

The Community Fund for WOMEN & GIRLS

Winter 2021

a component fund of  The **COMMUNITY** Foundation for Greater New Haven



State Representative Aimee Berger-Girvalo, a champion for abortion justice, at the State Capitol.

A Year of Action, Advocacy, Bold Ideas

It has never been more important to be part of the Community Fund for Women & Girls - a time of extraordinary challenges and opportunity to make change. In the past year, the Fund leaped into action to fund COVID relief efforts, support the Connecticut Collective for Women and Girls and collaborate to fund a study on the effects of the pandemic on women in the state. The report provided policy makers, advocates, nonprofit leaders and others with a searing look at inequities facing women in Connecticut, and in particular women of color, in areas of employment, childcare, healthcare, housing and food security.

The report also provided bold solutions, ideas for change. The groups presented the report to the General Assembly's Women's Caucus in February and some of the proposals were enacted within months of the study. Now, women and girls' organizations around the state are galvanizing support for proposals for this next legislative session and beyond.

The Institute for Women's Policy Research's

report "Building the Future: Bold Policies for a Gender Equitable Recovery" also revealed how profoundly the pandemic has affected women and families in the U.S. In a June virtual Convening co-hosted by The Fund and The Community Foundation, Dr. C. Nicole Mason, President and CEO of the Institute for Women's Policy Research, talked about the vital importance of rebuilding the social safety net and making childcare accessible to and affordable for all families.

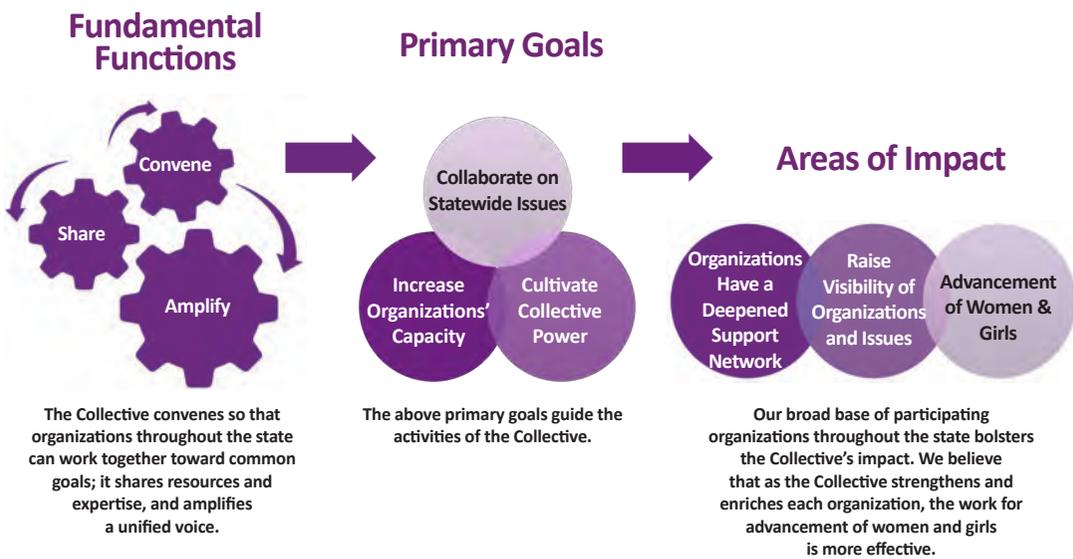
The Fund also created the Girls of Color Mentoring Network with nine Greater New Haven nonprofit organizations.

While a major focus of The Fund has been on pandemic recovery and collaborative work to find solutions to inequities and injustice, The Fund continues to monitor the alarming status of reproductive rights in America. Amanda Skinner, President and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, calls this "a red alert moment for reproductive rights in America." In a detailed question and answer piece, she shares what is coming up, resources and actions to take.

Powerful Report on COVID's Impact Reveals Inequities Faced by Women in Connecticut and Recommends Changes for an Equitable Recovery

The COVID pandemic put into stark relief the many inequities women, and women of color in particular, face in COVID health outcomes, access to healthcare, employment, childcare, ...

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An illustration of the guiding principles of the Connecticut Collective for Women & Girls

Powerful Report Reveals Inequities

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... housing, and food security across the state.

A groundbreaking collaborative study by the Connecticut Collective for Women and Girls (The Collective) and the Connecticut Data Collaborative (CTData), with funding and advocacy support from the Community Fund for Women & Girls, the Aurora Women and Girls Foundation, the Fairfield County's Women and Girls Fund and others, found a 300% increase in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) requests at the start of the pandemic and that one in three people applying for unemployment during the pandemic were women. It also found that just six percent of families of color can afford high quality infant or toddler programs; that homelessness was predicted to increase, disproportionately affecting Black and Hispanic households; and that more Hispanic women reported food insecurity compared to women of other races and ethnicities.

