on how these words lead to action in creating a healthy democracy where parent leadership is a strong foundational pillar.”



Food and Nutrition

During the 2024 Legislative Session, a number of Food and Nutrition Bills were introduced to the Legislature:

- **Government Nutrition Programs:** HB 5003, enacted as [PA 24-82](#) establishes a number of requirements for the Departments of Social Services, Public Health, and Agriculture to make it easier for individuals to learn about, enroll in, and meet the requirements of participation in nutrition program such as SNAP, WIC, and the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). These include:
 - Developing a plan to streamline cross-enrollment of children receiving HUSKY A in WIC, SNAP, and the WIC FMNP
 - Creating fact sheets on these programs, their eligibility requirements, and how to apply
 - Permitting participation in SNAP-Ed programs to count towards WIC's nutrition education requirement whenever federally permissible.
 - Purchasing and making available equipment to farmers markets to allow them to accept SNAP and WIC payments
 - Developing an interagency plan to create a common application for the programs listed above and increase automatic enrollment
 - Staggering the distribution of SNAP benefits by March 2026
- **Strengthening the Elderly Nutrition Program:** SB 396, enacted as [PA 24-99](#) implements a number of recommendations made by task force for the elderly nutrition program designed to sustain the program and maximize its effects. These changes include:
 - Requiring the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) to, within available appropriations, make additional payments to Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) within 30 days of receiving notification from the AAA that it has spent at least half of its contracted funds.
 - Requiring ADS to report to the Aging and Human Services Committees by July of 2025 on the feasibility of making similar payments when an AAA has spent 25% of its contracted funds
 - Requiring local AAAs to develop a continuity of effort plan to minimize disruptions to services and submit those plans to ADS by January 2025
 - Requiring ADS, in consultation with local AAAs, to develop a plan to streamline the contracting process, compliance and reporting, and eligibility and assessment forms.
 - Requiring DSS to inform ADS or a local AAA upon request whether an elderly nutrition program participant is receiving SNAP benefits.
 - Requiring DSS and ADS to develop and submit a plan to maximize SNAP benefits to support the elderly nutrition program



- **School Meals:** [PA 24-81](#), makes the state responsible for the local and regional boards of education's portion of the costs of reduced price school breakfasts and lunches for FY25.

2024 Community Engagement:

On November 15th, 2024, the Commission hosted a Food Insecurity Forum at the State Capitol and Legislative Office Building (LOB). The event brought together food organizations and community members from across the state to share their insights on the state of food insecurity in Connecticut, key challenges contributing to food insecurity, as well as promising solutions. The event centered community perspectives on these topics ahead of the release of the Commission's report on food insecurity in Connecticut.



Data:

1. Statewide Food Insecurity Rates:
 - a. [Feeding America](#) (2022): **12.9%**
 - b. [DataHaven](#) (2022): **17%**
 - c. [US Department of Agriculture](#) (USDA) (2021-2023 average): **10.4%**
2. [USDA Low-Income, Low-Access Census Tracts in Connecticut](#) (formerly known as "food deserts") (last updated 2019)
 - a. "Significant number/share of residents" live more than 1 mile from a supermarket in urban areas/10 miles in rural areas: **65**
 - b. "Significant number/share of residents" live more than 0.5 miles from a supermarket in urban areas/10 miles in rural areas: **207**



