



CONNECTICUT'S PATHWAYS TO THE FUTURE

INVESTING IN OPPORTUNITY YOUTH TO INVIGORATE OUR WORKFORCE

"There were a lot of times when I felt like giving up. I felt like I was making a lot of the wrong decisions again and there was a point when I was slipping and even though I thought it was unnoticed it was noticed."

--Youth participant

WHO ARE OPPORTUNITY YOUTH?

Young adults who are out-of-school and out-of-work, in Connecticut. There are an estimated 40,000 currently.

WHAT IS CAMPAIGN FOR WORKING CONNECTICUT (CWCT)?

A statewide coalition of diverse stakeholders addressing the critical need to strengthen Connecticut's future talent pipeline

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VOICES FOR OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

Investing public and private funding in programs supporting Opportunity Youth is essential for promoting economic growth and social equity and for preparing the next generation of workers for a rapidly changing job market.



This paper was informed by the voices of young people and developed through the Campaign for Working Connecticut with Opportunity Youth stakeholders and advocates across the state, including Our Piece of the Pie, COMPASS Youth Collaborative, Regional Youth Adult Social Action Partnership (RYASAP), DOMUS, National Youth Employment Coalition, Capital Workforce Partners, and United Way of Connecticut. Thank you for your support.

The shared vision of a comprehensive Opportunity Youth strategy was developed in collaboration with the Youth Subcommittee of the Governor's Workforce Council Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Taskforce and the Connecticut Office of Workforce Strategy.

Support for the Campaign for Working Connecticut is provided by National Skills Coalition.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Faced with the critical need to strengthen Connecticut's future talent pipeline, the Campaign for Working Connecticut (CWCT), in partnership with workforce and youth serving organizations, urges state leaders to **immediately launch a \$25-million statewide investment this year, and \$500-million over a ten-year initiative to provide comprehensive support for quality career pathways for an estimated 40,000 Opportunity Youth: young people who need to be reconnected to school or work.** There is high potential for public-private partnerships to support this critical investment.

- ◆ Opportunity Youth in Connecticut are **disproportionately justice-involved¹, homeless², and low-income youth³, teenage parents, and communities of color.**
- ◆ Investing in programs supporting Opportunity Youth is essential for **promoting economic growth and social equity and for preparing the next generation of workers** for a rapidly changing job market.
- ◆ Reducing the number of disengaged and disconnected youth by half would **result in an additional \$3 billion in gross state product** for Connecticut over the long term. ⁴
- ◆ Funding the initiative would address the **urgent needs of business and industry to address their talent needs.**
- ◆ **Supporting the plan would provide targeted, effective services** that would include: subsidized workforce experiences, mental wellness supports, non-workforce social services, data reporting and coordination, youth development supports, youth mentoring, and job training and placement services.

The proposed investment would be in addition to present and proposed investments to high-risk youth, disengaged youth in school, and out-of-school youth (14-26). Moreover, the State of Connecticut could leverage significant financial support by reallocating a portion of its American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to target Opportunity Youth specifically. **An initial investment of \$25 million would launch Connecticut's ability to serve Opportunity Youth at scale – engaging 5,000 young people in career pathways in year one while building the foundation for an effective, comprehensive statewide approach. Connecticut's young people, communities, and employers cannot afford to wait.**

¹ According to the Connecticut Support Services Division Annual Report, over 4,000 juvenile cases were processed in Connecticut in 2020. https://www.jud.ct.gov/CSAO/CSAO_Annual_Report_2020.pdf (chat.openai)

² According to the 2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), there were an estimated 872 homeless individuals under the age of 25 in Connecticut on a single night in January 2020. "2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report", retrieved April 2023. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2020-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

³ According to the 2020 Connecticut Court Support Services Division (CSSD) Annual Report, there were a total of 33,924 youth served by CSSD during the 2020 fiscal year.

"Connecticut Court Support Services Division (CSSD) Annual Report," Connecticut Judicial Branch, retrieved April 2023. https://www.jud.ct.gov/CSAO/CSAO_Annual_Report_2020.pdf

⁴ According to the September 2016 report by Parthenon-EY Education practice, "Untapped Potential: Engaging all Connecticut Youth"

For the purposes of this proposal, **Opportunity Youth**, young people ages 14-26 who are severely off-track or disconnected from school or employment, are tiered into three groups based on participation in school or work, with interventions and investments specific to each group.

