

Hartford Foundation for Public Giving 2023 Legislative Activity

The Hartford Foundation's broad range of public policy activity, grounded in our [grantmaking](#) and guided by [our mission and values](#), makes our work more far-reaching, sustainable, and responsive to critical community issues.

The Foundation's public policy activities include sharing data and research (including program evaluations), convening diverse voices around a particular issue, forming strategic relationships, and administrative and legislative lobbying.

At the center of our public policy work is urging policymakers to include people with lived experience in various social issues when developing interventions to address those needs. Our public policy work now includes supporting community-based advocacy by nonprofits that engages residents with lived experiences to advocate on their own behalf.

The Foundation's participation in public policy has expanded policymakers' perceptions of our role in the community. Foundation staff are now invited by advocates, legislators, and task forces to weigh in on legislative proposals and participate in working groups to develop state policy recommendations. When legislation is approved and signed into law, Foundation staff assess the need for administrative advocacy to engage with state agency leadership and ensure that initiatives are properly implemented.

Below is a summary of the Hartford Foundation's legislative testimony from the 2023 Legislative Session of the Connecticut General Assembly. It should be noted that the Foundation's policy work acknowledges that policy leader priorities change over time and while we seek to raise up long-standing issues, we also must take advantage of the opportunities that are created each year.

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Activity	Strategic Priority	Issue	Foundation Position	Status	Linked Activity
<p>Hartford Foundation testimony in support of Senate Bill 1057, An Act Concerning The Secretary Of The State And Early Voting</p> <p>Senate Bill 1064, An Act Concerning the Implementation of Early Voting</p> <p>House Bill 5004, An Act Implementing Early Voting</p>	Civic and Resident Engagement	All three proposals were variations of an initiative to implement Connecticut’s early voting system, which was overwhelmingly approved by voters in the 2022 election.	The Foundation offered testimony in support of the primary goals of these proposals based on its own support for efforts to elevate community voices, such as through participation in the electoral process. In its testimony, the Foundation highlighted the fact that many residents, particularly adults in low-income working families, have limited flexibility to cast their votes on Election Day. By creating additional days for people to vote, including evenings and weekends, Connecticut can ensure that every eligible voter can make their voice heard at the ballot box.	House Bill 5004 received bipartisan support in the House and Senate and was signed into law by Governor Lamont. The law requires municipalities to offer 14 days of early voting in the general election in 2024, less for primaries and special elections.	As part of its efforts to dismantle structural racism and improve social and economic mobility for Black and Latinx residents of Greater Hartford, the Hartford Foundation supports civic and resident engagement in our region. Beginning in 2018, the Foundation began supporting voter registration drives focused on populations least likely to participate in federal, state and local elections: young adults, Latinx and Black residents, justice-involved residents, individuals with developmental disabilities and people living in high poverty neighborhoods.
<p>Hartford Foundation in Support of Senate Joint Resolution 29, Resolution Approving An Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting</p> <p>House Joint Resolution 1, Resolution Approving An Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow No-Excuse Absentee Voting</p>	Civic and Resident Engagement	Both resolutions sought to add a ballot question to the November 2024 ballot which would amend the Connecticut Constitution to allow for no-excuse absentee voting.	The Foundation offered testimony in support of both proposals that would ask voters in the November 2024 election to vote on the question: "Shall the Constitution of the State be amended to permit the General Assembly to allow each voter to vote by absentee ballot?" Should voters approve the measure, the General Assembly would develop implementation language during the 2025 legislative session. Absentee, mail-in voting was credited with dramatically increasing voter	House Joint Resolution 01 received bipartisan support in the House and Senate and were signed into law by Governor Lamont.	See above

