



CAFCA
Connecticut Association
for Community Action

**March 29, 2021 Public Hearing Testimony before the
Connecticut General Assembly's
Public Health Committee**

In support of

**House Bill 6666: An Act Concerning the Department of Public Health's
Recommendations Regarding Various Revisions to the Public Health
Statutes**

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 federally designated antipoverty agencies serving nearly 200,000 low- and moderate-income people in all 169 cities and towns across the state.

I am writing to express our support for Sections 70-72 of House Bill 6666, *An Act Concerning the Department of Public Health's Recommendations Regarding Various Revisions to the Public Health Statutes*.

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 how critical safe, stable housing is to addressing and alleviating poverty and homelessness, especially for youth and young adults. It is also inextricably linked to improved health and economic outcomes. This bill plays an important role in these efforts.

Very simply, sections 70-72 of H.B. 6666 makes it easier for young people experiencing homelessness to obtain their birth certificate by removing the issuance fee for "certified homeless individuals" aged 15-24.

It also specifies a definition of homelessness consistent with the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Current state law allows a fee waiver for people who are residents of a homeless shelter or other facility for homeless persons (CGS sec. 1-1h). Yet many youth experiencing homelessness do not stay in a shelter.

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As we all know, birth certificates can be a vital form of identification for people opening bank accounts, applying for jobs, and getting into stable housing. The fee for accessing birth certificates (\$30 if obtaining it from the Department of Public Health, and \$20 if from a person's town of birth) can be a barrier for Connecticut's most at-risk and vulnerable populations.

This proposal is a small, but impactful way that our State can help young individuals who are trying to improve their lives. Thank you for your time and consideration.

In closing, I strongly urge you to support these sections of H.B. 6666. Thank you for raising this important bill and for your time and consideration.