The Connecticut Opportunity Project defines the young people:

Severely off-track youth are enrolled in high school but show one or more indicators of being at risk of dropping out, including chronic absenteeism, failure to earn credits in a timely way, and/or 2+ suspensions; and, they have been failed by the traditional high school environment to the extent that they need intensive additional supports to get back on track to graduate – whether provided within the traditional high school context or an alternative education setting – such as mentoring and comprehensive case management that incorporates trauma-informed practices.

Disconnected youth do not have a high school diploma and are not enrolled in school or work; or, they do have a high school diploma but are not participating in the workforce in a sustained way. Additionally, disconnected youth have experienced one or more of the following traumatic life events, which we classify as risk indicators: involvement with the juvenile or criminal justice system, previous involvement with the Department of Children and Families including placement in foster care, periods of homelessness, and perpetrating and/or being victimized by violence.

“Connecticut cannot overlook the need to bring the talent of 40,000 Opportunity Youth into our state’s workforce. We must act now to meet the unique needs of the young people who are the present and future of our workforce to achieve significant returns for our communities, for public spending on costly systems, and for the businesses that drive Connecticut’s economy.”

– Mark Argosh, Executive Director, Social Venture Partners and Chair, Governor’s Workforce Council

NATIONAL CONTEXT

According to the National Youth Employment Coalition, a network improving the effectiveness of the organizations and systems that serve Opportunity Youth, Connecticut’s circumstances echo those throughout the nation, where young people have not recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic, with great disruption in high school, leading to:

- ◆ stagnated math and reading levels
- ◆ declining graduation
- ◆ more than one million fewer undergraduate students⁴

⁴ “Current Term Enrollment Estimates: Fall 2022,” National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, February 2, 2023. <https://nscresearchcenter.org/current-term-enrollment-estimates/>

In addition, the participation of young adults in the formal economy⁵ has not returned to pre-pandemic levels, even as 73 percent of young people seek additional income⁶. Thus, nearly five million⁷ young people are out of school and out of work, with high levels of homelessness. These groups overlap with those trapped in the child-welfare and justice systems: young adults aged 18 to 24 make up 10 percent of the U.S. population, but they constitute 21 percent of prisoners⁸. And around 400,000 young people remain in foster care⁹.

The nation's Opportunity Youth strive for success, but often live in the gulf between public systems that have failed them and vibrant careers in an economy that needs workers with modern skills. The COVID-19 pandemic has also laid bare long-standing and stubborn disparities that impact youth. The "essential workers" lauded by leaders at the start of the pandemic were disproportionately women, Black or Latinx, and foreign-born¹⁰. Yet in 2021, women earned 82 cents for every dollar earned by men¹¹. In 2021 and 2022, for each dollar earned by White workers, Latinx workers earned 76 cents. Black workers earned 79 cents¹². As such, Opportunity Youth are positioned to enter a workforce defined by inequalities that can impede their ability to participate and contribute. These challenges must be in the forefront of public and private systems as they design efforts to support the full potential of our workforce and realize the potential gains from Opportunity Youth's participation.

"Connecticut's experience mirrors what is happening nationally: there are too many young people who are disconnected from school or work, and who are eager and willing to support themselves, who struggle to be ready and able to fill the jobs in-demand now and the jobs of the future.

Connecticut can seize this moment to invest in our youth and change the trajectory of their lives and the state's economy."