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			participation in the 2020 and 2022 elections.		
Hartford Foundation testimony in support of Senate Bill 929, An Act Expanding School Meal Programs To Provide Free School Meals To All Students	Basic Human Needs	Bill would have provided state funding to allow public schools to continue providing universal free school meals.	The Foundation offered its support for this legislation to continue state funding necessary to provide universal free school meals. This was in recognition of many families continuing to meet basic needs during this time of rising inflation and the end of federal subsidies	Raised by Committee on Children and referred to Appropriations where it was never acted upon. The Legislature and Governor did approve \$16 million to extend free school meals to students whose families make 200 percent or less of the federal poverty line.	As part of our efforts to dismantle structural racism and advance equity in social and economic mobility in Greater Hartford's Black and Latinx communities, the Hartford Foundation supports basic human needs in our region, including access to nutrition. In 2022, the Foundation awarded more than \$1.4 million to support food programs that respond to emergency and short-term needs as well as food services during the holidays.
Hartford Foundation testimony regarding House Bill 6854: An Act Establishing the Office of Food Access and Tax Incentives for Grocery Stores	Basic Human Needs	Bill sought to create a new Office Food Access Advocate to provide for a centralized resource to address food insecurity in the state and provide tax incentives for the location of grocery stores in food deserts.	The Hartford Foundation submitted testimony that focused on the creation of tax incentives for developers who construct grocery stores in areas that lack access to quality, diverse and affordable produce. This proposal was consistent with the Foundation's past and current efforts to construct a grocery in Hartford's north end neighborhood.	The bill was approved by the House but was never voted on by the Senate.	In collaboration with the City of Hartford, UConn, Trinity Health, the Hartford Community Loan Fund and other resident-led organizations, the Foundation has worked to support the Healthy Hartford Hub ('HHH') Project, a collaborative effort to address Hartford's food desert that would offer shopping options for fresh foods and education on how to prepare them. The plan also included a pharmacy, medical clinic, exercise space and, possibly, housing. As part of this effort, the Foundation provided support to the

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					Healthy Hartford Hub's Community Action Task Force (CATF), a group of North Hartford residents working to make real the vision of a wellness center anchored by a full-service grocery store.
Hartford Foundation Testimony in support of House Bill 6586, An Act Concerning Supplemental Nutrition Assistance	Basic Human Needs	The bill would have changed the payment schedule for SNAP benefits so that beneficiaries receive benefits at multiple intervals during the month.	The Foundation offered its support for this legislation's effort to help families budget their resources more effectively. The Foundation's testimony pointed out that it fails to adequately address the impact of growing food insecurity and inflated food prices on Connecticut families, especially families of color.	The bill was approved by the Human Services Committee but never taken up for a vote in the House or Senate.	As part of our efforts to dismantle structural racism and advance equity in social and economic mobility in Greater Hartford's Black and Latinx communities, the Hartford Foundation supports basic human needs in our region, including access to nutrition. In 2022, the Foundation awarded more than \$1.4 million to support food programs that respond to emergency and short-term needs as well as food services during the holidays.
Hartford Foundation testimony in support of Additional State Funding for Rental Assistance and Homelessness Prevention and Mitigation Services	Basic Human Needs	The Foundation testified on the Appropriations Committee bill to create the state biennial budget. The hearing was convened by the Committee's subcommittee on Conservation and Development which covers housing and homelessness prevention. The Foundation urged legislators to provide substantial increases to homeless prevention and mitigation and rental assistance.	The Foundation urged legislators to support significant increases to the state's Rental Assistance Program, which has not seen any significant increases in nearly a decade, despite increasing rental costs and growing resident need. The Foundation also testified in support of efforts to provide substantial increases in the state's homelessness prevention and mitigation system to provide long-	The Legislature approved a modest increase of \$7 million in additional funding for the Homeless Response System. A significant change is dedicated line-item funding specifically for community-based homelessness	The Foundation is a leading funder of the Greater Hartford Coordinated Access Network that works to rapidly rehouse individuals and families at risk or experiencing homelessness. The Foundation also supports a variety of nonprofits that work to support residents at risk of being evicted due to having difficulties covering their rent.

