



Greater Hartford Gives Foundation Testimony on

Senate Bill 003, An Act Concerning Health Care Affordability

Senate Bill 497, An Act Protecting Food Security For Veterans And Others And Mitigating Federal Cuts To Nutritional Assistance

Human Services Committee

March 17, 2026

Good afternoon Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrest, Senator Perillo, Representative Case and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee. The [Greater Hartford Gives Foundation](#) (formerly the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving) is grateful for this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of **Senate Bill 3, An Act Concerning Health Care Affordability and Senate Bill 497, An Act Protecting Food Security For Veterans And Others And Mitigating Federal Cuts To Nutritional Assistance**. We support the legislature's efforts to develop transitional programming to maintain access to essential food and healthcare services for Connecticut's vulnerable residents, including veterans, who are at risk of losing federal benefits.

According to the [Connecticut Department of Insurance](#), federal reductions in insurance subsidies and new federal requirements put as many as 35 percent of Connecticut residents enrolled in Affordable Care Act (ACA) plans through Access Health CT at risk of losing their coverage by 2034. The expiration of enhanced premium tax credits at the end of 2025 has impacted approximately 137,000 individuals across nearly 100,000 households, many of whom rely on this financial assistance to keep their health insurance affordable.

According to [Feeding America](#), more than 516,000 (1 in 7) Connecticut residents struggle with hunger; more than 122,000 (1 in 6) children are food insecure. Child hunger has risen, with rates reaching up to 25 percent in cities like Hartford and New Haven. For children, food insecurity can lead to developmental delays, mental health issues, and physical illnesses.

The [Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity's State of Food Insecurity in Connecticut 2025 Report](#) found that the overall state of food security in Connecticut has significantly worsened and that will likely continue in the coming years without significant intervention. Connecticut has passed Maine for the highest food insecurity rate in New England.

Senate Bill 3 would provide critical support for thousands of Connecticut residents negatively impacted by the federal reductions to health insurance premium subsidies, through the establishment of the Connecticut Affordable Health Care Trust Fund administered by the State Treasurer's Office. The legislation also creates the Connecticut Option affordable health care program to offer state premium subsidies to eligible residents to assist them in obtaining affordable health plans through Access Health Connecticut, the state-run health insurance marketplace. The foundation applauds the legislature for developing practical solutions to mitigate federal funding losses and help ensure that people continue to have access to affordable.



The state is facing complex challenges which require collaborative, holistic approaches to manage the current and prepare for future changes to major federal assistance programs. The foundation supports Senate Bill 3's efforts to address changes to federal work and community engagement requirements for Medicaid and SNAP beneficiaries by establishing working groups to monitor and advise on the state's response and enhances data sharing between state agencies to streamline program administration and eligibility verification. The legislation's focus on planning and seeking input from key stakeholders and interagency collaboration recognizes that the challenges related to accessing benefits often present interrelated issues; services often engage overlapping vulnerable populations. We strongly support the provision that integrates consulting with current enrollees in Access Health Connecticut, health care providers, health insurance issuers, health care advocates, researchers, actuaries and nonprofit health care service providers. Tapping their insights will provide work groups additional direct practical experience.

The challenge of diminished federal support across a range of programming requires a coordinated response. The foundation applauds the legislation's recognition that state agencies addressing basic human needs should work together to create an ecosystem of support. We recognize that coordination takes time and recommend exploring ways of integrating ongoing interagency collaborative work as feasible.

Since 1925, the Greater Hartford Gives Foundation has proudly served as the community foundation for the 29-town Greater Hartford region. Last year, the foundation celebrated 100 years of service and remains committed to building an even greater Hartford region. Over the past two years, we have distributed more than \$115 million in grants to promote equitable opportunity for all residents in our region. Made possible by the gifts of generous individuals, families and organizations, the foundation has awarded grants of more than \$1 billion since its founding.

As part of our efforts to dismantle structural racism and advance equity in social and economic mobility in Greater Hartford's Black and Latine communities, Greater Hartford Gives supports [basic human needs](#) in our region by ensuring food security, reducing homelessness, and expanding access to health care. This work recognizes that longstanding systems and practices are challenged to meet people's most basic human needs. Through our investments, we have seen that when essential needs are met, people are better able to achieve stability and other goals.

We support nonprofits working to reduce homelessness, address food insecurity, and improve the physical and emotional wellbeing of Greater Hartford residents, prioritizing Black and Latine residents who are disproportionately impacted by structural racism and bias. Our grantmaking is structured to strengthen the local and regional safety net and ensure people have the stability necessary to participate in education, the workforce, and their community. We also support activities that increase the coordination among basic needs providers, and the responsiveness of local and state agencies.

