



## CONNECTICUT CRADLE TO CAREER COALITION 2025 CONNECTICUT LEGISLATIVE SESSION SUMMARY

The [Connecticut Cradle to Career Coalition](#) unites five StriveTogether partnerships serving 125,000 children in [Bridgeport](#), [Norwalk](#), [Stamford](#), [Danbury](#), and [Waterbury](#). With fifteen community-based working groups and over 440 partner organizations, we are committed to fostering collaboration, driving systemic change, and ensuring thousands more Connecticut children achieve economic mobility by 2030.

Our work is grounded in shared learning, civic and community engagement, data-driven decision-making, and policy and advocacy. We advocate for legislative solutions that recognize the critical importance of early childhood development, from prenatal stages through age five; the transformative role of education in shaping economic and social mobility; and the power of youth, family, community voices, and service providers in designing effective policies and programs. The Coalition's policy agenda focuses on three key areas: economic, educational, and health equity.

The 2025 legislative session marked a historic milestone for Connecticut's children and families, with the passage of groundbreaking early care and education reform. While other priorities remain unfinished business, this session laid a powerful foundation for equity, opportunity, and economic mobility from cradle to career.

### ★ A National Model: Transformational Early Care and Education

Connecticut is the first state to enact early childhood reforms of this magnitude: a comprehensive, equity-centered approach to affordability, workforce, opportunity, and sustainability:

- Establishes a permanent endowment fund for early childhood;
- Caps child care costs at 7% of family income, with free care for those under \$100K;
- Raises child care worker salaries to be competitive with public school teachers, and offers a health care subsidy; and
- Expands opportunity for special needs children, includes infant/toddler slots, dedicates facilities funding, and supports both working families and businesses.

This legislation is an investment that advances economic equity, strengthens the early education workforce, and builds a more inclusive system where all families – regardless of zip code or income – can thrive.



## Civic & Legislative Engagement

- Through the Coalition's inaugural Policy & Advocacy Subcommittee, community representatives and partners co-created our [2025 statewide policy agenda](#), which was unanimously adopted by Coalition leadership.
- Coalition members partnered with Child Care for CT, as an active participant on their Rapid Response Policy Committee, the United Way of Connecticut's Connecticut Child Tax Credit Coalition and Opportunity Youth Initiative, and School and State Finance Project, which provided us with the most current status and messaging for our advocates, youth, parents, providers, staff, and other community members.
- Ten Coalition members submitted testimony on 22 bills, with six testifying live, bringing firsthand accounts of youth disconnection, mental health crises, and structural barriers to opportunity.
- These stories, echoed in the Dalio Education and 119K Commission reports, spotlighted longstanding inequities that demand urgent, cross-sector solutions. United Way of CT's Back on Track [video series](#), including two of our Bridgeport students, shows what that struggle looks like — and how the right support can change everything. While significant funding and policy wins remain ahead, this year's engagement elevated visibility and seeded important legislative relationships for the future.

## Economic Equity

- While the Child Tax Credit didn't pass again, the legislature approved a \$250 increase to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a compromise that provides relief to many of the same households with children.
- The new early care system strengthens labor market re-entry for parents and boosts family economic resilience.

## Educational Equity

Alongside early care reform, the phase-in schedule of the Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula was completed as ECS grants were fully funded for the first time and enhancements for Special Education funding and grants to incentivize reductions in out-placements all passed. These measures move Connecticut closer to a funding system that reflects student needs and promotes fairness across districts.



## ✓ Health Equity

- Medicaid reimbursement rates significantly increased (\$15M next year, rising to \$45M by FY26-27), critical for sustaining community health providers.
- The Coalition engaged legislators and other key stakeholders in shaping a proposal for Youth Community Health Workers (YCHWs), an innovative strategy to address youth mental health, build career pathways, and alleviate provider shortages into the future. Legislators expressed interest, and planning is now underway to introduce a YCHW bill in 2026, alongside pilot funding efforts.

## LOOKING FORWARD

### 🔑 Federal Uncertainty

Continued concerns around federal funding requires preparations for pivots in strategy:

- Full-Service Community Schools (FSCSs) support integrated academic, health, and family services in two of our Coalition cities and expansion has been considered elsewhere. As these programs are at risk of losing all funding if proposed federal budget cuts passes, the Coalition is advocating to reinstate the FSCS funding at the federal level and exploring and advocating for support at the state level, including the CT After School Grant program.
- Medicaid rate increases were long overdue and cuts at the federal level could undermine both health service access and reimbursement supports, affecting community providers. Our position provides options to organize, support, and gather stories and data to advocate. These cuts could also impact School-Based Health Centers, the workplace of our Youth Community Health Workers proposal, and the FSCS strategy as health/integrated student supports, leading to the next point.
- Ramp-up current research on other funding options:
  - Pursue public-private, place-based federal infrastructure funding
  - Leverage philanthropic partnerships and innovative financing
  - Mobilize the full power of our collective impact approach– with deep city partnerships and cross-sector working groups – to mobilize resources within and beyond state appropriations



## ➤ Moving Ahead

The Coalition is ready to lead during the next phase, where fiscal creativity, equity-centered policy, collaborative action, and community-grounded implementation must come together:

- Sustain momentum for equitable education, early care, and health care funding, leveraging the role of our place-based partnerships in family and community engagement with the new Local Governance Partners structure to ensure these new policies are implemented in a way that works for families in each local community;
- Advance the Youth Community Health Worker model with pilot programs and legislation in 2026, while advocating for recognition of youth disconnection as a national crisis;
- Continue advocacy for a permanent Child Tax Credit; and
- Leverage our collective impact model to unlock place-based, public-private innovation and cross-sector alignment.

Yet as we expand opportunity, we must also face – and elevate – the persistent barriers to access, the built environment:

- In many of our communities, limited public transit, unsafe sidewalks, steep hills, and over-parked streets still make even the best policies difficult to reach. Equity requires not just programs, but pathways.
- Whether it's voting, accessing health care, child care, food, or education, connectivity and physical accessibility remain structural challenges that limit full participation and deepen disparities. Access is equity.

As we move forward, the Coalition is committed to elevating access as a core lens across all policy areas and to pushing for infrastructure and service delivery systems that meet families where they are... literally.