

Approval of United Response to COVID-19 for Connecticut's Youth and Young Adults

WHEREAS, the Partnership for Connecticut's mission is to help Connecticut's disengaged and disconnected youth and young adults (ages 14 to 24) access the educational and career opportunities they need to succeed in life;

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic is a public health crisis that has and will continue to impact Connecticut's residents and families, especially Connecticut's disengaged and disconnected youth and young adults who are already in a vulnerable position and are likely to have inequities exacerbated by the pandemic;

WHEREAS, the Partnership aims to assist with a united response to the COVID-19 pandemic consistent with its mission and for the benefit of disengaged and disconnected youth and young adults (ages 14 to 24) in under-resourced communities across Connecticut;

WHEREAS, the Partnership underscores the importance of addressing both urgent and longer-term challenges in order to advance equity, access, and opportunity for Connecticut's disengaged and disconnected youth and young adults;

WHEREAS, the Partnership aspires to support and encourage a future whereby all young people have access to the educational tools and technology they need to learn and thrive, and situations such as this pandemic would not further marginalize our most vulnerable young people;

WHEREAS, the Partnership believes that a united response requires bipartisan leadership, as well as collaboration and coordination with young people and their families, State leaders, educators and school officials, higher education leaders, mayors and community leaders, and non-profits and service providers;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it hereby:

RESOLVED, that the Partnership will commit resources, time, and energy toward assisting with a united, statewide response to COVID-19 for Connecticut's disengaged and disconnected youth and young adults (ages 14 to 24), helping them to access the educational and career opportunities they need to succeed in life; and further

RESOLVED, that the Partnership will work with the Connecticut State Department of Education and local school officials to increase equitable access to education for up to 60,000 students enrolled in eligible high schools by understanding their technology needs and making every effort to secure laptops for those high school students as quickly as possible in accordance with the Equitable Access Program Guidelines, as follows:

A. The program objective is to advance equitable access to education by providing laptops to those eligible high schools and students who need them;

B. Program eligibility is limited to the high schools across the 33 Alliance Districts who serve significant populations of students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, and laptop distribution will prioritize students demonstrating the most need; however, if the needs are met for these eligible high schools and there is remaining inventory and resources, then program eligibility may expand to include high schools beyond the Alliance Districts where more than

40% of students qualify for free or reduced-price meals, and laptop distribution will prioritize students demonstrating the most need;

C. Eligible districts and high schools may opt into this program on behalf of their students if student laptops are a need;

D. Eligible districts who opt into the program will receive laptops to increase their ability to provide

high school students with devices during their high school careers; districts will retain ownership of these laptops to help close opportunity gaps and support future cohorts;

E. The program will distribute laptops through a collaborative design, such that everyone is working together to achieve the program objective, as follows:

a. The Partnership and the Connecticut State Department of Education will determine the available inventory of laptops in the country's supply chain;

b. The Connecticut State Department of Education and participating school district superintendents will develop a comprehensive plan to promote equitable access to public education by linking the program with efforts to expand content and connectivity for eligible students and their families;

c. The participating school district superintendents will:

i. Determine specific needs within the available inventory identified by the Partnership and the Connecticut State Department of Education;

ii. Develop and assume responsibility for device distribution and maintenance plans, ensuring that students receive the laptops once ordered and that the laptops are well maintained and integrated into each participating district's IT system;

iii. Create a communications plan so that eligible high school students and their families have the information they need to participate in the program;

F. The Partnership's CEO shall negotiate prices and develop proposals with device providers based on the available inventory, identified needs, and available resources, and recommend proposals to the Partnership's Board of Directors for consideration and final approval within 10 days; and further

RESOLVED, that the Partnership will work with young people and their families, State leaders, higher education leaders, mayors and community leaders, and non-profits and service providers to develop an inclusive and impactful strategy for addressing immediate and longer-term challenges consistent with the Partnership's mission in accordance with the United Community Program Guidelines, as follows:

A. The program objective is to help Connecticut's disengaged and disconnected youth and young adults overcome the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in ways that are consistent with the Partnership's mission;

B. Program eligibility is limited to under-resourced communities in Connecticut where there is a high poverty rate and youths and young adults (ages 14 to 24) who are showing signs of disengagement or disconnection from high school, the workforce, or the community;

C. The Partnership shall work with stakeholders in under-resourced communities to ensure public input and participation in program design, while remaining focused on advancing positive outcomes as quickly and sustainably as possible;

D. The Partnership's CEO shall present a recommended strategy to the Partnership's Board of

Directors for consideration and final approval within 15 days, leading to direct funding opportunities consistent with the Partnership's mission and the explicit goals for the United Community Program; and further

RESOLVED, that the President/CEO and the Officers are hereby authorized to take all necessary actions to advance planning, engage stakeholders, and develop proposals and recommendations for the Board of Directors' consideration and approval as soon as possible in accordance with the Equitable Access Program Guidelines and United Community Program Guidelines.