



**CAFCA**  
Connecticut Association  
for Community Action

**February 23, 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)

**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 6471: An Act Establishing a Public-Private Partnership to  
Deliver Cost-Effective Human Services and Deter Fraud**

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 today to express our support for House Bill 6471: *An Act Establishing a Public-Private Partnership to Deliver Cost-Effective Human Services and Deter Fraud*.

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. Last year, we served nearly 200,000 people statewide.

CAAs have been rooted in their communities for over 55 years, providing locally driven programs and services that speak to the needs of those they serve. This includes both as independent agencies and part of a statewide network, partnering with other community-based organizations and government agencies to ensure the most efficient and effective provision of services. And, for over forty years, CAFCA has administered many state and federal grants, led statewide collaborative efforts, and coordinated multiple subcontractors – including the successful administration of various statewide service delivery programs. In years past, this included Residential Energy Assistance Challenge (REACH); Section 8 and the Rental Assistance Program; Safety Net; HUSKY Outreach; Prison Re-Entry; Lead Abatement; and Individual Development Account (IDA) Programs. Currently, this includes enrollment in Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) Case Management; Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Outreach; and the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), among other initiatives.

The network's rich history, years of experience working with neighbors in need across Connecticut, collaboration with state and federal agencies, and deep community connections make Community Action Agencies a key partner in

providing essential, cost-effective services to struggling residents. CAAs currently partner with state agencies including the Department of Social Services, Office of Early Childhood, Department of Aging and Disability Services, Department of Housing, and more. As the State plans for its future program administration, and given the potential number of state employee retirements upcoming in the next five years, CAAs stand ready and able to continue and further our partnership. Additional opportunities and initiatives will be cost-effective for the State, while helping to ensure our poorest residents have access to the tools, resources, and support they need to achieve and maintain financial stability.

In closing, I urge you to support H.B. 6471 – and include CAAs as an essential partner. Thank you for raising this important bill and for your time and consideration.