



NARROWING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP IN CONNECTICUT

Harnessing the Power of Philanthropy

A workshop and discussion with Dr. Robert Putnam

- On July 21, 2016, 80 members of 16 funding organizations from across Connecticut came together to discuss how they can leverage their unique roles as funders to narrow the opportunity gap.



① THE PROBLEM

Over the past 60 years, the increasing segregation between classes has halted socio-economic mobility. The poor have little hope of overcoming hardships and advancing their status as poverty isolates, obstructs and excludes them from opportunity, limiting:

- Where they live
- Where they go to school
- Who they know
- Whom they marry

This opportunity gap especially affects children.

For example, in Connecticut:

- Single parents are three times more likely to have a high school diploma or less¹.
- High-poverty schools have lower rates of pre-K experience².
- Low-income residents have low trust in their neighbors, regardless of place³.

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We don't have to believe that because the geographic lines are drawn so narrowly here in Connecticut that our thinking and our actions have to be as limited. We know in order to have any real, long-term, sustainable, systemic change in this state we all have to come together. What we're thinking about here today, and what we'll continue to think about is: 'What do we do tomorrow?' and 'How do we keep this momentum going?'

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LINDA KELLY

President of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving

¹University of New Hampshire, Carsey School of Public Policy | ² Connecticut State Department of Education | ³ 2015 DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey



- Dr. Putnam estimates **the opportunity gap costs the U.S. \$5 trillion** between criminal justice costs, health care costs, and the loss of contributions from all kids who fall victim to the gap.

② THE CHALLENGE IN CONNECTICUT

Three big questions:

1. What would a collective impact effort to address Connecticut's opportunity gap look like?
2. How can we build upon or expand efforts that are currently in place and working?
3. What are the barriers to making these ideas a reality, and how do we remove them?

Calling upon philanthropy to act differently:

- Sharing agendas, data, metrics and outcomes
- Advancing learning communities, courageous conversations and inclusive practices
- Increasing advocacy and lobbying
- Engaging the business sector

To create systemic change in areas that will help narrow the opportunity gap, including:

- Regionalization
- Two-generation approaches
- Early childhood development
- Public education funding and standards
- After school and mentorship programs
- Workforce development
- And much more

③ NEXT STEPS

Continue the conversation and advance the effort.

- Download and read, ["Closing the Opportunity Gap,"](#) a product of Harvard Kennedy School's Saguaro Seminar with Dr. Putnam.
- Determine your commitment. Might you be willing to attend a next convening in the fall of 2016 or first quarter of 2017?