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			term stability to the state’s coordinated access networks.	response work. The Legislature failed to increase funding to the state’s Rental Assistance Program.	
Hartford Foundation testimony in support of House Bill 6554, An Act Appropriating Funds for Certain Homelessness Response Programs	Basic Human Needs	The bill would have given \$50 million to Connecticut’s homeless response system to fund cold weather services, increase service providers’ pay and pay for other infrastructure within the state’s homeless response system.	The Foundation testified in support of this proposal based on its longstanding investment in homelessness prevention and mitigation and the significant challenges providers face in meeting a significant increase in demand for services.	The Housing Committee held a public hearing, and the bill was referred to the Appropriations Committee but never taken up for a vote. The approved budget did include a modest increase to support homelessness response programs.	See above
Hartford Foundation testimony in support of House Bill 6778, An Act Establishing a Proxy Address Program for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness or Housing Insecurity	Basic Human Needs	This legislation would have required the Commissioner of Housing to establish a pilot program to provide proxy addresses for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity, and appropriate funds for such a pilot program.	The Foundation offered support for this proposal recognizing that the lack of a home address can be a significant obstacle for people experiencing homelessness or housing instability attempting to apply for jobs, enroll their children in school and apply for services and benefits. By removing	The bill was the subject of a Housing Committee public hearing but not taken up for a vote.	See above

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			<p>this obstacle, individuals will be in a better position to find jobs and other supports that can help lead to finding permanent housing.</p>		
<p>Hartford Foundation testimony on Senate Bill 980, An Act Authorizing and Adjusting Bonds of the State</p>	<p>Higher Opportunity Neighborhoods</p>	<p>The Governor’s proposed state bonding legislation included \$300 million in in each year of the biennium for housing projects and programs.</p>	<p>The Foundation lauded Governor Lamont’s recognition of the overwhelming need for more housing in Connecticut through this proposal to invest \$200 million in the Housing Trust Fund in Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025. This proposal also provides \$100 million to support Flexible Housing funding in each fiscal year. This \$600 million in new bond authorizations represents a significant and much-needed investment in housing, representing twice the investment in the previous biennium. This funding would provide for an estimated 2,200 additional homes in each fiscal year.</p>	<p>The final state budget and bond package approved by the House and Senate and signed into law by Governor Lamont provided \$800 million for new housing development.</p>	<p>The Hartford Foundation seeks to increase the numbers of Hartford residents living in higher opportunity neighborhoods both by increasing the opportunities in Hartford neighborhoods and by increasing the ability of Hartford residents to choose to move to other higher opportunity areas throughout the Greater Hartford region. Foundation staff currently serve on the HOME CT coordinating committee that is working on legislative issues to expand access to quality, affordable housing in higher opportunity areas.</p>
<p>Hartford Foundation Testimony in Support of House Bill 6890, An Act Concerning Qualified Transit Communities</p>	<p>Higher Opportunity Neighborhoods</p>	<p>This bill would have provided financial incentives for municipalities that adopt certain transit-oriented development policies and to coordinate related state funds through the Office of Responsible Growth, which would be created through this legislation.</p>	<p>The Foundation offered its support for this innovative proposal which provided a mechanism for municipalities to develop their own plans for transit-oriented development to create more housing options, including affordable housing, by providing financial incentives. The new Office of Responsible Growth would provide centralized support to towns for planning and design, infrastructure upgrades and</p>	<p>Bill was approved by the Planning and Development Committee but never taken up for a vote in the House or Senate. The creation and funding for the Office of Responsible Growth was</p>	<p>The Hartford Foundation seeks to increase the numbers of Hartford residents living in higher opportunity neighborhoods both by increasing the opportunities in Hartford neighborhoods and by increasing the ability of Hartford residents to choose to move to other higher opportunity areas throughout the Greater Hartford region. Foundation staff currently serve on the HOME CT coordinating</p>