*– Mary Ann Haley, PhD,
Executive Director, National
Youth Employment Coalition
and Chair, Governor's
Workforce Council DEIA
Committee*

⁵ According to a Bank of America press release, 73% of Gen Z say the economic environment has made it more challenging to save, and 75% seek ways to earn additional income. Bank of America, September 2022. <https://newsroom.bankofamerica.com/content/newsroom/press-releases/2022/09/73--of-gen-z-say-economic-environment-has-made-it-more-challengi.html>

⁶ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, FRED Economic Data, St. Louis FED, retrieved April 2023. <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/graph/?g=ZAEY>

⁷ According to Measure of America, the 2020 youth disconnection rate is 12.6 percent, or 4,830,700 young people. Social Science Research Council, March 2022. <https://measureofamerica.org/youth-disconnection-2022/>

⁸ Frank, Alex. "Why Reimagining Prison for Young Adults Matters," VERA, February 2017. <https://www.vera.org/news/why-reimagining-prison-for-young-adults-matters>

⁹ National Foster Care Month 2023, U.S Administration for Children and Families. <https://www.childwelfare.gov/fostercaremonth/awareness/facts/>

¹⁰ Geary, Chris et al. "Who Are Essential Workers?" Georgetown Law Workers' Rights Institute, July 2020. <https://www.georgetownpoverty.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/GCPI-ESOI-Essential-Workers-July2020.pdf>

¹¹ "Women in the Workforce: the Gender Pay Gap is Greater for Certain Racial and Ethnic Groups and Varies by Education Level", U.S. Government Accountability Office, December 2022. Women in the Workforce: The Gender Pay Gap Is Greater for Certain Racial and Ethnic Groups and Varies by Education Level | U.S. GAO

¹² Weller, Christian. "A Hot Labor Market is Not Enough for Racial Equality," Forbes, September 2022. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/christianweller/2022/09/12/a-hot-labor-market-is-not-enough-for-racial-equality/?sh=7eb42e9e751>

CONNECTICUT CONTEXT

The population of young people in Connecticut who are disconnected or severely off-track in Connecticut includes a disproportionate number of justice-involved¹³, homeless¹⁴, and low-income youth¹⁵, teenage parents, and communities of color. The proposed investment is intended to support the organizational development and capacity building of nonprofit organizations and their implementation of targeted interventions that have demonstrated positive impacts on Opportunity Youth.

Currently, organizations outside of state funding provide these investments and technical assistance to service providers who are laser focused on supporting Opportunity Youth. As a result, the impacts are intermittent and inconsistent across geographies and populations in Connecticut, as service providers depend on varying availability of funding and technical assistance focused on achieving social impact.

Dalio Education's 2016 publication, *Untapped Potential Engaging all Connecticut Youth*, found that if the state reduced the total number of disengaged and disconnected youth by half – meaning 2,000 more students graduating high school each year, 8,000 more jobs created for young people aged 18–35, and 4,000 fewer people incarcerated – this would result in an additional \$3 billion in gross state product over the long term.¹⁶ **This economic benefit would far exceed that of proposed public/private investment, and the savings and taxes it would generate – combined with its ability to stimulate production of goods and increases in services – would sustain the initiative in the decades ahead.**

A SHARED VISION: CAMPAIGN FOR WORKING CONNECTICUT AND GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE COUNCIL DEIA YOUTH COMMITTEE

CWCT is a statewide coalition of diverse stakeholders (see Attachment A) collaborating to ensure jobseekers, workers, students, and Opportunity Youth have the knowledge, skills, and pathways to meet employers' middle-skill talent priorities, support business growth, and achieve financial security.

¹³ According to the Connecticut Court Support Services Division Annual Report for 2020, over 4,000 juvenile cases were processed in Connecticut in 2020.

¹⁴ According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), there were an estimated 872 homeless individuals under the age of 25 in Connecticut on a single night in January 2020. "2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress," HUD, retrieved April 2023. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2020-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

¹⁵ According to the Connecticut Court Support Services Division (CSSD), there were a total of 33,924 youth served by CSSD during the 2020 fiscal year. "2020 Connecticut Court Support Services Division (CSSD) Annual Report," Connecticut Judicial Branch, https://www.jud.ct.gov/CSAO/CSAO_Annual_Report_2020.pdf (chat.openai).