The "Essential Equity: Women, COVID-19 and Rebuilding CT" report findings were presented to the Connecticut state legislature's Women's Caucus. In February, State Representatives Dorinda Borer (D-West Haven) and Rosa Rebimbas (R-Naugatuck), co-chairs of the Women's Bipartisan Legislative Caucus, hosted a webinar to share findings and present recommendations to make change. Borer called the statistics "startling." On her website, Rep. Rebimbas says they will collaborate on the issues raised "to help women and girls in Connecticut to work through this public health emergency and beyond."

Madeline Granato, Policy Director at the Connecticut Women's Health and Legal Fund (CWEALF), says the report shows how vital women are to the state's economy. "The report highlights that if even just one to three percent of moms who reported in fall 2020 having to stay home and not work due to childcare leave the workforce entirely, Connecticut could see a loss of between \$150 and \$500 million in annual wages for one year alone," she says. "This illustrates the clear cost of doing nothing, not only to women and the families that depend on their income, but to our state and our economy as a whole."

In addition to the many illuminating statistics, the report included recommendations, urging policy makers to enact changes including acknowledging racism as a public health crisis, expanding HUSKY healthcare eligibility, and continuing to fund telehealth visits. It recommended

Powerful Report Reveals Inequities cont'd

the state invest in caregiving – "increased childcare spots, subsidies to make care affordable, and increased pay for childcare and healthcare workers." And it recommended making investments in housing and "equitable pathways to high-wage, high-growth jobs and a commitment to closing gender and racial wage gaps."

The state legislature addressed a number of the recommendations this year, Granato says. In one instance, the state allocated use of American Rescue Plan funds to temporarily enable parents in low wage-earning jobs to enroll in job training programs and not lose their childcare funding eligibility. The state also provided funding for legal representation for tenants facing eviction.

One policy recommendation would strengthen the state's paid sick days law. "We were the first state in the nation to require certain employers to provide paid sick time to their workers, but now, more than 10 years later, the law is outdated," she says. The law needs to be expanded to ensure all workers – regardless of their job title or the size of the company they work for – "have the short-term time that they need to care and recover – especially as we continue to live and work through a pandemic."

Strengthening Organizations and Young Women Creating the Girls of Color Mentoring Network

Across New Haven and the Greater New Haven region, organizations – long established community-based groups and programs just getting started, all led by women of color – work on behalf of girls and young women. They provide mentoring programs that focus on college readiness or esteem building, or on career or business development.

Now, with support from the Fund for Women & Girls, nine mentoring organizations will form a collective, finding new ways to bolster their work and each other within the Girls of Color Mentoring Network. The goal is to strengthen the organizations, their leaders and staff so they can provide young girls and young women of color with as many resources, tools, and the guidance they need to thrive particularly at time when the long-term implications of the pandemic on education, mental health, youth violence, and financial needs of families are becoming apparent.

Strength in numbers will be helpful, say nonprofit leaders, in reaching guidance counselors, school administrators, teachers and parents who interact with girls and understand the benefits of mentoring programs.

The Girls of Color Mentoring Network grew out of a series of spring focus groups with leaders of mentoring organizations that serve girls of color. The groups explored the challenges facing young girls pre/post pandemic; the supports needed to help participating mentoring organizations meet their mission in serving young girls; and the potential collaboration opportunities among mentoring organizations. Participating organizations include: D.E.S.T.I.N.E.D to Succeed; National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc.; Phenomenal I Am; Spanish Community of Wallingford; Collaboration of Minority Women Professionals; Theta Epsilon Omega Chapter, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.; New Haven Alumnae Chapter, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.; Iota Chi Sigma Chapter, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.; Urban Community Alliance.

The Network builds on the Fund's gender specific work and is designed with a racial equity lens, directing resources to community-based and grassroots organizations led by women of color with the goal of supporting young women of color. The one-year pilot program will provide individual grants of \$3,500 to the mentoring organizations.



An October 2nd rally in Stamford, Connecticut.

Credit: Planned Parenthood of Southern New England

Reproductive Rights: Q & A with Amanda Skinner

MSN, MBA, President and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Southern New England

In what abortion rights leaders and activists across the country are calling a momentous and perilous time for reproductive rights in the U.S., Amanda Skinner, President and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, discusses the latest developments, what is at stake and shares ideas on resources to turn to for information and actions people can take.

Q. Can you share some information on what is happening and where and what is at stake? What are the next steps in the fight for reproductive rights?