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			expansion, and for actual home construction	included in the enacted state budget.	committee that is working on legislative issues to expand access to quality, affordable housing in higher opportunity areas. The Foundation also provided a housing advocacy grant to Desegregate CT, the lead advocacy organization spearheading this initiative.
Hartford Foundation testimony in support of House Bill 6633, An Act Concerning a Needs Assessment and Fair Share Plans for Municipalities to Increase Affordable Housing	Higher Opportunity Neighborhoods	This legislation would have required an assessment of the statewide need for affordable housing and an allocation of such need to planning regions and municipalities; the creation of affordable housing plans for each municipality; and evaluated municipalities' performance in meeting the requirements of these plans.	The Foundation offered testimony in support of this effort, which is modeled after a successful initiative in New Jersey that if approved and successfully implemented could produce up to 300,000 units of market rate and affordable housing over ten years to address Connecticut's crucial housing needs. This proposal allowed towns to develop their own plans and zone for growth by removing political barriers and helping ensure that all residents have the ability to live in quality, affordable housing in high opportunity neighborhoods.	This legislation was approved by the Housing Committee but was never taken up for a vote in the House or Senate. The Legislature did include a study to assess individual municipal affordable housing needs that will be shared with the Legislature in 2024.	The Hartford Foundation seeks to increase the numbers of Hartford residents living in higher opportunity neighborhoods both by increasing the opportunities in Hartford neighborhoods and by increasing the ability of Hartford residents to choose to move to other higher opportunity areas throughout the Greater Hartford region. Foundation staff currently serve as a member of the HOME CT advisory committee working on legislative issues to expand access to quality, affordable housing in higher opportunity areas. The Foundation also provided a housing advocacy grant to Open Communities Alliance which led the campaign to enact this initiative.
Hartford Foundation testimony on House Bill 5326, An Act Concerning Affordable Housing Appeals Process and Removing	Higher Opportunity Neighborhoods	The proposal sought to weaken Connecticut's only enforcement of affordable housing regulations known as 8-30g. This bill would have allowed municipalities to include	The Foundation expressed its concern that at a time when the state is experiencing an affordable housing crisis, this proposal would not create a single new affordable home but	The bill never made it out of the Housing Committee.	The Hartford Foundation seeks to increase the numbers of Hartford residents living in higher opportunity neighborhoods both by increasing the opportunities in

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the Municipal Opt-out Deadline for Accessory Apartments		<p>unrestricted homes affordable to those at 80 percent of average median income (AMI) into the calculation of the ten per cent threshold for the affordable housing appeals procedure and remove the deadline for any municipality to opt-out of the as-of-right allowance of accessory apartments.</p>	<p>would provide another tool to municipalities seeking to block affordable housing development. Many Connecticut towns are failing to provide residents with the type of smaller, denser, affordable homes within walking distance to stores, services and public transit that the state needs to thrive. As our state looks to develop additional policies to expand access to affordable housing, Section 8-30g helps to ensure that a town cannot avoid affordable housing development by enacting exclusionary local zoning policies or cite a lack of demand for housing.</p>		<p>Hartford neighborhoods and by increasing the ability of Hartford residents to choose to move to other higher opportunity areas throughout the Greater Hartford region. Foundation staff currently serve as a member of the HOME CT advisory committee working on legislative issues to expand access to quality, affordable housing in higher opportunity areas.</p>
Hartford Foundation Testimony on House Bill 6659, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2025 (housing inspections)	<p>High Opportunity Neighborhoods</p>	<p>The underlying bill was the Governor’s biennial budget proposal and the testimony focused on adding funding to support housing inspections.</p>	<p>The Foundation offered testimony urging the Legislature to create a \$5 million pilot program to support additional housing inspection capacity and enforcement. This was intended to support municipalities with a proactive residential rental licensing or inspection program that requires regular inspections without the need for tenants’ complaints and ensure landlords’ compliance with local health and housing code ordinances.</p>	<p>While the Legislature and Governor did approve more than \$800 million for new housing development, no funds were allocated for housing inspections.</p>	<p>See above</p>

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Hartford Foundation testimony in support of Senate Bill 151, An Act Concerning a Full Employment Trust Fund Trust Fund	<p>Employment Opportunities</p>	<p>The proposal would have required the Labor Commissioner to conduct a study regarding the establishment of a full employment trust fund in order to create employment opportunities and job-training programs.</p>	<p>The Foundation offered its support of the proposal which included provisions that would have allow the fund to support workforce housing, employment opportunities for disadvantaged youth, and the expansion of work-study opportunities for secondary and post-secondary students. The Foundation shared some what it has learned through its investments on programming for opportunity youth, men and women returning from incarceration and work with the region’s Alliance Districts. The Foundation encouraged the Department of Labor to complement programming already in place to provide more opportunities for students and others facing barriers to employment access to job training, employment and other supports.</p>	<p>The bill was approved by the Labor Committee but never taken up in the House or Senate.</p>	<p>As part of our efforts to dismantle structural racism and improve social and economic mobility for Black and Latino residents of Greater Hartford, the Hartford Foundation seeks to close the wealth gap and end generational poverty by increasing stable education and employment opportunities for adults and youth in our region facing barriers to employment.</p>
Hartford Foundation testimony in support of House Bill 5003, An Act Concerning Education Funding in Connecticut	<p>Employment Opportunities</p>	<p>Legislation made substantial revisions to how public education is funded in the state and include a significant increase in education funding focused on under resourced school districts.</p>	<p>The Foundation offered its support for the proposed legislation’s comprehensive package of reforms to address the historic disparities in state education funding and provide much-needed support Connecticut’s highest need and most under resourced districts. The testimony discussed the Foundation’s ongoing work with the region’s Alliance Districts and suggested that the costs of developing critical school-community-</p>	<p>An amended version of the proposal, which included a \$300 million increase to local school districts and an additional \$50 million over two years to support special education costs, was</p>	<p>As part of its efforts to increase stable employment opportunities for adults and youth in our region facing barriers to employment, the Foundation has made significant investments in six of our region’s Alliance Districts (Bloomfield, East Hartford, Manchester, Vernon, Windsor, and Windsor Locks). The Foundation has seen how stronger school partnerships with families, nonprofits and the community help</p>

