

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **\$1 Million Investment in Aurora Foundation's College Success Program Launches Enhanced Initiative, Extending Educational and Economic Opportunity for Women in Greater Hartford**

### ***Essential Wrap-Around Support Services Eliminate Barriers, Create Pathways to Higher Education Success and Careers***

The Aurora Women and Girls Foundation has received the largest investment in its history, a four-year, \$1 million commitment to launch an Enhanced College Success Program, building on Aurora's longstanding expertise in collaborating with, and providing grants to, local nonprofit organizations driving success in college for women in Greater Hartford who might not otherwise pursue or achieve higher education success.

The grant, from the Charlotte and Hy Goode Family Fund Supporting Women's Potential at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, triples Aurora's annual grant making, which has had a substantial impact on advancing opportunities for young women in Hartford and the region. In just under a decade, for example, more than 1,500 college students have participated in local programs coordinated by more than 20 nonprofit organizations that earned financial support from Aurora's College Success Program. That grant program is continuing, even as the new initiative is underway.

Aurora-funded College Success programs give women, especially low-income, women of color, and first-generation students the tools they need to navigate and advance in higher education. Aurora has identified best practices for these programs, including one-on-one counseling and advising, mentoring and introducing women to role models, building self-advocacy skills, and addressing basic needs such as childcare and transportation.

As a result of this work, students are graduating and entering careers that pay a family-sustaining wage—buying first houses, starting college savings accounts for their children—and we can now see a way to break the cycle of poverty in Hartford, one of America's poorest cities.

With the landmark donation, formally announced at Aurora's Annual Meeting on March 30, an Enhanced College Success program initiative will go further, and deeper, to encourage life-changing success that can reverberate for generations.



In honor of Charlotte Goode's 95th Birthday, she and her family worked closely with philanthropic advisors from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving to establish the new fund, which will provide \$250,000 per year to support six students who will receive access to College Success programs with additional mentoring and educational opportunities, and wrap-around supports and funding for housing, childcare, technology, health (including mental health), transportation and tuition.

With these barriers removed, the goal is for students to be able to focus on their studies and to have an effective support system to help them navigate any additional barriers. This represents a significant investment per student that will have a positive impact on individual success, but also a positive impact on their children, families and communities.

“What I saw time and again in my career as a guardian ad litem is that women were working to better themselves, but without the kind of help this program offers, there were too many barriers,” explained **Charlotte Goode**. “If you give wrap around services and case management and mentors, it makes all the difference in the world. Once they graduate, they can get better jobs and support their families. Their children will watch them succeed and higher education and success becomes something that seems possible for the kids, too.”

### ***Students Attending Area Colleges, with Support from Aurora’s Enhanced College Success Program and Local Nonprofits***

The new initiative is underway in the current academic semester, with the Aurora Women and Girls Foundation having selected the YWCA Hartford Region’s YW Career Women Program (four students) and the Women in Transition program at Charter Oak State College (two students) to be recipients of funding support in the inaugural year of the Enhanced College Success Program grants. The six students selected by the organizations are attending Manchester Community College, Capital Community College, and Charter Oak State College.

“Aurora is inspired by the power and potential of women and girls. We imagine a world where every woman, every girl, has what she needs to thrive—and then we work to bring the resources to build that world,” explained **Jenny Steadman, Ph.D., Executive Director of Aurora Women**

“WHEN WE PROVIDE WOMEN WITH OPPORTUNITIES, THEY WILL CHANGE THE WORLD FOR THEMSELVES, THEIR FAMILIES, THEIR COMMUNITY, AND ALL OF US.”

**and Girls Foundation**. “Charlotte shares that vision, a vision held by Aurora’s community of donors and supporters, which knows that when we provide women with opportunities, they will change the world for themselves, their families, their community, and all of us.”

The innovative new initiative may resonate well beyond the Hartford region, establishing a new model for achieving higher education and career success for women from underserved circumstances. Students supported by the Enhanced College Success Program will receive financial and coaching support well beyond traditional scholarships or case management.

Grantee organizations in the inaugural year of the Enhanced College Success grant program at the Aurora Women and Girls Foundation were asked to identify students in their existing Aurora-funded College Success program to participate in and benefit from the new enhanced program with increased support for tuition and other living expenses.

“YWCA Hartford Region is honored to be a recipient of Enhanced College Success Program funding. This significant commitment will provide four YW Career Women program participants with financial resources and life coaching services to support college completion and sustainable career journeys,” said **Donna Sodipo, Chief Program Officer, YWCA Hartford Region**.

“The legacy of the Charlotte and Hy Goode Family Fund recognizes the sacrifice and determination working mothers face daily to support their families. This award addresses the often-overlooked complexities women deal with daily as they balance family, work, school, well-being, and life,” Sodipo added. “This opportunity will have a lasting effect and change the lives of our participants and their families in the years to come.”

