



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 28, 2021

# New Report Documents Unequal Impact on Women & Girls in CT; Outlines Need for Equitable Solutions for Relief & Recovery

*“Essential Equity: Women, COVID-19 and Rebuilding CT” Reveals Stark Data and Critical Challenges; Recommendations Call for Comprehensive State Action*

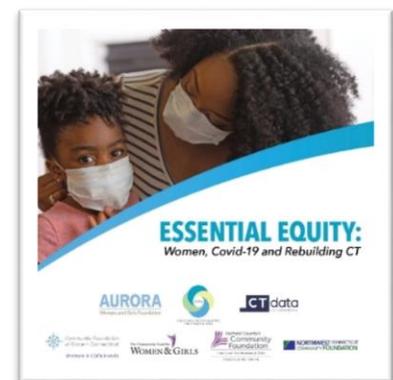
A new report, [Essential Equity: Women, Covid-19 and Rebuilding CT](#), documents the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women and girls, and particularly on women and girls of color, across areas of health, economic security, child care, housing, mental health, safety, and hunger.

The report calls on policymakers, government officials, philanthropists, nonprofit service providers, corporations and community members to respond to the wide-ranging findings and actionable recommendations - not only to improve the lives of women and girls, and their families, throughout the state, but to assure a strong economic recovery for Connecticut.

The 47-page report calls for gender and racial equity to be centered in relief and recovery. It highlights that effective economic recovery will not be possible without strong participation from women, noting that 49% of Connecticut's workforce is female and 48% of those are essential workers, and that women-owned business, because of the industries where they have the strongest presence, were most at-risk due to the pandemic. Additionally, without affordable child care and paths to careers with family-sustaining wages, the report points out, women will not have economic security and the larger Connecticut economy is less likely to improve.

Findings from the report call for attention and action, including:

- Females surpassed males in unemployment claims for the first time in Connecticut's history, and throughout the pandemic.
- Females of color account for over 1 in 3 initial (36%) and continued (43%) unemployment claims filed by females.
- 75% of females who applied for initial and continuing unemployment did not have a college degree\*
- 30% increase in calls to the Safe Connect domestic violence hotline, accompanied by a 125% increase in time on calls and 43% increase in costs for safe housing
- 19% of females feel no, or slight, confidence in their ability to pay rent or mortgage next month (32% for Black females)
- 300% increase in SNAP applications for food assistance; four-fold increase in calls to 211 from individuals seeking help with buying food; 70% of those calls made by females



"For those of us who advocate for women and girls, we knew in our hearts that the impact of the pandemic would be devastating," said **Jennifer Steadman, Executive Director, Aurora**

**Foundation for Women and Girls.** "*Essential Equity* provides the data to show just how profound the impact has been, even over the first six months of the crisis. Now that we have the facts, we can work to direct resources to the women and girls who need them and build solutions that will work better for women and girls, and, by extension, for all residents of Connecticut."

Stating that "our economy depends on women," the report indicates that 76% of parents who had to stay at home and not work due to child care are female, and nearly 1 in 3 families have not been able to find quality child care during the pandemic. Women-owned businesses were also among those most affected by the pandemic, as across all industries those with the highest percentage of female owners were in industries most impacted – healthcare and social assistance, education services, and retail. In addition, housing insecurity has risen with increased evictions and mortgage delinquency.

"*Essential Equity* took on the difficult task of assessing the impact of COVID-19 as the crisis was still occurring. We offer a first look at the impact on women and girls, told through public data. In addition, we worked with community partners to provide recommendations on how to approach relief and recovery in a way that builds a more equitable future in Connecticut," said **Michelle Riordan-Nold, Executive Director, Connecticut Data Collaborative.**

The report recommends significant investments to improve access and affordability of quality child care, health care including telehealth, housing and job opportunities, including closing wage gaps and preventing discrimination. It also calls for all levels of government to acknowledge that racism is a public health crisis.

In regards to child care, the report data indicates that approximately 75% of child care providers are private business owners – 92% of which are women-owned – and 3 in 4 closed during the pandemic. The report recommends a system of universal early education and child care to ensure all families can afford high quality care with well-paid providers and educators in the setting of their choice.