Commission Legislative Wrap-Up Report

- **School Climate:**
 - The children’s subcommission worked closely with the Education Committee to develop the following legislative proposals during the 2024 General Session.
 - § 16 [Public Act No. 24-45](#), amends [CT Gen Stat § 10-222q](#). This new law requires the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative (SEL Collaborative) to develop:
 - school climate survey standards, including, but not limited to, standards for the collection of data on diversity, equity, and inclusion and for the reduction in disparities in data collection between school districts; and
 - develop a model school climate improvement plan.
 - § 18 modifies the definition of school climate survey in subdivision (12) of section 10-222aa. This change amends the definition of school climate survey by:
 - ensuring that all surveys meet the standards developed by the Collaborative; and requires the SEL Collaborative to create a state-wide school climate survey that districts may adopt.
- **Suspensions and Expulsions:**
 - § 14 of Public Act No. 24-45 determines that an out of school suspension is appropriate for such pupil-based behavior that causes physical harm, requires that such pupil receives serves that are trauma-informed and developmentally appropriate and align with any behavioral intervention plan, considers whether to convene a planning and placement team meeting for the purposes of conducting an evaluation to determine whether a student may require special education or related services.
 - Importantly, an out-of-school suspension imposed under this cannot exceed ten school days for grades 3-12, and an out-of-school suspension for grades k-2 cannot exceed five school days.
- **Community-Based Bereavement and Grief Counseling:**
 - § 29 of Public Act No. 24-45 establishes a task force to develop recommendations for the creation and administration of a state-wide program for the delivery of bereavement and grief counseling services to children and families at no cost to participants.
 - The Commission will serve as the administrative staff for this task force.
- **Government Nutrition Programs:** HB 5003, enacted as [PA 24-82](#) establishes a number of requirements for the Departments of Social Services, Public Health, and Agriculture to make it easier for individuals to learn about, enroll in, and meet the requirements of participation in nutrition program such as SNAP, WIC, and the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). These include:



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 - Requiring DSS to inform ADS or a local AAA upon request whether an elderly nutrition program participant is receiving SNAP benefits.
 - Requiring DSS and ADS to develop and submit a plan to maximize SNAP benefits to support the elderly nutrition program
- **School Meals:** Section 242 of HB 5523, enacted as [PA 24-81](#), makes the state responsible for the local and regional boards of educations' portion of the costs of reduced price school breakfasts and lunches for FY25.
- **Equal Access & Opportunity in Education:**
 - The Children's Sub-commission helped advise the New Teacher Track Coalition on best practices and policies that would make it easier for prospective teachers to enter the profession.



- [Public Act No. 24-41](#) makes changes to the teacher certification processes and simplifies how applicants qualify for an initial educator certification and reduced the number of teacher certification levels from three to two.
- **Funding for Children’s Sub-commission Priorities:**
 - \$ 121 of [Public Act No. 24-81](#) allocates the \$150 million to the education cost share formula, charter schools and magnet grants.
 - Public Act No. 24-81 allocated \$8,600,000 to mobile crisis intervention services.
 - Public Act No. 24-81 allocated \$7,00,000 to urgent crisis centers.
 - Public Act No. 24-81 allocated \$3,500,000 to homeless services through the Department of Housing.
 - Public Act No. 24-81 allocated \$18,800,000 to Care4Kids.

Housing Crisis – Shortages, Lack of Affordability, and Evictions

The proposed **S.B. 6** aimed to address Connecticut’s housing affordability crisis by promoting the creation of affordable housing through a "Housing Growth Fund" managed by the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). This bill proposed financial incentives for municipalities to encourage housing development, along with tax credits, breaks for housing construction, and expansions in housing authorities' jurisdiction. It also allocated funds for homelessness prevention programs. Despite testimony in favor of **S.B. 6**, the bill died in the Senate on March 25th.

Concentrated Poverty – 10-Year Plan to Eradicate Poverty (S.B. 456)

S.B. 456 proposed reducing concentrated poverty in census tracts where at least 30% of residents lived below the poverty line by mandating a tailored ten-year plan for poverty reduction. The bill sought to establish an Office of Neighborhood Investment and Community Engagement within DECD. While **S.B. 456** did not pass, some initiatives were continued through **HB 5524**, which created a pilot program and established an office to develop similar plans. CWCSEO highlighted in our testimony the urgent need to address systemic disadvantages and racial disparities in these areas.

