



RE: SB 1511

March 18, 2025

Committee on Education, CT General Assembly

Dear Committee members:

We provide this feedback on SB 1511 as nonprofit providers with extensive experience supporting disengaged and disconnected youth in our state. We are incredibly pleased to see state decisionmakers recognize this, as a recent report put it, *unspoken crisis*.

- **Sec. 3a (9) and (10), pg 4:** We urge lawmakers to use the definitions of disconnected youth found in the 2023 report *Connecticut's Unspoken Crisis* (glossary, page 8); since this report was published, many practitioners and funders in the state are now using these definitions, and continuity helps us provide consistent data over time to show our interventions are either effective or need adjustments.

- **Sec. 3f, pg 6:** We applaud lawmakers for establishing a data-sharing process to ensure programs serving these youth are effective. We encourage you to partner with nonprofit program experts when developing metrics: We have done extensive research for our own programs to determine how we can best understand what's working, and we're happy to share those learnings with you.

- **Sec. 6d, pg 8–9:** We commend lawmakers for expanding access to workforce development programs for disengaged and disconnected young people. We ask you to work with providers to ensure each program is structured in a way that supports these young people as they need wraparound supports and intentional relationships with youth development professionals in addition to workforce development skills to find success. Again, we're happy to share our knowledge and experience on this issue.

We're proud that many of us were lauded in the 119K Commission's 2024 report *Young People First* as organizations providing effective services that meet the needs of these youth. Between this report and *Connecticut's Unspoken Crisis*, there is extensive research and evidence around successful interventions currently being used to help disconnected youth.

The 2,000+ youth we all serve, and those we don't have the capacity to reach, need help *right now*. Data collection is important, but action, using proven interventions, is vital, life-saving, and needed immediately. **We strongly urge the committee to consider including in the bill:**

- **a provision funding training for Connecticut nonprofits seeking to work with this population but who lack the skills and expertise to do so.**
- **funding to build the capacity of those of us utilizing proven interventions to help disconnected youth graduate high school and obtain and keep good jobs, which was a recommendation in the *Young People First* report.**



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Thank you for this opportunity to share our expertise and thoughts on this important legislation, and thank you for pursuing ways to ensure happy, healthy futures for every young person in Connecticut. We offer to you our experience and knowledge to make this a reality.

Signed,

Marc Donald, Catalyst CT

Leonard Jahad, CT VIP

Ben Dubow, Forge City Works

Jackie Santiago, Compass Youth Collaborative

Mike Duggan, Domus

Hector Rivera, Our Piece of the Pie

Sunindiya Bhalla, Roca