



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

Senate Bill 86: An Act Appropriating Funds for Housing Resources for the Homeless and to Prevent Homelessness

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 Senate Bill 86, *An Act Appropriating Funds for Housing Resources for the Homeless and to Prevent Homelessness*.

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.

Community Action Agencies know and understand the importance of addressing the housing crisis in Connecticut. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, housing is integral to addressing and reducing intergenerational poverty (especially childhood poverty) and increasing economic mobility. Children who live in safe and stable homes are also more likely to succeed in school and have access to more opportunities that enable them to learn both in and outside of the classroom.

Connecticut's coordinated, focused efforts to addressing homelessness are starting to work. Although January 2020's Point in Time (PIT) Count – a one-day, unduplicated count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals and families – recorded nearly 3,000 Connecticut residents experiencing homelessness, that represents a 35% decrease from 2007. Additionally, the number of people using the state's shelter system has decreased by 42% from 2012.

Driving these positive results are collaborative partnerships under the umbrella of the Coordinated Access Networks (CAN), which are made up of local providers – including Community Action Agencies – working together and with the State of Connecticut. CAAs provide a variety of housing-related services including, but not limited to, affordable housing, emergency shelters, supportive housing, rental

assistance, rapid re-housing, Section 8 application assistance, housing the homeless, and landlord mediation.

As we continue to deal with the adverse effects of the pandemic, another crisis looms: the very real possibility that many people in Connecticut will be evicted from their homes when the moratorium is lifted in April, or when they lose their homes in foreclosure. More funding must be directed to addressing and preventing homelessness, and the State of Connecticut should continue to partner with Community Action Agencies and CANs to do this critical work.

In closing, I urge you to support S.B. 86. Thank you for raising this important bill and for your time and consideration.