¹⁶ "Untapped Potential Engaging all Connecticut Youth," Parthenon-EY Education Practice, Ernst & Young LLP, p. 5, September 2016. https://www.dalioeducation.org/Customer-Content/www/CMS/files/Untapped_Potential_-_September_2016_Report.pdf

CWCT supports the Governor’s Workforce Council’s Youth Subcommittee vision statement “that all Connecticut youth, including those with marginalized experiences and identities, have access to meaningful and safe opportunities to explore careers, acquire education, coaching, vocational skills, employment and career pathways to a livable wage, self-sufficiency and lifelong well-being” and echoes the subcommittee’s emphasis that “to reinvigorate Connecticut’s economy, the priority exists to attract and develop young talent and strengthen career development and pathways by building an extended, multi-year systemic campaign and response for disconnected youth and young adults in Connecticut.”¹⁷

Investing public and private funding in programs to support Opportunity Youth is essential for promoting economic growth and social equity – and for preparing the next generation of workers for a rapidly changing job market. Presently, the State of Connecticut has significant available American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds that could be utilized for these investments, as they currently do not target young people who are disconnected or severely off-track.

It is necessary for the state of Connecticut to commit to significantly increased investments to connect high-risk youth, severely off-track, and disconnected out-of-school

youth with year-round services, including increased support to new and existing innovative community-based workforce development. Services needing prioritization include subsidized workforce experiences, mental wellness supports, non-workforce social services, data reporting and coordination, youth development supports, youth mentoring, and job training and placement services. Additionally, there is a need to improve connections to the workforce development system, state agencies, adult education, American Job Center infrastructure, and Regional Sector Partnerships, and to leverage other existing related services. The potential to strategically braid together existing resources to better serve disconnected youth could be another priority.

“I never felt judged or anything. I felt comfortable.” - Youth participant

¹⁷ GWC DEIA Youth Subcommittee 2022-2023 Priorities

SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY: YOUTH SERVICES PROPOSAL

Supporting Opportunity Youth to gain employment requires significant new investments in existing, proven, innovative community-based organizations and workforce programs. This investment must include a coordinated effort from multiple stakeholders, including educators, workforce development systems, employers, policymakers, and community organizations. **By working together to provide education, training, mentoring, job placement, and business engagement opportunities, young people who are disconnected or severely off-track will have meaningful opportunities to re-engage and succeed in the workforce and achieve economic mobility.** As referenced in the [CT Opportunity Youth Project Annual Report, USDOL Youth Build, US DOL Job Corps](#) and other programs serving young people who are disconnected report that such comprehensive, long-term programs have very positive outcomes. Attachment B provides one example from DOMUS Kids, Inc. demonstrating the level of intensity and services needed to support young people who are disconnected and severely off-track, and its conclusions echo those of other programs serving this population in Connecticut.

"To achieve a thriving economy in Connecticut, it is imperative to invest in a more inclusive economy and create favorable conditions. The Governor's Workforce Council Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access Committee was formed with this objective in mind. Recognizing the potential of disconnected young people, especially those from marginalized communities, is not an option but a necessity."

– Anthony Barrett, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, CT Office of Workforce Strategy

According to a study supporting the Connecticut Youth Investment Plan in 2022, When aggregating several sources of information, the **best estimate for funding needed to support Connecticut's 40,000+ Opportunity Youth is about \$500 million.** This number may be a conservative estimate of the number of Opportunity Youth in Connecticut, as the impact of COVID has not been factored into much of the data currently available. For this proposal, Opportunity Youth are designated into three tiers to reflect the differing needs and necessary interventions among this population. The tiers are informed by a review of several sources of research on disconnected youth¹⁸ and the input of organizations serving Opportunity Youth in Connecticut.

¹⁸ "10-Year Social Investment Strategy 2020-2030," Connecticut Opportunity Project, January 2023. https://www.ctopportunityproject.org/Customer-Content/www/homepage-stories/PDFs/2022-12-27_CTOP_10YrStrategy.pdf; Brinson, Dana, Hassel, Bryan et al. "Connecting Youth through Multiple Pathways," PUBLIC IMPACT for The Annie E. Casey Foundation, December 2008. <https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-ConnectingYouthMultiplePathways-2009.pdf>

- ◆ **Tier 1:** Young people who are severely disconnected and who have typically experienced a lifetime of trauma, including repeated exposure to violence¹⁹.
- ◆ **Tier 2:** Young people who are moderately disconnected, characterized as individuals who are out of school and not working or participating in job training or community service programs.
- ◆ **Tier 3:** Young people who are in school but are experiencing multiple risk-factors of absenteeism, suspensions, or academic failures. These youth are also likely not working or participating in job training or community service programs.

