

CONNECTICUT CRADLE TO CAREER COALITION

Five CT communities collaborating on practice and policy changes to help every child thrive from cradle to career



The Danbury Collective

Norwalk ACTS



CT Cradle to Career Coalition Quarterly Newsletter

Advancing Economic, Educational, and Health Equity Across Connecticut

This quarter, the CT C2C Coalition is excited to share about our role in the landmark Early Childhood Wins of 2025 and a highlight from each of our C2C partnerships.

We are also happy to report that several bills were passed in the recent November Special Session of the CT Legislature that support children and families. Lawmakers passed a focused package of four bills addressing [health equity](#), [housing growth](#), [federal funding reductions](#), and key components of [Connecticut's children's behavioral health, economic support systems, and courthouse operations](#),

Importantly for the Waterbury region, [HB-8001](#) enables UConn Health to acquire Waterbury Hospital and authorizes significant bonding for capital improvements, an outcome that supports local access to care and anchors community stability.

[HB-8004](#) advances several priorities aligned with the Coalition's policy agenda, including children's behavioral health, economic stability, and safe, accessible civic systems. The bill incorporates elements consistent with our prior testimony on children's behavioral health ([HB-6951](#)), reinforces economic mobility through a standard self-employment expense deduction – advancing principles we outlined in testimony on guaranteed income and benefits cliffs ([HB-6841](#)) – and ensures equitable access to justice by codifying protections that prevent courthouse immigration arrests without a judicial warrant. As legislative leaders noted, these measures help ensure individuals feel safe accessing public systems and pursuing stability. Together, these bills reflect meaningful progress toward strengthening the health, social, educational, and economic foundations that Connecticut families need to thrive.

Next up for the CT C2C Coalition are preparations for the 2026 CT State Legislative Session and our 2026 Policy Agenda.

[Connecticut Leads the Nation in
Early Childhood Reform](#)



Connecticut has enacted one of the most ambitious childcare reform packages in the nation, offering a model for states seeking to make childcare affordable, equitable, and sustainable. The centerpiece of this reform, Senate Bill 1, establishes a \$600 million endowment to ensure long-term access to affordable childcare. Families earning under \$100,000 now qualify for free care, while costs for others are capped at 7% of income. The package also funds over 16,000 new early learning slots, wage parity and benefits for educators, and millions in facility, technology, and insurance support. Together, these investments position Connecticut as a national leader in advancing economic mobility through early childhood education.

This transformation is the product of years of grassroots advocacy led by the [Child Care for CT \(CC4CT\)](#) Coalition and local partnerships, including Bridgeport Prosper, Danbury Collective, Stamford Cradle to Career, Waterbury Bridge to Success, and Norwalk ACTS. These transformative wins were powered by the Connecticut Cradle to Career Coalition, which, alongside CC4CT, mobilized families, educators, and community leaders to ensure that policy reflected lived experience and that family voices shaped reform. As the state moves into implementation, policymakers, educators, and families are collaborating to ensure equitable access and accountability. Connecticut's progress offers a powerful blueprint for the nation — proof that when communities lead and policymakers align around opportunity, transformative change for children, families, and the workforce is possible.

[READ MORE HERE](#)

[C2C Initiative Highlights](#)

Celebrating New CARE Health Leaders in Bridgeport



On September 10, Bridgeport Prosper celebrated the graduation of the city's first cohort of CARE Health Leaders—trailblazers who spent months learning, advocating, and building a healthier, more connected community. Their achievement marks more than a milestone; it's the beginning of lasting change led by residents committed to improving the well-being of their neighbors.

The ceremony featured remarks from Sarah Lopez, Outreach Assistant from Senator Chris Murphy's office, who commended graduates for their community impact, and from Ayeisha Cole, Director of the Community Alliance for Research and Engagement (CARE), who praised Bridgeport's leadership in launching the program locally: "I'm so proud of Bridgeport Prosper for taking this program and making it what it is today." The evening closed with a moving moment as graduates surprised the Bridgeport Prosper team with flowers and heartfelt cards of thanks—a true reflection of the community connection this program inspires.