A. Right now, is a red alert moment for reproductive rights in America. We are watching a coordinated strategy to roll back reproductive health, rights and access — one that is years in the making — unfold. Just this year, more than 600 restrictions on abortion were introduced in state legislatures across the country. Many of these won't go into effect but it's clear that politicians won't stop trying to take away people's fundamental reproductive rights.

On September 1, Texas enacted one of the most restrictive and radical abortion bans in the country. This law bans abortions after six weeks, before many people even know they are pregnant. Alarmingly, the law is enforced through civil actions: this law allows anyone — even a complete stranger — to sue anyone who helps a person seeking an abortion after six weeks, with a minimum award of \$10,000 for a successful lawsuit. Already we've seen an exponential increase in Texas patients visiting health centers in surrounding states for access to abortion. Those who can't afford to travel or take time off work are left virtually without options and without choice.

And this isn't the only fight. Already, politicians in Missouri, Arkansas, South Carolina, and other states are following Texas' playbook to push increasingly extreme abortion bans.

This month, the U.S. Supreme Court is reviewing a 15-week abortion ban in Mississippi. This is the first direct challenge to *Roe v. Wade* since Justice Amy Coney Barrett was appointed, and it has the potential to completely gut the protections of *Roe* and render the right to abortion meaningless.

Even in places where the right to abortion is protected, like here in Connecticut, we know there is still inequitable access to abortion. For people who are undocumented and ineligible for health insurance coverage, or residents enrolled in high-deductible plans who are forced to pay out-of-pocket for the cost of their medical expenses, access to sexual and reproductive health care — including abortion — is often out of reach. We need to address these barriers in Connecticut and

Reproductive Rights: Q & A with Amanda Skinner

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make health care more affordable and easier to access.

This is an issue of equity and justice. Abortion bans are about controlling anyone who has a uterus — women, trans men, and people with nonbinary and fluid gender identity — and strip away their rights to make decisions about their bodies and their future. These bans also have the hardest impact on people who face multiple barriers to accessing care: Black and Latino/a/x people, people with low incomes, immigrants, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and more. Restrictions on abortion and on sexual and reproductive health care only reinforce the deep, systemic, and painful health care disparities in our communities.

Q. Can you direct readers to where they may find additional resources and information to keep up with what is happening?

A. Locally, you can follow us on social media @PPSNE to learn more about our work in Connecticut — and nationally, you can follow @PlannedParenthood and the Center for Reproductive Rights to get more information about how other states are impacted.

We also encourage people to learn more about the reproductive justice and abortion justice movements. This work is led by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) activists, fighting for equitable access to reproductive health care and working to ensure everyone can decide when, how and if they want to become a parent and to raise their children in safe, supportive, and healthy communities. We recommend following SisterSong, All* Above All, the Black Women's Health Imperative, and National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice — these are just a few of the many organizations we can continually learn from.

Q. What are some specific actions our readers can take? How can they get involved and help?

A. We want to encourage people to support those who are most impacted — if possible, please consider a donation to a Texas Abortion Fund or one of the funds through the National Network of Abortion Funds. These funds help cover the costs of abortion, including additional out-of-pocket expenses like travel and childcare.

Right now, is a red alert moment for reproductive rights in America.

— Amanda Skinner

You can also donate to the abortion access fund at Planned Parenthood of Southern New England to help patients in Connecticut access abortion — and an additional gift to our organization supports sexual and reproductive health care services, education programs, and community outreach and advocacy efforts in our own communities.

Another powerful thing you can do is speak out and share your story. We can help end the stigma around abortion by speaking up from our own experiences. Sexual and reproductive health care, including abortion, is life-saving and life-changing. Visit ppsne.org/story to share your story.

Q. What can people do while they wait for the Supreme Court decision?

A. We can get behind Congressional efforts to safeguard access to abortion, including the Women's Health Protection Act. This critical legislation would prevent states from enacting medically unnecessary restrictions on abortion and protect our fundamental right to safe, legal abortion.

Connecticut's U.S. Senators and Representatives have all co-sponsored the bill, which passed the House recently. If you have a moment, contact your Representative and thank them for their vote so they know abortion access matters to you. You can also contact Senator Blumenthal (who introduced the bill in the Senate) and Senator Murphy and tell them you want the Senate to take action — and thank them for championing reproductive rights.

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Salary Transparency, Working to Bridge the Gap

On October 1, the state took another step toward closing the gender wage gap with “An Act Concerning Salary Range for a Vacant Position,” says Madeline Granato, Policy Director at the Connecticut Women’s Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF). The new law states “employers must provide job applicants salary ranges for vacant positions.” The law also allows current employees to request the salary range for the job they hold.