YEAR 1 PRIORITY: BUILD INFRASTRUCTURE FOR IMPACT

Limited data exists on the prevalence of youth in the defined tiers. Below are available data points indicating the prevalence of Opportunity Youth overall.

CT YOUTH DESCRIPTOR/MEASURE	NUMBER	SOURCE
Number of CT youth ages 20-24 unemployed (U-3), showing some evidence of wanting labor participation, 2021	26,203	American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau
High Need 11th and 12th graders not meeting any post- secondary education benchmark, 2022	29,408	CT State Department of Education, 2021-22 Next Generation Accountability System
Unstably housed or literally homeless youth ages 13-17, 2020	2,444	CT Coalition to End Homelessness, 2020 Youth Count
Unstably housed or literally homeless youth ages 18-24, 2020	5,379	CT Coalition to End Homelessness, 2020 Youth Count
Youth aging out of foster care, 2011-2015	1,374	CT Voices for Children, The Time to Grow

PUBLIC IMPACT for The Annie E. Casey Foundation, December 2008. <https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-ConnectingYouthMultiplePathways-2009.pdf>

¹⁹ "Serving Disconnected Youth Better: The Connecticut Opportunity Project Annual Report 2022", Connecticut Opportunity Project, January 2022.

https://www.ctopportunityproject.org/Customer-Content/www/CMS/files/2023-01-05_CTOP_Annual_Report_Proof_Final.pdf

A Year 1 priority of this proposal is to support the research and data collection necessary to develop a more refined understanding of the 40,000 Opportunity Youth in Connecticut. Dalio Education is in the process of refreshing and expanding the 2016 Untapped Potential report which will help to better understand the population of disconnected and severely off-track young people in the state. Investments in these efforts are critical to inform an effective and efficient response. Additional **“foundational” functions necessary in the launch phase** of the proposal include:

- Mapping of existing programs and services for disconnected youth.
- Identifying key stakeholders and existing and potential state, federal, private, and philanthropic funding streams.
- Assessing current data collection systems and creating performance metrics and the data infrastructure necessary to capture timely and accurate data on outputs and outcomes across multiple programmatic and funding streams.
- Cost-modeling a “right-sized” statewide response that supports targeted interventions appropriate to the number and vulnerability of Opportunity Youth and identifies the most effective processes and methods to achieve desired outcomes.

YEAR 1 PRIORITY: INVESTING IN PROGRAMMATIC GAPS

In addition to building the knowledge and infrastructure to support the most effective and efficient statewide approach, **the initial year of the proposal must resolve critical gaps in services that prevent Opportunity Youth providers from delivering highly effective services and reaching a greater number of disconnected youth.** As a reference point for the scale of current efforts, in 2022, the Dalio Foundation’s Connecticut Opportunity Project, the largest private funding effort focused on disconnected and severely-off-track youth, supported efforts that served 754 young people through its six grantees: Regional Youth Adult Social Action Project (RYASAP), Connecticut Violence Intervention Program (CTVIP), Our Piece of the Pie (OPP), DOMUS, COMPASS, and ROCA Young Mothers.

The small group of providers currently skilled and equipped to serve severely and moderately disconnected youth have identified, in alignment with national best practices, that effective work with Opportunity Youth requires an extended time commitment, typically two to five years, and holistic core services that provide youth with incentives to participate in programming and financial compensation to allow them to remain engaged in services.

Connecticut has no time to lose. The cost of youth disengaging from or never entering services is too steep. In order to effectively serve currently engaged Opportunity Youth and bring additional disconnected youth who are un- or under-served into effective programming, the following services require immediate financial support:

- ♦ **Subsidized, supported employment** to meet the immediate need for income while gaining “safe” work experiences
- ♦ **Outreach** to identify, build trust, and engage youth in services “where youth are at”
- ♦ **Integrated education and training**, including remedial education and work readiness
- ♦ **Flexible funds** for agencies to provide direct cash assistance to young people to remove barriers from participation in job training, education, health and wellness services, and employment

An initial investment of \$25 million would launch Connecticut’s ability to serve Opportunity Youth at scale – engaging 5,000 young people into career pathways in Year 1 while building the foundation for an effective, comprehensive statewide approach. Connecticut’s young people, communities, and employers cannot afford to wait.

