



CAFCA
Connecticut Association
for Community Action

**February 16, 2021 Public Hearing Testimony before the
Connecticut General Assembly's
Human Services Committee**

Board of Directors

Peter DeBiasi
Access Community
Action Agency, Inc.

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

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

Michelle James
Community Action
Agency of Western CT,
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Lena Rodriguez
Community Renewal
Team, Inc. (CRT)

Marlo Greponne
Human Resources Agency
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(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 6416: An Act Concerning the Removal of Liens on the Property
of Public Assistance Beneficiaries.**

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 write to express our support for House Bill 6416, *An Act Concerning the Removal of Liens on the Property of Public Assistance Benefits*.

CAAs connect their customers 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.

Connecticut's policy of recovering public assistance by placing liens on the homes of former welfare recipients is not mandated by federal law, and we are one of the only states in the country doing it. This outdated, unfair practice disincentivizes residents who received public assistance in the past from building up their assets, becoming homeowners, and saving money for retirement lest the state come after them for reparations. This "poverty tax" perpetuates the cycle of generational poverty and discourages people who find themselves in a financially vulnerable situation from seeking support from the State in the first place. What's more, the lien remains with the recipient for life – and even gets passed down to their children.

For nearly 60 years Connecticut's Community Action Agencies have fought to address the causes and conditions of poverty, working to remove barriers such as this one that hinder people from building a better and brighter future for themselves and their family. Eradicating this dangerous, unjust measure is one step closer in attaining this goal.

In closing, I urge you to support H.B. 6146. Thank you for raising this important bill and for your time and consideration.