



Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Testimony in Support of

Senate Bill 108, An Act Requiring a Study of Transportation Barriers That Limit Access to Workforce Development Programs

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

February 22, 2024

Good evening, Senator Slap, Representative Haddad, Senator Kelly, Representative Haines and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **Senate Bill 108, An Act Requiring a Study of Transportation Barriers That Limit Access to Workforce Development Programs.**

The [Hartford Foundation for Public Giving](#) is the community foundation for the 29-town Greater Hartford region. Over the past two years, the Foundation has distributed \$104.5 million in grants to promote equitable opportunity for all residents in our region. Made possible by the gifts of generous individuals, families and organizations, the Foundation has awarded grants of more than \$998 million since its founding in 1925.

As part of our efforts to dismantle structural racism and improve social and economic mobility for Black and Latine residents of Greater Hartford, the Hartford Foundation seeks to work with government, nonprofit and other public-private partners to **increase stable employment opportunities for adults and youth in our region facing barriers to employment.**

This work recognizes that all residents of our region need access to training and employment options that provide a sustaining wage. The Foundation's efforts focus on increasing opportunities for education and training along with hiring and retaining residents with significant barriers to employment, including returning citizens and opportunity youth disconnected from school and work.

The Hartford Foundation offers its support for Senate Bill 108 which requires the Department of Transportation and the Office of Workforce Strategy to study transportation barriers that limit access to workforce development programs. We appreciate the collaboration across departments in undertaking the study and are pleased to share what we are learning about the critical need for transportation in implementing workforce programs in this testimony and would be pleased to continue to share our perspective as the study progresses.

The Foundation also applauds the bill's inclusion of a survey of participants of workforce development programs in each region of the state. In order to effectively identify needs and potential solutions to existing challenges, it is vital to receive direct input by people most affected. Through our own investments in workforce and education programming, our program evaluations have consistently shown how a lack of access to a car or public transportation in close proximity to a job training site can be a significant barrier to a person's consistent participation in a program.

Many Greater Hartford residents lack adequate access to transportation. According to the [Greater Hartford Community Wellbeing Index 2023](#), the rate of transportation insecurity was 21 percent for those who did not attend college and 32 percent for adults making less than \$30,000 per year. According to Census data, vehicle availability varies by race and ethnicity and by the number of workers in the home. Among households with at least one working-age member but without any employed members, 59 percent of Black households and 52 percent of Latino households had no access to a vehicle. Only 21 percent of white households in this group lacked vehicle access. In households with one employed



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adult, 18 percent of Black households lacked vehicle access and 17 percent of Latino households lacked access to a vehicle. This compared to three percent of white households with one employed adult lacking vehicle access. In many parts of Greater Hartford, having access to a vehicle is needed to find and keep a job. Racial disparities in access to a vehicle may therefore exacerbate racial disparities in employment rates and income levels.

To reduce barriers that many high needs students and participants in workforce development programs often encounter, the Hartford Foundation has long supported providing funding to cover a wide range of wraparound supports, including for transportation, to ensure individuals can learn new skills and be successful. Understanding current needs around transportation through a study will provide critical information. As issues are explored, we recommend examining the need for flexible funding support to address broader basic needs, given individual needs vary and all can affect participation in programs. Wraparound supports provided in workforce programs often extend to addressing access to childcare, food, clothing, housing stability as well as transportation and other basic needs. We have seen through our work that providing transportation support is a proven strategy to promote consistent participation and completion of academic, job readiness, post-secondary credential and degree programs and other workforce development programs to ensure that youth and adults with the greatest barriers to completion are able to complete their course of study.

With thousands of Connecticut job openings, the Foundation is eager to partner with legislators, philanthropy, nonprofits, advocates, and businesses to eliminate barriers to employment and ensure that all residents have an opportunity to participate in the workforce, reach their potential and economic stability, and to thrive and contribute to Connecticut's economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our staff at policy@hfpg.org or 860-548-1888.