



For Immediate Release

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HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY RECEIVES GRANT TO LAUNCH PROGRAM HELPING IMMIGRANT WOMEN COMPLETE COLLEGE DEGREES

Funding from Aurora Foundation for Women and Girls will eliminate obstacles to help female immigrant students remain in college

(Hartford, CT) - Hartford Public Library has received a \$14,000 grant from the Aurora Foundation for Women and Girls to fund a new program, **Barriers Can't Stop Us: Building Immigrant Women's Success**, that will help 30 female students who immigrated to the United States while in high school access the necessary resources to remain in school and complete their college degrees.

The program, which will begin this month, has three main goals: reduce the various obstacles – academic, financial and social — associated with obtaining a post-secondary degree, provide support to students as they transition into a new and unfamiliar academic environment, and foster connections between peers of similar backgrounds and identities to mitigate social isolation.

“Pursuing a college degree as a young immigrant woman presents unique challenges,” said **Hartford Public Library President and CEO Bridget E. Quinn**. “We are so grateful that the Aurora Foundation has assisted us in funding a program that will prepare these students for great success in the future.”

Although the transition to college can be difficult for all students, female immigrants face a unique set of hardships when it comes to post-secondary education. These students are learning English while they complete application and financial aid forms almost entirely in English. They also must navigate a new culture of American higher education while pursuing their degree. Finally, daughters in immigrant families often take on additional responsibilities at home while in school, such as caring for younger siblings or assisting parents with English translation. For these reasons, Barriers Can't Stop Us has been created to address the unique experience of female immigrants.

Students in the program will have the opportunity to meet individually with a College Access and Retention Specialist during the summer and the academic year, and they will meet with a peer support network run by a College Peer Mentor each semester.

Hartford Public Library's Michele Maccarone Brophy, who runs the library's after-school English language learning program for immigrant high school students and has more than 30 years of experience working in college access and retention for first-generation and low-income students, will serve as the College Retention Specialist. Students who recently graduated from the English Learner Success program will participate in Barriers Can't Stop Us.

"Having worked with the students while they were in high school, it is exciting to see them take this next important step in their academic journeys, and to be there to support them," **Brophy said.**

The College Peer Mentors, college upperclassmen who have also completed the English Learner Success program, will be matched with a group of incoming first-year students at their respective institutions and will provide them advice about their school and the transition to college. Mentors will be selected based on their demonstration of strong leadership skills.

Hartford Public Library was [one of six organizations](#) selected by the Aurora Foundation for a grant to fund a college completion program.

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About Hartford Public Library

With roots dating to 1774, Hartford Public Library remains at the forefront of redefining the urban library experience in the 21st century. With seven locations throughout the city, the library provides education, intellectual enrichment and cultural development for thousands of children, youth and adults every year. Hartford Public Library has also gained local and national recognition for its wide range of new initiatives and partnerships designed to meet the needs of a diverse and dynamic city and region, including immigration services, employment assistance and youth leadership training. www.hplct.org.