S.B. 456 died in committee but it was eventually adopted via a Bond bill **HB 5524** §§ 118-123, effective upon passage.

S.B. 416 – Conversion of Commercial Property for Residential Use

S.B. 416 aimed to help Connecticut communities convert vacant commercial properties into residential spaces by reducing bureaucratic barriers. Although this bill died in committee, its provisions were eventually adopted via **HB 5524**, sections 118-123.

Evictions for Cause (S.B. 143)

S.B. 143 sought to strengthen eviction processes by requiring evictions to be for cause, protecting vulnerable tenants from unjust or retaliatory displacement. It also included provisions to exempt owner-occupied properties with 1-4 units. Despite its balanced approach, **S.B. 143** did not move forward and died in committee.



Work, Live, Ride Bill (H.B. 5390)

The **Work, Live, Ride** bill (H.B. 5390) focused on transit-oriented housing development, promoting zoning changes to encourage residential projects near public transportation hubs. While the bill gained support, it also faced opposition from those concerned about its impact on local communities. The bill passed the House but died in the Senate.

Notice of Rent Increases (H.B. 5474)

H.B. 5474, now **Public Act 24-33**, was passed to prohibit rent increases unless landlords provided at least 45 days' written notice. For short-term leases (one month or less), the notice period must match the lease term. This law went into effect on October 1, 2024.

HUSKY for Immigrants

Connecticut expanded HUSKY Health coverage to undocumented children up to age 15 and pregnant women. The Commission advocated for further expansion to include all immigrants under 19, inspired by successes in California and Colorado. A related study by the Office of Health Strategy estimated the expansion would cost \$25.3 million over two years, covering an additional 13,000 youth. However, this proposal did not advance and died in committee.

Green Amendment to the State Constitution (S.J.R. 193)

S.J.R. 193 proposed adding a Green Amendment to the Connecticut Constitution to guarantee residents the right to a clean and sustainable environment. The amendment would have required the government to protect natural resources, with particular focus on marginalized communities affected by environmental degradation. The resolution followed similar actions in New York, Pennsylvania, and other states but did not pass during the session.

Establishing Secondary Traffic Violations (H.B. 5324)

H.B. 5324 aimed to address racial disparities in traffic stops by converting minor traffic infractions into secondary violations, meaning police could not initiate a stop for these issues alone. This proposal emerged from the task force formed under the Police Accountability law. Despite its intent to reduce unnecessary interactions, the bill did not advance.

School Suspensions and Expulsions (H.B. 5437)

H.B. 5437 introduced significant reforms to reduce the length of school suspensions and limit out-of-school suspensions to situations involving physical harm for early grade students. The bill also required trauma-informed services for students returning from suspension and mandated the creation of a school climate survey. These reforms were intended to address the disproportionate impact of suspensions on African American and Latino students. **H.B. 5437** passed as **Public Act 24-45**.

Teacher Certification Reforms (H.B. 5436 / P.A. 24-41)

H.B. 5436, now **Public Act 24-41**, modernized Connecticut's teacher certification process by reducing certification levels and expanding the alternate route to certification (ARC) program. The law eliminated the provisional educator certificate and aimed to diversify and strengthen the teaching workforce. Further



amendments were recommended to phase out outdated certification regulations and ensure accountability in teacher preparation programs.



Appendix

Legislative Report

Sec. 2-128 of the General Statutes states that the Commission duties include focusing its efforts on the following quality of life desired results for women, children and their families, seniors, and members of the African American, Asian Pacific-American and Latino and Puerto Rican populations of the state: That all such persons are healthy, safe and achieve educational success; free from poverty; and free from discrimination.

Further information on these bills can be located on the House & Senate Calendars, House & Senate Lists of Bills, and the CGA Bulletin. The CGA Bulletin is located on the CGA Website under “CGA Daily Records” section. We encourage the public to utilize the bulletin during session to find out more information such as relevant bills, public hearings, and current events.

