



## 2019 Legislative Agenda<sup>1</sup>

The Commission on Women, Children and Seniors (CWCS) provides information, research and analysis to elected officials and the public regarding issues affecting the state's women, children and older adults, without regard to ethnicity or socioeconomic standing. As appropriate, our work also seeks to inform – and is informed by – federal policies that have an effect on our residents.

**Statutory Mandate:** Pursuant to statute, the Commission's mandate is to “(1) Focus its efforts on the following quality of life desired results for women, children and the family and elderly persons in the state: That they are (A) healthy, safe and achieve educational success; (B) free from poverty; and (C) free from discrimination; (2) Make recommendations to the General Assembly and the Governor for new or enhanced policies, programs and services that will foster progress in achieving the desired results described in subdivision (1) of this subsection.

### Legislative Priorities

*Legislative priorities are policy measures that the CWCS takes the lead on, in partnership with others.*

**Two Generational Workforce, Education, System Change and Service Delivery** – Through administration and coordination of the 2GEN Advisory Council, work with partners in federal, state and local government, philanthropy, business, and advocacy organizations to promote two-generational approaches and systems reform at the state and local level that provide opportunities for and meet the needs of vulnerable children and their parents together. This is also a workforce strategy through which we will support women's advocacy efforts (e.g., CWELF, Aurora) on college completion for women and girls, STEAM fields for women, and caregiver supports for those who care for the elderly and long term care.

### Literacy

Over the past five years, the State of Connecticut's K-3 Literacy Initiative has led the way in collecting data and ensuring sustainable outcomes in literacy proficiency by implementing its scientific and research-based literacy efforts in under-performing schools and districts.

The Commission will continue to lead in these efforts by drafting and supporting legislation that will take CK3LI to scale for the entire state. This will take both policy change and budget prioritization. The Commission will also support the creation of a Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success at UCONN which will continue to lead the state's efforts in closing the opportunity gap in literacy and organizing a legislative forum on Reading,

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<sup>1</sup> The Commission on Women, Children and Seniors (CWCS) is a non-partisan arm of the Connecticut General Assembly. As staff to the legislature, the 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.

## **Anti-Bullying/Abuse, Empathy, Connection and Social and Emotional Skills Building and Support**

Over the years, the Commission has played a collaborative role in the development of a statewide climate strategy. Having convened a School Climate Task Force in the latter part of 2018, advocates and practitioners agree that Connecticut's school climate and anti-bullying laws are due for a revision. The task force recommended that the Commission continue to collaborate with national, state, local, philanthropic and academic partners to build upon existing law to support the adoption of statewide social and emotional skills building guidance/standards, and to review and seek to modify Connecticut's anti bullying law to focus on social and emotional skills building.

The Commission will also continue to participate in a nationwide collaborative to develop and model Social and Emotional Learning Standards in the state. The Commission will continue to support the work of the task force and its recommendations. Furthermore, Understanding the issues of social isolation and bullying faced by our senior population, the Commission will expand its collaborative efforts to include strategies to support our aging population in this field.

## **Mandated Reporting**

Under Connecticut law, mandated reporters are required to report or cause a report to be made when, in the ordinary course of their employment or profession, they have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a vulnerable person is being abused or neglected, or that a specific type of practitioner is impaired in a way that endangers public health. Vulnerable populations protected by our mandated reporter laws include children, persons with disabilities, residents of long-term care facilities, the elderly, and those treated by impaired practitioners.

There is opportunity to explore Connecticut's mandated reporting law to enhance training, communication and statutory language. The Commission will lead on this issue by convening an informational forum to explore this area of law and determine whether there are opportunities to effect policy to bring more clarity to our mandated reporter laws in the best interest of vulnerable populations.

## **CWCS Issue Areas**

*Issue areas are general policy topics that the CWCS supports, in partnership with others.*

**Correctional and Detention System Conditions for Women, Children and Seniors** — The Commission will support the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus of the legislature and the Committee's on Aging and Children on their efforts to address abuses and disparities in our corrections and detention systems. This is a joining of the work undertaken by the Commission on Equity and Opportunity.

**Trafficking In Persons** – Continue to work to prevent and address sex and labor trafficking by supporting 2019 policy measures identified by the Trafficking in Personals Council.

**Water Safety and Awareness** — The CWCS established a task force to more fully understand the health and well-being of children around water safety. CWCS is slated to receive the final recommendations and next steps for the task force on January 23, 2019. The CWCS will support the policy recommendations of the Water Safety and Awareness Task Force for the 2019 legislative session to address and prevent accidental drowning by raising awareness and providing policy guidance.

**Violence Against Women** – Support advocacy effort that promote the rights of all women to bodily autonomy by confronting, addressing, and preventing all forms of violence against women including rape, sexual assault and abuse, domestic and intimate partner violence, stalking, sexual harassment and emotional abuse.

**Achievement Gap** – Promote policies inside and outside the school system to close persistent gaps in educational achievement among the poor and children of color.

**Long-Term Care** – Assist State agencies and policy makers in developing and modifying programs that serve all persons in need of long-term care.

**School Climate** – Support schools efforts to reduce suspension and expulsion rates by increasing teacher training and support. Support policies to reduce bullying in schools, including those based on race, ethnic history, religion, and sexual orientation.

**Minority Teacher Recruitment** – Collaborate with the State Department of Education and institutions of higher education on strategies to increase the number of culturally sensitive and ethnic minority administrators and teachers in the state of Connecticut school system.

**Economic Justice, Independence and Pay Equity** – Support external advocacy efforts to promote wage equality and pay parity by eliminating gender segregation in the labor market through data collection, stronger anti-discrimination laws and standard wage initiatives.

**Reproductive Justice** – Support external advocacy efforts to ensure all women’s right to have children, not have children, parent the children they have in safe and healthy environments, and have bodily autonomy and freedom from any form of reproductive oppression.

**Senior Centers** – Strengthen the connection between senior centers and other senior-serving municipal agents and the State by promoting implementation of the recommendations of the task force established through S.A. 16-7, *An Act Concerning Senior Centers*.

**Disabled Children and their Families** – Monitor the changes and funding reductions that would affect children (from birth through age 21) who are entitled to educational and other services, including transitional services and family supports.

**Safety Nets for the Most Vulnerable** – Monitor trends in funding of – and access to – such vital Safety Net supports as Care4Kids, TANF, SSI/SSDI

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