“The Aurora Women and Girls Foundation, Charlotte Goode, and her family represent the future of philanthropic giving. No longer is it okay to simply meet the needs of our less fortunate neighbor, it is time to acknowledge that financial resources, training, AND higher education (in

workforce relevant programs) is imperative to lasting impact. Together, your gift and our program meet the needs, remove the financial, physical, and even psychological pressures while providing the path to career and economic enhancement. Thank you!” **said President Ed Klonoski** of Charter Oak State College.

“Charlotte’s incredible generosity imagines a world of opportunity and possibility that changes the world one woman at a time,” Steadman noted. “By developing, funding, and delivering strategic solutions for local women in college we can make substantial individual, family, and community impact. Aurora is proud to partner with the Goode Family Fund and bring our college success expertise, robust community relationships and fierce advocacy for women and girls to enact Charlotte’s vision, which mirrors our own. Her recognition that access to college is not enough for these women to reach graduation and entry into careers that will pay a family-sustaining wage is at the core of the enhanced program.”

Even in its early stages, the impact of the new Enhanced College Success Program was recently underscored by a **participating student**:

“I am honored to be selected for such a blessing. This blessing is more than I could have ever thought of or prayed for. For such a dark time of my life to turn into such a bright, positive one shows the God I serve is faithful. This opportunity will allow me to get out of debt, SAVE, and stop over-drafting my account and living paycheck to paycheck. It will allow me to be present with my children and stress less. The amount of gratitude I feel cannot be justified by words. I can see a brighter future ahead for my children and I. Thank you does not feel like enough. We will forever be grateful for this chance.”

“The vision of the Aurora Women and Girls Foundation continues to support efforts to reduce barriers to education, promote opportunities for professional growth, and fuel transformative economic mobility experiences,” Sodipo said of the continuing support provided by Aurora.

Aurora invites participation and support to bring educational and economic resources to women and girls across the community. Continued and expanded support of Aurora makes this program - and so much more - possible for women and girls in Greater Hartford. Visit [www.aurorafoundation.org](http://www.aurorafoundation.org) to learn about upcoming data reports, events and programs.

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### ***About YW Career Women Program, YWCA Hartford Region***

YWCA Hartford Region's YWCW program is designed to address earning inequalities by eliminating multiple barriers program participants often face. The premise of the program is to help underrepresented students enrolled at Capital Community College (CCC) and Manchester Community College (MCC) to bridge education and career gaps through academic counseling, career services and financial coaching.

YWCW makes it possible for low-income women to stay the course, graduate college and secure family sustaining wages. The program serves single mothers (although women who are not mothers can also participate), most of whom are women of color, struggling with the daily challenges of life: transportation, childcare, working full-time, all while completing their college education. The three key program goals are for participants to: graduate with an associate degree and (if applicable) complete required licensing exams; increase their basic economic security and earning capacity; and enhance their financial education skills.

YWCW has provided individualized case management, including one-to-one coaching, career guidance, connection to housing and childcare resources, personal development, and academic support services. Graduating students also receive career readiness training. Through the program's holistic approach, participants, who would otherwise be at risk of deferring their studies, learn self-advocacy and gain the tools needed to complete their degree.

### ***About Women in Transition Program, Charter Oak State College***

The Charter Oak State College Women in Transition (WIT) program was established in 2000, to break the cycle of poverty by helping underserved and low-income single mothers earn a college degree with zero to minimal debt. The program is designed to eliminate barriers, such as: the cost of tuition, fees, and books; provide necessary technology and access; address home front, childcare, and transportation challenges; while offering academic support and coaching.

The program has met the ongoing challenges of the pandemic by creating a virtual food pantry (gift cards are mailed to students), increasing the support of wi-fi hot spots, adding life coaching to services available, and adding access to telehealth mental health services campus-wide.

Students may use the funding from this program for the following: participation in a College Success mentoring program, Tuition and books, licensing exams, housing, childcare, transportation, technology needs, health services (including mental health).

### ***About Aurora Women and Girls Foundation***

In 2000, a group of community leaders came together to lift up women and girls through focused philanthropy. The Aurora Women and Girls Foundation galvanizes resources to increase gender and racial equity through economic security, educational attainment, and leadership for women and girls in the Greater Hartford region. We envision strong, equitable communities in which all women and girls realize their potential and are full, valued, and sought-after participants, economically, politically, and socially.

We achieve our mission by applying a gender and racial equity lens to: conduct cutting edge research; raise funds and direct resources; convene and mobilize community partners; build the capacity of nonprofit organizations; engage individuals and institutions in the power of philanthropy. Our mission, vision, values, and strategies support all women and girls inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.