In addition, the law changes the wording from “equal pay for equal work” to “equal pay for comparable work” to better reflect the realities of the modern workplace. Employees will receive equal pay for work that requires “substantially similar skill, effort and responsibility and is performed under similar working conditions.”

Being aware of the salary range for an open position and not having to state the salary an applicant is currently earning are viewed as major steps toward wage equity. Granato notes that in public sector jobs where salaries are posted, the wage gap quickly levels off.

Salary negotiations can have an impact on a woman’s life for decades. Knowing what a salary range is can help women negotiate.

“Since women, specifically women of color, are already paid significantly less, they would need to ask for a very large percentage increase to be on par with their white, non-Hispanic male colleagues,” Granato says. “This, compounded by unconscious and implicit bias that labels women as less likeable or desirable candidates when they negotiate the salary they deserve, contributes to a cycle where women continue to be underpaid and undervalued.”

In its report on wage inequity, the National Women’s Law Center stated that closing the wage gap is crucial for women who are just starting out in the workforce because the difference in earnings undercuts a woman’s “ability to provide for herself and her family as well as her retirement security.”

The new law builds on others passed in recent years in Connecticut to bridge the wage gap. In 2015, the state passed a law saying employees could not be retaliated against for talking about their salaries with other employees. In 2018, the state passed a law prohibiting the use of salary history in the job application process and the next year the state passed legislation for a comprehensive paid family and medical leave program, considered one of the strongest in the country.

The Community Fund for Women & Girls is a long supporter of organizations, including CWEALF, that advocate for wage equity.

Considering a gift to The Fund? THANK YOU!

The Community Fund for Women & Girls is Greater New Haven’s only endowment promoting the social and economic advancement of women and girls. We can do what we do because of the continued support from our community.

To gift retirement assets or appreciated securities or if you would like to create your own individually named fund, please contact Sharon at 203-777-7071. To make a credit card donation, please visit fundforwomenandgirls.org. Checks are gratefully accepted using the enclosed envelope.

Advisory Board Spotlight: Cynthia Watson

When Cynthia Watson was first asked to consider becoming part of the Community Fund for Women & Girl’s Advisory Board, she decided to attend a Fund-sponsored event. She had worked for the City of New Haven and for a nonprofit and was familiar with the work of advisory boards. But this board, she says, was something else altogether. She was immediately drawn in.

“There were front line folks, executive directors, people from foundations, people who were retired and people in the corporate world – a very well-rounded group of women from New Haven and Greater New Haven who all had a very profound interest in supporting women and girls,” Watson says. “I’m often telling my daughters and nieces and women in the community about the board – how the board looks like me.”

She went to that first meeting and stayed. She likes how the board is both collaborative and decisive. The board takes great pride in their work, “like the Grants Committee, they take time to research. Their due diligence is awesome, bringing information – qualitative and quantitative data – but they don’t take forever. Then we talk and make a decision,” she says. “The women on the board have a drive to want to get something done and we work together to get it done. Everyone has a strength they bring. And there’s a synergy like I’ve never seen anywhere.”

“There’s a learning that happens too,” adds Watson, who has long volunteered in the New Haven community. “If it’s a topic I’m not familiar with I listen to people who are experts in their field. You’re encouraged to be part of those conversations, to be inquisitive because we know these are the same questions that may be raised by the community...”

She’s proud of the way The Fund and The Community Foundation pivoted as the pandemic hit. “It was scary for all of us. At first, we checked in to see how everyone was doing. Then we went right to ‘how can we help in the communities?’ Some of the needs may or may not be specific to our goals before the pandemic, but we shifted and focused on asking ‘what can we do to help our community now?’”



Credit: Judy Sirota Rosenthal

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Q. As President and CEO of Planned Parenthood Southern New England, can you share your thoughts about what is happening and why you feel getting involved matters?

A. This fight is incredibly personal to me. Planned Parenthood was there for me as a patient. As a nurse-midwife, I’ve spent years working to give my patients the essential care they needed and deserved. Now, at Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, I am proud to lead an organization dedicated to providing access to health care and advocating for change here in Connecticut, in Rhode Island, and across the country to achieve the promise of reproductive freedom for all people.

I encourage everyone to join our movement. We need you — your voice, your experience, and your story are incredibly powerful. I’ve seen change happen and I know it’s possible. Right now, it might feel like the fight is too big, or the challenge too daunting. But what we’ve achieved over the years here in Connecticut to protect reproductive rights is a testimony to the legacy of thousands of people just like me and you who took a stand and fought for what’s right. We have the power to continually make change for those in our state as we fight for equitable access to health care — for ALL. Visit ppsne.org/get-involved



Credit: Planned Parenthood of Southern New England



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