Below is a summary including the bills influencing our top legislative priorities. As per our mandate, we categorize our priorities into the following four categories: (1) health, (2) educational success, (3) freedom from poverty, (4) freedom from discrimination. Additionally, located below is a CWCSEO event calendar including a list of events the Commission is organizing.

Furthermore, the following are priority items that were funded or created by H.B. No. 5523: An Act Concerning Allocations of Federal American Rescue Plan Act Funds And Provisions Related to General Government, Human Services, Education and The Biennium Ending June 30, 2025. This bill allocates remaining ARPA money for programs and initiatives.

Items Funded by ARPA Bill

Dept of Housing, Homeless Services	FY 25: \$3,500,000
Dept of Pub Health, Printed Materials on Intimate Partner Violence	FY 25: \$60,000
Sec of State, Early Voting	FY 25: \$1,000,000
OEC, Care4Kids	FY 25: \$18,800,000
DCF, Mobile Crisis Intervention Services	FY 25: \$8,600,000
DCF, Children’s Behavioral Health	FY 25: \$10,000,000
DCF, Urgent Crisis Centers	FY 25: \$7,000,000
DSS, Support for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Services	FY 25: \$4,000,000
DSS, Presumptive Eligibility	FY 25: \$500,000
DADS, Establish Deaf Blind Bureau	FY 25: \$200,000



DADS, Alzheimer’s Awareness Program	FY 25: \$150,000
Sec. 15, DSS, behavioral health providers	FY 25: \$7,000,000

Priority Items Implemented by ARPA Bill

Sec. 11, support a study on community-based bereavement and grief counseling services	Up to \$50,000 available June 30, 2024 to June 30, 2025
Sec. 35, two-year pilot for children with autism spectrum disorder	Within available appropriations
Sec. 45, DPH develops educational materials related to health and safety of pregnant and postpartum persons with mental health disorders, educational materials for intimate partner violence toward pregnant and postpartum person’s	No appropriation
Sec. 50, OEC, Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program	\$15,000,000 for FY 26
Sec. 63, establishment of coalition to maximize federal funding for Medicaid-eligible health care services in public schools	No appropriation
Sec. 64, amends qualifications for medical assistance for persons with disabilities.	No appropriation
Sec. 65, created bureau of services for persons who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing within DADS	No appropriation
Sec. 105, allows presumptive eligibility – no more than 90 days	No appropriation
Sec. 106, DPH develops public awareness and educational campaign to promote community-based screening and education for common diseases affecting high risk male populations.	No appropriation
Sec. 108, updates education mandate review advisory council	No appropriation
Sec. 115, changes rate that magnet schools can charge for tuition.	No appropriation
Sec. 121, supplemental funding for ECS, charter schools, magnet schools, open choice and VO-AG Center Grants	\$139,626,522 for FY 25
Sec. 121, supplemental funding for open choice program	\$11,420,343
Sec. 193, Commissioner of Health Strategy establishes a program to expedite the development of the state-wide health information exchange.	No appropriation