For many years, **the foundation has provided annual grants to address basic human needs (totaling approximately \$8 million in 2025) to support regional and local nonprofit agencies in providing direct services and addressing systemic challenges.** Our grants tackle a range of related issues, including food security and healthy food choices and other supports for wellness.

These grants include the foundation's annual **Basic Human Needs Emergency Assistance grants** where more than 60 percent of funding supports food assistance. In 2025, the foundation awarded \$755,000 in



Emergency Assistance grants to 70 nonprofits, including faith-based and mutual aid organizations. These grants prioritized nonprofits that serve neighborhoods and towns with a higher percentage of residents living in poverty and sought to reduce barriers to equitable access to basic needs. Our investments have helped to address a portion of the enormous need, but philanthropy alone cannot adequately address food insecurity and lack of access to health services without state investments. **The foundation supports the proposed legislation's provisions to invest state dollars in transitional state-funded nutrition assistance programs to ensure that Connecticut residents are not left without essential support to provide food for themselves and their families.**

The foundation's basic human needs strategies intersect with our [Employment Opportunities](#) investments where we have seen how food, housing, and other wraparound supports are essential in supporting people in persisting in job training and sustaining employment.

Through our grantmaking and broader work with nonprofits, we have seen increased needs among families with children. Rising costs for basic needs such as health care and groceries and the increasing number of families struggling to make ends meet require the state to provide a safety net that ensures that families have access to food.

The foundation supports the provisions in Senate Bill 497 to establish a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Transitional Benefit Program to help vulnerable individuals, including veterans, who may lose benefits due to changes in federal work requirements, providing them with financial assistance, job training, and case management for up to twelve months. Like Senate Bill 3, this legislation takes a thoughtful, holistic approach to ensuring that Connecticut residents continue to have access to basic human needs, including food. We applaud the legislation's creation of a dedicated account to support this program to serve people at risk of losing access to SNAP and ensure that veterans receive the same Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits they previously received, without requiring meeting the new federal work requirements. We recognize that meeting the new requirements will likely be challenging for many served in nonprofit programs, especially people with disabilities and other health conditions or financial barriers that make working difficult.

The foundation also supports the bill's proposal for the Department of Social Services to seek **federal approval for a three-year pilot program using a Medicaid waiver to offer "produce prescriptions" and nutritional counseling to Medicaid beneficiaries**, aiming to improve health outcomes and reduce food insecurity. The foundation also supports the bill's call for **increasing the minimum annual rate for "Meals on Wheels" providers to at least match the cost-of-living adjustment measured by the consumer price index.** From our longstanding work with nonprofits providing food services, it can be challenging to meet costs of providing healthy meals. The increased funding proposed is essential in ensuring providers can manage the cost of food for the people they serve.

We want to share what we are learning from research supported by the foundation and work with nonprofit providers supporting the basic needs of the families they serve.

As a member of the Connecticut Urban Opportunity Collaborative (CUOC), a partnership among Greater Hartford Gives, The [Community Foundation for Greater New Haven](#), and [Fairfield County's Community Foundation](#), the foundation has invested in [UpTogether](#) to launch a multi-regional Direct Cash Assistance Pilot Program. The program promotes social and economic mobility while studying the



impact of cash assistance and documenting the need to preserve public benefits to ensure that the cash assistance boosts limited financial resources as intended. The pilot program is designed to support 120 people from Hartford, New Haven, and Bridgeport who are facing economic hardship and collaborating to build community power and improve their lives and neighborhoods. Over three years, participant households will receive monthly payments totaling \$12,600 to help alleviate financial challenges and foster community improvements. A growing body of evidence from the many direct cash programs operating across the country demonstrates that direct cash can lead to increased food security, improved health, more stable employment and housing, and increased family incomes and savings.

Both Senate Bill 3 and Senate Bill 497 create additional work for state agencies, with much of this work being led by the Department of Social Services. **We ask that the Committee consider including adequate funding to administer these programs, including support for communications to alert the public and to work with the populations to be served to ensure they understand and can meet new federal requirements.**

At a time when costs for basic needs continue to rise, while access to jobs has become increasingly more challenging, Senate Bill 3 and Senate Bill 497 represent thoughtful, compassionate responses to the substantial federal reductions in vital programs that support Connecticut's vulnerable residents. The state can and must do all it can to mitigate the negative impacts of these proposed changes to federal policy and program requirements. The foundation fully appreciates that Connecticut legislators recognize the need for the state to act decisively.

The Greater Hartford Gives Foundation is ready to partner with legislators, state government leaders, philanthropy, advocates, and other stakeholders to ensure that all residents have the resources they need to thrive. We invite policymakers and other stakeholders to meet with us to explore public-private partnerships and ways philanthropic dollars could complement existing resources to help address funding gaps and foster equitable strategies to support Connecticut residents with significant unmet needs.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our staff at policy@greaterhartfordgives.org or 860-548-1888.