Danbury Collective Progress and Partnership

On November 6, the Danbury Collective hosted its annual community convening, bringing together parents, community members, and local leaders to celebrate progress, learn together, and plan next steps for children and families. Since launching in 2023, Danbury has built strong momentum by achieving membership in the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network, launching a community-wide campaign to reduce chronic absenteeism, providing civic engagement trainings in the community, and launching social media channels (follow us!).



We were also selected by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation to participate in a regional viability study to guide their future investments in education justice efforts. In 2025, Danbury joined partners across the Connecticut Cradle to Career Coalition to shape the first statewide policy agenda, collectively contributing 49 testimonies on 22 bills to elevate family and educator voices. Three Danbury members — a high school student, a parent, and a direct service provider — now serve on the Policy & Advocacy Subcommittee, ensuring the perspectives of the Danbury community inform state-level advocacy for education, health, and economic equity.



Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) in Action in Stamford



Representative Jim Himes and Mayor Caroline Simmons recently visited Rippowam Middle School to see the Full-Service Community Schools strategy in action at both Rippowam and Dolan Middle Schools. During the visit, they heard powerful stories from students, parents, educators, and community partners about how this coordinated approach is transforming school culture—boosting student involvement, strengthening family engagement, improving school climate, and reducing discipline incidents.

The visit highlighted the deep collaboration behind this success, with leadership from SC2C President Edith Presley, Principals Colmenares and Claps, parent Rebecca Petersen, community partner Barry Woods, and Community School Managers Shawn Davis and Leticia De La Rosa. Representative Himes left inspired by the progress and reaffirmed his commitment to advocating for continued federal funding to sustain and expand this impactful work across Stamford.



Norwalk ACTS Youth Advocates

The Norwalk Youth Advocates collaborated with the Center for Youth Leadership of Brien McMahon High School on the 3rd Youth-Led Board of Education Candidate Forum. Norwalk ACTS collaborated with Nancy on Norwalk and the League of Women Voters of Norwalk to formulate questions and format. View the recording on the [Norwalk ACTS YouTube Channel](#). Check out the [CT Examiner](#) and [Nancy on Norwalk](#) recap!



Youth Vote Community Forum in Waterbury



During election season in Waterbury, voter education was a key focus. On October 22nd, we hosted the Young Vote Community Forum, which featured a panel of candidates for the Waterbury Board of Education as well as candidates from each district running for the Board of Aldermen. At this event, first-time voters were educated on how to correctly complete their ballots, locate their polling places, and assist others in registering to vote.

We also partnered with eight local youth organizations and churches to lead a voter registration drive, expanding our reach and ensuring that more residents were prepared to participate in the election. On Election Day, we distributed polling location information widely to ensure voters knew exactly where to cast their ballots. Throughout the season, we emphasized to unhoused individuals that they could register to vote using the address closest to their place of rest. Additionally, we engaged with local business owners near areas where unhoused residents frequent, informing them that their establishments could serve as supportive spaces to help individuals participate in the voting process.



Looking Ahead: Building On Momentum

Across Connecticut, communities are demonstrating what's possible when we work together toward a shared vision: every child, from cradle to career, has the opportunity to thrive. From historic early childhood reforms to powerful examples of local leadership in Bridgeport, Stamford, Norwalk, Waterbury and Danbury. The Connecticut Cradle to Career Coalition is proving that collaboration, data, and community voice drive real change.

As we move forward, our focus remains on implementation, equity, and accountability — ensuring that statewide policy translates into meaningful results for children and families in every neighborhood.

We invite you to stay connected, share your voice, and be part of this work:

- Follow your local partnership to see impact in action
- Join upcoming events and advocacy efforts
- Learn more about our statewide initiatives at ctc2c.org

Together, we're building the systems our children deserve — and showing the nation what's possible when community leads the way.

Thank you for being part of this movement.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Read our [full summary](#) to see how collective impact is driving systems change across Connecticut, and what's next as we prepare for 2026.

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