The report also recommended an expansion of access to telehealth to increase access to mental and physical health services for women and girls, and awareness of the need to address the digital divide and meet the needs of people of color.

"Our program serves low-income women, many of whom are single mothers and most are women of color, attending college in pursuit of careers with family-sustaining wages. The pandemic exacerbated the challenges they face every day: transportation, childcare, caring for elderly parents and working full-time, or in many cases, multiple jobs.... all while completing their college education," said **Adrienne Cochrane, CEO of YWCA Hartford Region.** "The report shows that what we saw first-hand is happening across the state. "Many lost their jobs or struggled to make ends meet due to reduced work hours, causing some to fall behind on essential living expenses, such as rent, utility payments, or providing food for their family."

Highlighting inequities and the disproportionate health impact from COVID-19, females have experienced more cases and deaths than males. And although Hispanic individuals make up 16% of the state's population, 28% of Connecticut's COVID-19 cases were Hispanic; 10% of the state's population is Black, yet 15% of individuals with COVID-19 cases were Black. Black and brown individuals are more likely to know someone who was hospitalized, and someone who died, from COVID-19 than whites.

The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is the organizer of the CCWG and a collaborator on *Essential Equity*. The [Connecticut Data Collaborative](#) gathered and analyzed the data for *Essential Equity*. The Connecticut Collective for Women and Girls (CCWG), a statewide network for organizations serving women and girls, supported

development of the report and, individually and collectively, is a primary audience for the report. Women and girls' funds from Foundations across the state recognize the power and impact of data to decision-making at all levels. *Essential Equity* is funded collaboratively by the [Aurora Women and Girls Foundation](#), [Fairfield County's Community Foundation's Fund for Women & Girls](#), [Community Fund for Women and Girls of the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven](#), [The Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation in honor of its Women & Girls Fund](#), and the [Women and Girls Funds of the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut](#).

"Connecticut women's funds and partners have demonstrated how, by working together, it is possible to meet even the most daunting challenges," said **Elizabeth Barajas-Román, CEO of the Women's Funding Network**. "By centering the experiences of marginalized women and their families, these partners were able to gather data to make a case for effective relief and recovery centered on equity. This is a crucial strategy in the work of dismantling systemic oppression and inequities so women and girls don't shoulder the burden of the current crisis or the next crisis."

A copy of the full *Essential Equity* report is available for download at [womenandgirls.ctdata.org](http://womenandgirls.ctdata.org)

###

*The **Connecticut Collective for Women and Girls** is a collaborative of organizations committed to the advancement of women and girls, including those who are cisgender, transgender, and non-binary, in the state of Connecticut. The Collective is a network that brings participating organizations together to highlight and amplify their work while drawing on the collective power of collaboration and working together.* <https://www.cwealf.org/advancement-leadership/ct-collective-for-women-and-girls/>

*The **Aurora Women and Girls Foundation** has a deep history of making investments which improve outcomes for women and girls in greater Hartford. Since 2000, Aurora has invested over \$1 million in the community for women and girls with a more recent focus on college completion. Aurora also conducts research and convenes the community to promote understanding of gender issues and fosters collaboration for effective solutions. To learn more about the work of the Aurora Women and Girls Foundation, go to [www.aurorafoundation.org](http://www.aurorafoundation.org).*

*Striving for informed decision-making across Connecticut, the **Connecticut Data Collaborative (CTData)** works to empower an ecosystem of data users by democratizing access to public data and building data literacy. Among its programs and initiatives, the Connecticut Data Collaborative manages the CTData Academy, which aims to increase data literacy, build data capacity and enable nonprofits, state and local government, community groups, and organizations across the state to effectively use their own data, open data, and data from other sources, for the purpose of understanding, measuring, advocating, and impacting lives. [www.ctdata.org](http://www.ctdata.org)*

---

### **Media Contacts:**

For **Aurora Women and Girls Foundation**, Jennifer Steadman, Executive Director, [jsteadman@aurorafoundation.org](mailto:jsteadman@aurorafoundation.org); 860-969-3435

For **Connecticut Data Collaborative**, Bernard Kavalier, Media Consultant [bernard@express-strategies.com](mailto:bernard@express-strategies.com); 860-729-3021

*\*of those who reported their education level*