LEVERAGING PRIVATE INVESTMENT

The 2016 Dalio Education report, with the support of the State Department of Education, uncovered an urgency to support disconnected and off-track young people in Connecticut. As a result of the report’s findings, Dalio Education launched the Connecticut Opportunity Project (CTOP) to help develop high-performing non-profit organizations in Connecticut that can help young people get back on track to succeed. CTOP is now in the process of refreshing the 2016 report to better inform and advance the work being done to put disconnected and severely off-track youth on a post-secondary path that positively alters the trajectory of their lives and their contributions to our state’s economy.

A TEN-YEAR PLAN BUILT TO DELIVER OUTCOMES AND RETURNS

The intensity and length of services required to achieve outcomes for Opportunity Youth are not well aligned with public and private funding streams, most of which are often short-term, restrictive, or siloed in the services they support. This ultimately limits the effectiveness of current programming and impedes expansion of services to meet the needs of youth and the needs of our business community.

Last year's Connecticut Youth Investment Plan estimated that supporting the 40,000 Opportunity Youth and young people who are disconnected and severely off-track in Connecticut would cost about \$500 million, assuming services are delivered with quality from high performing and adequately funded non-profit organizations. **While the cost per participant might appear significant, the return on investment more than pays for the intervention and has lifetime benefits to the individual, community, and business and industry sector.**

The cost per participant varies depending on the severity of the circumstances youth face. Examples of disconnected youth descriptions appear below, defined as tiers for the purposes of this document, and associated costs per participant.

The yearly cost per participant can vary from several thousand dollars per participant for Tier III participants, and in some cases, as high as \$30,000 for Tier I, with the cost drivers including:

- Staff 'relentless' outreach, case management, positive youth development supports, mental wellness supports; wraparound services (CBT, etc.) *Average yearly cost per participant: \$3,500-\$5,000.*
- 25-30 hour subsidized work experience: subsidized-job model, including wage subsidy and wraparound supports for each slot each year. *Average cost per participant: \$15,000 for six months.*
- Integrated education and training; academic remediation; career/work readiness competency training. *Average cost per participant: \$8,500.*
- Other costs: data and evaluation; infrastructure/technology; management and administration. *\$1,500 per participant.*

Other public, philanthropic, and private resources have an important role to play to create a connected system able to maximize and leverage resources and produce measurable outcomes

Interventions Identified for Connecticut General Fund or ARPA Funds Investment	Functions Identified for Other Public, Private, or Philanthropic Investment
Integrated education and training	Mapping disconnected youth services and assets
Subsidized employment	Identifying the number and degree of severity of disconnected youth
Youth outreach	Mapping existing and potential funding streams
Case management	Developing shared performance metrics and supportive data infrastructure
Positive youth development supports	Process and outcome evaluation
Mental wellness supports	Cost-modeling effective, efficient cross-system service delivery system
Other non-workforce supports (e.g. child care, health care, housing, transportation, etc.)	Coordinating existing and new providers to promote best practices and aligned services
Program management and administration	Advocacy efforts to promote shared outcomes and attract additional revenue

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF OPPORTUNITY YOUTH INVESTMENTS

Maintaining connection to school and work is critical. Gaps in connection have a significantly high cost for individuals and economies. A CT Voices for Children paper noted that, “Experiencing six months of unemployment at age 22 results in an eight percent lower salary the following year.

This depressed wage continues into a person’s third decade. At ages 30 and 31, wages continue to be two to three percent lower than had a person not experienced unemployment.”²⁰

In *The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth*, a January 2012 report from the Corporation for National and Community Service and the White House Council for Community Solutions, researchers estimated that each Opportunity Youth imposes – on average and compared to other youth – an immediate taxpayer burden of \$13,900 per year and **an immediate social burden of \$37,450 per year** (2011 dollars). After each Opportunity Youth reaches 25, they will subsequently impose a future lifetime taxpayer burden of \$170,740 and a social burden of **\$529,030**.²¹

“Connecticut’s businesses and government have a shared goal – a world class workforce pipeline that supports a growing state economy and thriving population. Reinvigorating Connecticut’s economy is an ‘all hands on deck’ effort that requires us to tap into the potential of all young people in our state. The young people experiencing the greatest disconnection will require the greatest intervention. The benefits of these efforts will ripple through public and private systems and increase wellbeing in Connecticut’s communities.”