Priority bills that passed both chambers

H.B. No. 5523: An Act Concerning Allocations of Federal American Rescue Plan Act Funds And Provisions Related to General Government, Human Services, Education and The Biennium Ending June 30, 2025
H.B. No. 5001: An Act Supporting Connecticut Seniors And the Improvement of Nursing and Home-Based-Care
S.B. No. 1: An Act Concerning Health and Safety of Connecticut Residents
H.B. No. 5005: An Act Expanding Paid Sick Days In the State
H.B. No. 5437: An Act Concerning Mandate Relief
H.B. No 5436: An Act Concerning Educator Certification
S.B. No 154: An Act Concerning Schools
S.B. No. 5: An Act Concerning School Resources
S.B. No. 14: An Act Assisting School Districts In Improving Educational Outcomes
S.B. No. 13: An Act Incentivizing Student Loan Repayment Assistance
H.B. No. 5524: An Act Authorizing And Adjusting Bonds of the State and Concerning Provisions Related to State and Municipal Tax Administration, General Government and School Building Projects
H.B. No. 5382: An Act Concerning The Recommendations of the Office of The Child Advocate
H.B. No 5262: An Act Concerning a Sexual Abuse and Assault Survey
H.B. No. 5367: An Act Concerning Medicaid Coverage of Rapid Whole Genome Sequencing for Critically Ill Infants
H.B. No. 5508: An Act Concerning Recommendations From the Juvenile Justice Police and Oversight Committee
H.B. No. 5369: An Act Concerning a Benefits Cliff Pilot Program
H.B. No. 5308: An Act Concerning Absentee Voting for Certain Patients of Nursing Homes
H.B. No. 5457: An Act Concerning Nursing Homes and Implementing Nursing Home Waiting List Recommendations
S.B. No. 308: An Act Implementing Task Force Recommendations For Wheelchair Repair
H.B. No. 5455: An Act Concerning The Efficiency of the Department of Social Services in Determining Eligibility for Medical Assistance and Responding to Requests for Information or Assistance



S.B. No. 396: An Act Implementing Task Force Recommendations for the Elderly Nutrition Program
S.B. No. 327: An Act Establishing a Task Force To Study The Effects of Hate Speech on Children's Health and Achievement
S.B. No 178: An Act Requiring The Education and Training of Barbers, Hairdressers and Cosmeticians To Include Working With Textured Hair
H.B. No. 5458: An Act Concerning Homelessness
H.B. No. 5369: An Act Concerning a Benefits Cliff Pilot Program
H.B. No. 5003: An Act Concerning Child and Family Nutrition
S.B. No. 218: An Act Establishing Task Forces to Study Bereavement and Grief Counseling Services and Social Isolation and Loneliness

Priority Bills that passed in one chamber

H.B. No. 5261: An Act Prohibiting The Sale of Energy Drinks to Individuals Under Sixteen Years of Age
S.B. No. 191: An Act Concerning Food Scrap Diversion From The Solid Waste Stream and The Redemption of Out-Of-State Beverage Containers
H.B. No. 5317: An Act Requiring a Study Concerning The Funding for and Effectiveness of the Community Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention Program
H.B. No. 5055: An Act Strengthening Police Data Reporting Requirements

Priority Bills that Failed to Receive a Vote

H.B. No. 5454: An Act Concerning Mental Health Services for Young Children and Their Caregivers
H.B. No. 5296: An Act Concerning Family Home Care Oversight and Expanding the Connecticut Home-Care Program for the Elderly
S.B. No. 364: An Act Concerning Supplemental Nutrition Assistance
H.B. No. 5368: An Act Concerning Medicaid Coverage of Diapers
S.B. No. 8: An Act Concerning Drug Affordability
H.B. No 5346: An Act Concerning Early Child Care
H.B. No. 5510: An Act Concerning Funding for Student Meals
S.B. No. 413 An Act Concerning Predictable Scheduling



H.B. No. 5295: An Act Concerning a Study of the Needs of Senior Citizens
S.B. No. 6: An Act Concerning Housing
H.B. No. 5324: An Act Establishing Secondary Traffic Violations
H.B. No. 5161: An Act Concerning Child Sexual Abuse Material