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			family partnerships including staff, programs and activities should be considered as part of equitable public education funding.	approved by the House and Senate and signed into law by Governor Lamont.	students feel increased connectedness to school, leading to increased attendance, academic engagement and persistence to graduation.
House Bill 6319, An Act Concerning Efforts By the Department of Economic and Community Development to Assist in the Recruitment of Persons or Persons Into Manufacturing Programs	Employment Opportunities	This bill required the DECD to support recruiting job seekers and high school students into manufacturing programs.	In its testimony, the Foundation asked the committee to consider expanding the bill's provisions include recruiting untapped talent such as opportunity youth and men and women returning from incarceration. The Foundation also encouraged the committee to consider including additional funding to provide academic supports in programs to ensure that participants who need to build math or other literacy skills are successful.	The bill was approved by the Labor Committee but never taken up in the House or Senate.	See above
Hartford Foundation testimony in support House Bill 6875, An Act Concerning the Issuance of a State Identification Card or Motor Vehicle Operator's License to a Person Being Discharged from a Correctional Facility	Employment Opportunities	This legislation required that a person being discharged from a correctional facility can obtain a state identification card or a motor vehicle operator's license at the time of discharge from such facility.	The Hartford Foundation submitted testimony in support of the bill based on the Foundation's own investments in assisting men and women returning from incarceration and the recognition that their complex needs cannot be met with access to valid state identification.	The bill was approved by the House and Senate and signed into law by Governor Lamont.	The Foundation has made significant investments in support of successful re-entry of residents returning from incarceration. In addition, Foundation staff has served on a legislative working group which submitted a series of recommendations that included the need to remove barriers to previously incarcerated residents which prevent them from obtaining housing, education and employment opportunities.

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Hartford Foundation Testimony on House Bill 6659, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2025, and Making Appropriations Therefor (Judicial and Corrections)	<p>Employment Opportunities</p>	<p>Portion of state budget proposal focused on funding of state judicial and corrections programs</p>	<p>The Foundation offered testimony on a proposal to reallocate the \$6.5 million in savings from the closing of the Willard Correctional Institution to create a new Justice Reinvestment Fund within the Department of Correction’s budget. The funding could be used for a variety of programs including in prison education and workforce development programs, support for post-release substance abuse treatment and other health programs. The Foundation also recommended that if such a fund was created that the distribution of resources be informed by multiple community voices, including the men and women who have been incarcerated as well as service providers.</p>	<p>Bill was approved by both the House and Senate and signed into law by Governor Lamont.</p>	<p>The Foundation has funded critical reentry supports to help returning citizens succeed, including preemployment training and job placement assistance offered through the Reentry Welcome Center in Hartford and the BEST Chance Program, which provides individuals with access to basic services and referrals to numerous other programs.</p>
Hartford Foundation Testimony on House Bill 6888, An Act Concerning Juvenile Justice	<p>Employment Opportunities</p>	<p>This bill implements various juvenile justice policy changes, including (1) expansion of the community-based diversion system, (2) expansion of the use of automatic prearrest diversion of children, (3) expansion of the membership of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee to include new members and funding for stipends for such members for childcare and transportation costs incurred due to their service on the committee, (4) development, implementation and</p>	<p>The Foundation offered its support of the bill’s inclusion of a community-based diversion system, and to expand it, as needed, for use by police officers instead of arresting children, when appropriate. Foundation testimony highlighted the approach taken by one of its grantees to expand support to young mothers. The Foundation also supported the legislation’s expansion of the Alvin W. Penn Racial Profiling Prohibition Act to include pedestrian stops to provide additional data to prevent racial</p>	<p>The bill was approved by the House and Senate and signed into law by Governor Lamont</p>	<p>As part of its efforts to dismantle structural racism and improve social and economic mobility for Black and Latinx residents of Greater Hartford, the Hartford Foundation invests in programs that remove barriers to economic success and increase social cohesion and the perception of community safety in Hartford. The Foundation offered its support for this bill based on its intent to keep children out of the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems and to develop options for diverting youth</p>