– Kelli-Marie Vallieres, PhD, Chief Executive Officer, Sound Manufacturing, Vice Chair, Governor’s Workforce Council, and Chief Workforce Officer, CT Office of Workforce Strategy

This pending crisis, coupled with the talent needs of Connecticut’s business and industry sector — where over 100,000 job openings²² in healthcare, manufacturing, transportation, technology, construction and other jobs remain unfilled because of a workforce talent gap — **highlights the urgency of supporting training and employment programming for Opportunity Youth as a path to promoting Connecticut’s economy, workforce, and quality of life.**

²⁰ “Rising Out of Recession,” Connecticut Voices for Children, February 2022. <https://ctvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/2022-YACD-Report.pdf>

Working in partnership, the Campaign for Working Connecticut and the Governor’s Workforce Council Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access Youth Subcommittee have developed a shared vision of a statewide response at scale with the both challenge and the opportunity presenting to Connecticut. This subsequent proposal, championed by the Campaign for Working Connecticut, recommends the dedication of \$50 million a year over the next ten years as a social investment fund to support Opportunity Youth in gaining quality career pathways and contributing to a vibrant state economy.

Funds from Connecticut’s General Fund and ARPA funding are ideally situated to launch and sustain a system of program interventions. An initial \$25 million investment from the state would build an effective service and systems infrastructure to prevent a deepening of the challenge and position Connecticut to lead the nation with an effective, comprehensive statewide approach.



²¹ Belfield, Clive R., Levin, Henry M., et al. "The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth," January 2012. https://www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/files/content/docs/resources/Economic_Value_of_Opportunity_Youth_Report.pdf

²² "After A Strong Pace in 2022 Unemployment Rate Holds Steady; Job Growth Trends Slow," CT Department of Labor, January 2023. <https://portal.ct.gov/DOLCommunications/News/Press-Room/2023/CT-Dept-of-Labor-After-A-Strong-Pace-in-2022-Unemployment-Rate-Holds-Steady-Job-Growth-Trends-Slow>

CAMPAIGN FOR WORKING CONNECTICUT STAKEHOLDERS ATTACHMENT A

- Achieve Hartford!
- AdvanceCT
- Capital Region Education Center (CREC)
- Capital Workforce Partners (CWP) (North Central WIB)
- Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG)
- Career Resources, Inc.
- Center for Latino Progress (CLP)
- Charter Oak Group
- Community Partners in Action (CPA)
- Connecticut Association of Adult and Continuing Education (CAACE)
- Connecticut Association of Human Services (CAHS)
- Connecticut Association of Public Schools Superintendents (CAPSS)
- Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA)
- Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology (CCAT)
- Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM)
- Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance
- Connecticut Education Association (CEA)
- Connecticut Green Bank
- Connecticut Health & Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA)
- Connecticut League for Nursing
- Connecticut Legal Services
- Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU)
- Connecticut Technology Council
- Connecticut Voices for Children

- Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)
- Cooperative Educational Services (CES)
- Cross Sector Consulting
- DanburyWORKS
- East Hartford CONNects (Working Cities Initiative)
- EASTCONN
- Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB)
- Educators for Excellence (E4E)
- EMERGE CT
- Farnam Associates
- Gateway Community College
- Goodwin College
- Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
- Hartford Working Cities Initiative
- John J. Driscoll United Labor Agency (ULA)
- Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
- MetroHartford Alliance
- National Skills Coalition
- Northwestern CT Workforce Investment Board (NRWIB)
- Ready CT
- Social Venture Partners Connecticut (SVPCT)
- The Workplace, Inc. (Southwest CT WIB)
- United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut
- United Way of Connecticut
- United Way of Greater New Haven
- Waterbury Board of Education
- Workforce Alliance (South Central WIB)