Statutory Committee Requirements

1. America 250 | CT Commission
2. Artificial Intelligence Task Force
3. Child Support Guidelines Commission
4. Civics Education, Civics Engagement, and Media Literacy Task Force
5. Commission for Child Support Guidelines
6. Commission on Racial and Ethnic Disparity in the Criminal Justice System, Commission Member
7. Commission on the Standardization of the Collection of Evidence in Sexual Assault Investigations
8. Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative Domain 5 Committee
9. Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Project, Advisory Board Member
10. Connecticut State Advisory Council for Special Education (SAC)
11. Connecticut Two-Gen Advisory Board
12. Council on Medical Assistance Program Oversight
13. Council on the Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Record
14. Diverse Teacher Recruitment Task Force, Advisory Board Member
15. Early Childhood Cabinet
16. Elderly Abuse and Exploitation Training for Financial Agents in Detecting Fraud
17. Elderly Fraud, Exploitation, and Financial Abuse Forum
18. Effects of Possible Alternatives to Suspensions and Expulsions Committee
19. Family Support Council
20. Federal Nutrition Programs Work Group
21. Food & Nutrition Work Group
22. Governor's Council for Women and Girls
23. Grief and Bereavement Task Force
24. Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention Committee
25. Home Visitation Program Consortium
26. Juvenile Justice Police Oversight Committee
27. LGBTQ+ Justice Opportunity Network



28. Livable Communities Initiative
29. Long Term Care Advisory Council (LTCAC)
30. Maternal Mortality Review Committee
31. Medical Assistance Program Oversight Council
32. Nutrition Service Stakeholders Council
33. Parent Education Program (PEP) Advisory Committee (CGS § 46b-69b)
34. Reading Leadership Implementation Council
35. Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative
36. Statewide Senior Centers Work Group
37. Suspension and Expulsion Subcommittee
38. Title IX Workgroup
39. Trafficking in Persons Council
40. Transforming Children's Behavioral Health



Non-Statutory Committee Requirements

1. Accidental Ingestion Workgroup
2. Advisory Board for the Connecticut Project/Migration Policy Institute (MPI) research project
3. Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD) Coalition
4. Asian American Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus
5. Bridging Aging and Disability Workgroup
6. Campus Reproductive Healthcare Working Group
7. Civil Rights Task Force
8. Connecticut Chapter of the Asian Pacific American Coalition (Legislative Subcommittee)
9. Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence Underserved Communities Advisory Board
10. Connecticut Collaborative on Poverty, Criminal Justice and Race
11. Connecticut Collective for Women and Girls
12. Connecticut Data Collaborative Equity in Data Community of Practice
13. Connecticut Immigrant and Refugee Coalition (CIRC)
14. Connecticut State Department of Education Commissioner's Roundtable
15. Disability Rights Connecticut (DRCT) Board of Directors
16. Expanding Accessibilities to Justice in Connecticut's Courts and Senior Financial Health Workgroup
17. Governor's Council on Women and Girls (Leadership Subcommittee)
18. Governor's Workforce Council – DEIA Committee
19. Innovators in Reshaping Aging - Yale School of Public Health initiative
20. JJPOC Education Workgroup
21. LGBTQ+ Group
22. LGBTQ+ Youth Policy Workgroup



23. Medicaid Long Term Services & Supports Rebalancing Initiatives Steering Committee
24. Medical Assistance Program Oversight Council
25. Money Follows the Person (MFP) Quarterly Report
26. Multisector Plan for Aging Learning Collaborative - Center for Health Care Strategies
27. New Teacher Track Coalition
28. Nutrition Services Stakeholder Meeting – Dept. of Aging and Disability Services, State Unit on Aging/Bureau on Aging
29. Office of the State Comptroller Health Care Cabinet
30. Office of the State Comptroller Healthcare Cabinet (Urban Healthcare: Equity & Disparities Subcommittee)
31. Operation Migrant Welcome (Emergency Management and Homeland Security)
32. School Crisis Response Drills Workgroup
33. School Recycling Subcommittee
34. Social Connection Advisory
35. Special Education Task Force
36. UConn UCEDD Consumer Advisory Council (CAC)
37. UK-CT Capitol Roundtable Discussion & Inaugural Meeting of UK-CT Friendship Caucus
38. University of Connecticut Asian and Asian American Studies Curriculum Lab
39. Yale School of Public Health Practicum Preceptor



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