

**Hartford Foundation for Public Giving**  
**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 248, An Act Concerning Access to Identity Documents By**  
**Homeless Youth and Young Adults**

**Public Health Committee**  
**February 28, 2020**

Good afternoon Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, Senator Somers, Representative Petit and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is grateful for this opportunity to offer testimony in support of **Senate Bill 248, An Act Concerning Access to Identity Documents by Homeless Youth and Young Adults.**

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for the 29-town Greater Hartford region. Made possible by the gifts of generous individuals, families and organizations, the Foundation has awarded grants of more than \$795 million since its founding in 1925.

The Hartford Foundation's new strategic framework includes a focus on efforts to ensure that all Greater Hartford residents have access to quality, affordable housing in high opportunity neighborhoods. Significant portions of our past and current investments have focused on preventing and reducing homelessness in the Greater Hartford region. On an annual basis, the Foundation provides approximately \$1 million to local nonprofit organizations to provide access to emergency shelter, housing subsidies, case management, eviction prevention/landlord negotiation, employment services, and housing services to residents' at-risk or experiencing homelessness.

Having a safe affordable place to live is a basic human need. The Foundation's funding provides not only supports emergency shelters and basic needs, but it helps advance collective solutions currently being implemented. Supporting evidence-based solutions to solve homelessness is an important part of the Hartford Foundation's basic human needs efforts and supports all of its strategic priorities.

While there has been significant progress in addressing homelessness, there are also continuing challenges, particularly among homeless youth and families. In 2018, the Foundation granted \$325,000 to resource the Greater Hartford Homeless Youth Collaborative to address and reduce mitigating barriers that often lead youth into homelessness. Securing stable housing is a crucial factor to providing people with the opportunity to be successful in school, in the workforce and creating more opportunity in our communities.

**The Foundation supports Senate Bill 248, which will allow the Department of Public Health and registrars of vital statistics to waive the fee for a certified copy of a birth certificate for youth and young adults who are experiencing homelessness.** The legislation will specify a definition of homelessness consistent with the federal McKinney- Vento Homeless Assistance Act and include youth age 24 and younger.

We know that the lack of access to identity documents including associated fees, such as birth certificates and state issued ID's, are a significant barrier for youth and young adults who are experiencing homelessness and housing instability. The result is that many young people are unable to work or participate in workforce development programs, unable to access, or

experience delays accessing, Job Corps and housing, and have difficulties in accessing supports such as mental health, benefits, or athletic activities.

The Hartford Foundation welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with legislators, advocates and municipalities to secure healthy, safe and affordable housing so vital to ensuring all residents have the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our staff at [policy@hfpf.org](mailto:policy@hfpf.org) or 860-548-1888.