



**Testimony before the Transportation Committee of the General Assembly
On Proposed House Bill 6047**

**Submitted by Commission on Women, Children and Seniors
February 15, 2017**

Senator Boucher, Senator Leone, Representative Guerrera, ranking members, and members of the Transportation Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the proposed bill before you.

The Commission on Women, Children and Seniors (CWCS) is the non-partisan arm of the Connecticut General Assembly. As staff to the legislature, CWCS researches best practices, coordinates stakeholders, and promotes public policies that are in the best interest of Connecticut's underserved and underrepresented women, children and older adults. Under statute, CWCS also serves as staff to the Interagency Working Group of the Two-Generational Initiative of the State of Connecticut. In both of those capacities, CWCS submits written testimony on:

**HB No. 6047, AN ACT CONCERNING PUBLIC TRANSIT COORDINATION IN
EASTERN CONNECTICUT**

House Bill 6047 would require the coordination of public transportation services in eastern Connecticut. CWCS supports this concept for the following reasons:

Improved coordination of public transportation services would have positive effects on access not only to transportation services themselves, but would increase access to other services available to low- and moderate-income individuals who do not possess reliable, private means of transportation; this access in turn would increase efficiency of service delivery and improve quality of life outcomes. Such services include medical and mental health services, educational services, job training, child care and child development services, nutritional supports, and other support and wraparound services that typically are made available through agency sites in centralized locations, not all of which are in easy reach of the rural and suburban areas that dominate the eastern part of the state.

In addition, coordinated public transportation, if properly planned, would also enable those individuals without private means of transportation to obtain and retain employment in locations both within and beyond their towns of residence—locations that currently are barred to them by lack of regular and coordinated access. Improved public transportation coordination therefore is a direct support of increased family economic security; it is good economic policy.

This type of coordination of services is a two-generational strategy as well. As was recently pointed out in the CWCS report to the legislature¹, “too often families are served through ‘siloes’ systems that result in fragmented services, lessening their impact on improving the lives of children, parents, and families. Two-generational approaches place families at the center, and *place the work of coordination on agencies* in order to ensure that whole family interests and needs are addressed.” (*emphasis supplied*)

Under its original legislation (Sec. 401 of Public Act No. 15-5), the Two-Generational Initiative created six demonstration sites to assist parent and child by focusing on services within systems; the sites chosen were diverse in size and location, urban, suburban, and rural, in order to create the greatest possible diversity of experiences in two-generational work, and the learnings that would create the strongest possible two-generational models for further work in the state. Among those six sites was Colchester, which provided a “rural lens” on the challenges of serving low-income families and improving their outcomes in educational and workforce development goals.

Transportation can make or break a family. Based upon the experiences of the Two-Generational sites in fiscal year 2016, transportation was common among them as a barrier cited frequently by parent informants. Without coordinated transportation, parents are unable to take their children to medical appointments, to get to work at a regular time, to attend community meetings, visit the food pantry, to get from the child care provider to the community college and back again in time to pick their children up at the end of the day.

To apply the “rural lens,” the Two-Gen team in Colchester reported low-income families were unable to take their children to school if they missed the morning school bus, unable to bring their children to the rare local early childhood program that could offer them a slot, unable to travel to neighboring towns for adult literacy classes or workforce development services. Like their urban counterparts, rural residents miss many opportunities for lack of transportation; beyond that, in rural areas the isolation of those without transportation is profound, increasing the challenges to children, parents and families.

¹ *A Two-Generational Approach: Reaching Workforce Success and School Readiness*, 2016 Report of the Interagency Working Group, submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly as required by Sec. 198 of Public Act 14-297, submitted January, 2017. Retrieved from: <https://ctcwcs.com/two-generational/>

While there are no simple answers to these difficulties, they cannot be addressed without concerted planning and coordination of a system of transportation that itself coordinates with the wider systems of services to be accessed—in terms of location, scheduling, funding streams, leverage, and non-duplication—and which places the needs of the clients first. The Two-Generational Initiative continues to work with Colchester to document its learnings, including those around transportation challenges. Our hope as staff to the Initiative is that those learnings will benefit other towns that share characteristics with Colchester and with other Two-Gen sites, including those in the eastern part of the state.

In connection with that work, CWCS strongly advocates legislative supports for further planning and coordination of services, in transportation together with other sectors, to deliver the most efficient and effective supports the state can provide for our families.

Thank you.