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		<p>funding for a comprehensive commissary implementation plan, (5) development of a reentry success plan, (6) full implementation of the plan to transition any person under eighteen years of age from the care and custody of the Department of Correction to the care and custody of the Judicial Branch, and (7) expansion of the Alvin W. Penn Racial Profiling Prohibition Act to address pedestrian stops.</p>	<p>profiling by state and local law enforcement. The Foundation-supported work of the Connecticut Institute for Youth and Police Relations can help inform approaches to reducing profiling youth of color. The Foundation also supported the bill's proposed expansion of the membership of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee to include four persons who are able to provide a voice for those living in communities of high juvenile arrest rates, including two of whom are under twenty-six years of age and have been impacted by the juvenile justice system.</p>		<p>to other programs and mitigating the potential long-term developmental impact.</p>
<p>Hartford Foundation Testimony in Support of House Bill 922, An Act Prohibiting an Institution of Higher Education from Withholding Transcripts</p>	<p>Employment Opportunities</p>	<p>The bill prohibits institutions of higher education from withholding student transcripts from employers, prospective employers or any branch of the military service of the United States as a means to collect a student debt.</p>	<p>The Foundation offered its support of this legislation, whose advocacy was led by one of the Foundation's grantees, the Student Loan Fund. The testimony discussed the fact that transcript withholding prevents students and alumni from accessing their transcripts due to debts owed to the educational institution. This practice prevents students from continuing their education, transferring credits, and getting jobs necessary to pay off delinquent loans. Transcript withholding disproportionately harms low-income students and those who do not complete their degrees, who struggle to pay what they owe before they</p>	<p>The bill was approved by both the House and Senate and signed into law by Governor Lamont</p>	<p>As part of its efforts to increase stable employment opportunities for adults and youth in our region facing barriers to employment, the Foundation provides approximately \$1.3 million in college scholarships, with more than 700 students receiving new and renewed scholarships, each year. In 2022, the Foundation provided a \$45,000 community organizing grant to the Student Loan Fund to support its work to develop leaders to reconstruct the systems of higher education funding and financing that disproportionately impact people of color and first-generation students.</p>

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			have completed their degree and obtain a good paying job.		
Hartford Foundation Testimony in support of House Bill 6692, An Act Concerning Certain Arts, Culture and Tourism Grants	Arts and Culture	This legislation would have authorized the Department of Economic and Community Development to provide certain grants concerning arts, culture and tourism, and required the department to identify strategic goals, establish metrics and establish an accountability structure for such grants.	The Foundation offered its support this bill citing its own work to support arts and cultural organizations led by people of color and providing resources to artists of color. The testimony raised up the fact that COVID created competing needs between basic human services and the arts, reinforcing the need for the public sector to be the first and primary funder for both arts and basic human needs. The Foundation encouraged DECD to work to ensure that the development and implementation of strategic goals include collaboration and input from organizations and individuals representing under resourced artists of color.	The bill was approved by the Legislature's Commerce and Finance Committees but never taken up for a vote in the House or Senate.	As part of the Foundation's efforts to dismantle structural racism and advance equity in social and economic mobility in Greater Hartford's Black and Latinx communities, the Hartford Foundation seeks to support arts and culture in our region, with a focus on expanding opportunities for people of color, who are underrepresented in Greater Hartford's art workforce.