



**CAFCA**  
Connecticut Association  
for Community Action

**February 18, 2021 Public Hearing Testimony before the  
Connecticut General Assembly's  
Housing Committee**

***Board of Directors***

**Peter DeBiasi**  
Access Community  
Action Agency, Inc.

**Dr. Monette Ferguson**  
Alliance for Community  
Empowerment, Inc.  
(formerly ABCD)

**Amos Smith**  
Community Action  
Agency of New Haven,  
Inc. (CAANH)

**Michelle James**  
Community Action  
Agency of Western CT,  
Inc. (CAAWC)

**Lena Rodriguez**  
Community Renewal  
Team, Inc. (CRT)

**Marlo Greponne**  
Human Resources Agency  
of New Britain, Inc.  
(HRA)

**Dr. James Gatling**  
New Opportunities, Inc.  
(NOI)

**David Morgan**  
TEAM, Inc.

**Deborah Monahan**  
Thames Valley Council  
for Community Action,  
Inc. (TVCCA)

***In support of***

**House Bill 5681: An Act Concerning Municipal Opportunity  
Reimbursement and Educational Equity**

Distinguished Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons, Ranking Members, and Members, my name is Deb Polun, and I am the Executive Director for the Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA), the state association that works with Connecticut's nine Community Action Agencies (CAAs), the state and federal designated antipoverty agencies serving nearly 200,000 low- and moderate-income people in all 169 cities and towns across the state.

I am here today to express our support for House Bill 5681, *An Act Concerning Municipal Opportunity Reimbursement and Educational Equity*.

CAAs connect neighbors in need to essential programs and services like employment and training, housing and shelter, energy and heating assistance, early childhood care and education, asset development, and food and nutrition. Through a holistic, comprehensive, multigenerational approach, CAAs work with those in need to plan, achieve, and maintain a realistic path to short and long-term economic self-sufficiency.

Research shows that access to safe, stable, and affordable housing is a key component in achieving and maintaining positive health, economic, and education outcomes for children. Without it, the odds are stacked against them. According to the Urban Institute, children who live in a crowded household at any point in their lives before 19 years old are less likely to graduate from high school and often have lower levels of educational attainment by the time they reach 25. Poor quality housing and underprivileged neighborhoods are also linked to lower kindergarten readiness scores, and students dealing with homelessness are more likely to show deficiency in academic subjects.

All children in Connecticut have the potential to succeed if we provide them with the right tools and opportunities. Having a place to call home is a key component in these efforts, and perpetuates economic opportunity and development – helping to support and build healthy, strong communities.

Unfortunately, too much of Connecticut is essentially segregated, both racially and socioeconomically. This is because of municipal zoning regulations that disincent or prohibit the building of multifamily or other affordable housing. We have seen town after town proactively work to keep lower income people out of their communities, often under the guise of “maintaining character.”

We support all efforts to enhance the availability of affordable housing, which in turn, will promote opportunities for educational and life success for low-income people. Notably, communities with mixed incomes also promote greater understanding and more unity. Specifically, we support this bill, which takes a “carrot” approach by proposing a higher reimbursement rate for school construction to municipalities that include more affordable housing. I urge your support.

Thank you for raising this important bill and for your time and consideration.