



**CAFCA**  
Connecticut Association  
for Community Action

**March 4, 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***

**Senate Bill 958: An Act Allowing Certain Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Beneficiaries to Use Electronic Benefit Transfer Cards at Participating Restaurants**

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 Senate Bill 958, *An Act Allowing Certain Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Beneficiaries to Use Electronic Benefit Transfer Cards at Participating Restaurants*.

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.

We are excited to have the opportunity to testify in support of this bill this year, as we did last year. This bill allows people who receive SNAP benefits (formerly Food Stamps) to utilize those benefits more efficiently by participating in the federal Restaurant Meals Program (RMP). This would allow SNAP enrollees who are elderly, have disabilities, or are experiencing homelessness to use SNAP to purchase meals in authorized restaurants and, potentially, prepared meals from grocery stores. Why this subset of people? Because these individuals have difficulty cooking meals for a variety of reasons – either disability-related, knowledge-related, or simply because they do not have access to a kitchen to store and cook food. The RMP is in practice in a handful of states across the country, including in a limited way next door in Rhode Island.

While the RMP does not expand SNAP eligibility, it does help people who face difficulties shopping or cooking gain access to food. And, at a time when our state's restaurants have been struggling, implementing this program could provide additional resources while bringing in new customers.

CAFCA acknowledges that creating this program would lead to additional administrative costs for the Department of Social Services, as they would need to sign restaurants up to participate, identify eligible SNAP enrollees, and modify the EBT vendor contract. We hope that these costs will not stand in the way of implementing a program that would be beneficial for so many state residents and businesses.

In closing, I strongly urge you to support S.B. 958. Thank you for raising this important bill and for your time and consideration.