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Connecticut Association
for Community Action

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Comments by Deb Polun, Executive Director
before the Connecticut General Assembly's
Appropriations and Human Services Committees

Public Hearing on the
Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) Allocation Plan for FFY 2022

September 21, 2021

Distinguished Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons, Ranking Members, and
Members of the Appropriations and Human Services Committees:

Thank you for holding this public hearing on the FFY 2022 Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) Allocation Plan. The Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA) is the state association that works with Connecticut's nine Community Action Agencies (CAAs), the state and federal designated anti-poverty agencies serving over 200,000 low-income people in all 169 cities and towns across Connecticut. We are pleased to support the Department of Social Services' (DSS) FFY 2022 SSBG Allocation Plan.

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, 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 economic self-sufficiency.

For the past six years, CAFCA has successfully administered the SSBG Case Management (SSBG CM) program in partnership with Community Action Agencies statewide. A map of SSBG CM catchment areas and agency contact information is included as an attachment to this testimony.

SSBG provides a unique kind of case management. This is because CAA case managers work with vulnerable or at risk adult customers on service provision that facilitates self-sufficiency. Customers are able to work with agency staff for as long as they need, which can range from a few weeks to several months, and sometimes more than a year. Individuals and families who receive SSBG CM must meet specific income guidelines (i.e., below 150% of federal poverty level), residency requirements (i.e., must live in Connecticut) and be part of a vulnerable population. This could be someone who needs mental health treatment, has a physical disability, or is housing insecure.

As with other services provided by Community Action Agencies, SSBG case managers utilize a holistic approach and conduct a full assessment of a customer's needs. This includes things like housing, employment, education, health, and more. Then, together, the case manager and customer set goals, such as achieving a GED, or finding and retaining a new job.

Through the provision of these services, from 10/1/2020-6/30/2021, our agencies helped 3,191 eligible individuals apply for benefits and critical, basic needs services; receive treatment, health, shelter, and transportation services; search for and apply to jobs; and, learn about money management and budgeting.

It is clear SSBG CM works for Connecticut. Of those served from 10/1-6/30:

- 60% seeking housing services obtained services that allowed them to prevent or escape homelessness;
- 90% seeking a basic needs service obtained that service;
- 80% seeking public assistance benefits received eligible benefits; and,
- 86% seeking an improved employment situation have obtained it.

It is important to note that COVID-19 did impact the number of people who received SSBG CM services this past year. However, since the pandemic hit, Community Action Agencies have transitioned nimbly, to provide both remote and in-person service delivery and SSBG CM services, as appropriate and desired – helping to ensure those facing financial struggles continue to receive assistance. Additionally, vulnerable or at-risk populations affected by COVID-19 are more likely to experience things like unemployment or loss of housing – making SSBG CM even more important during this time.

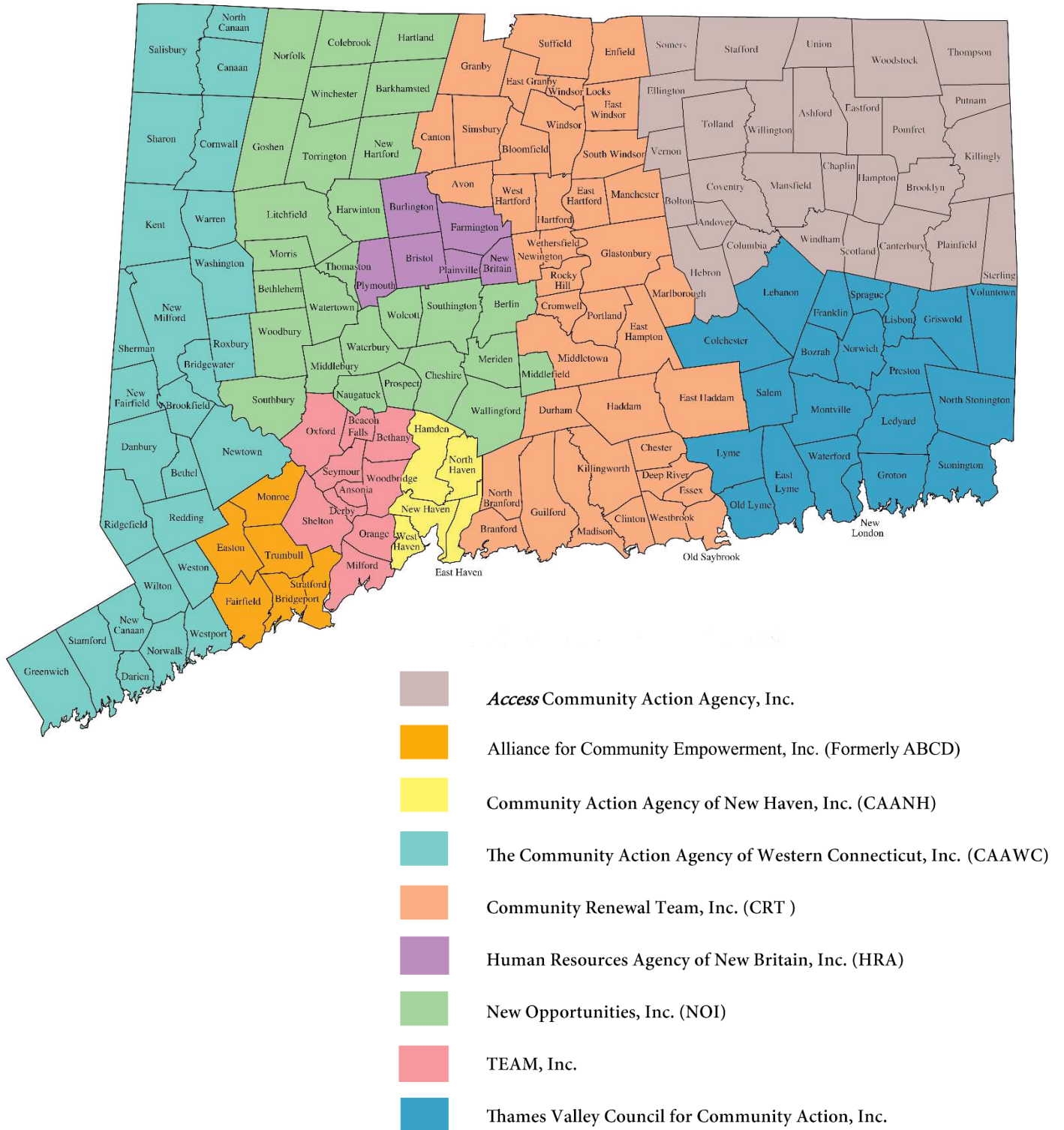
Again, I would like to thank Commissioner Gifford, Deputy Commissioner Brennan, State SSBG Administrators, and the General Assembly – especially the committees represented here today – for continuing to support the critical work Connecticut's Community Action Agencies do to empower people in need and improve communities across the state. CAFCA looks forward to continue to efficiently and effectively run this critical program for the State of Connecticut. We look forward to working with you as we continue serving the state's most at-risk and vulnerable populations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



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Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) Case Management Service Provider Map





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**Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)
Case Management Service Provider Contact List**

Access Community Action Agency

1315 Main Street
Willimantic, CT 06226
860-450-7400

231 Broad Street
Danielson, CT 06239
860-412-1600

**Alliance for Community Empowerment, Inc.
(Formerly ABCD)**

1070 Park Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06604
203-366-8241

Community Action Agency of New Haven, Inc.

419 Whalley Avenue
New Haven, CT 06511
203-387-7700

**The Community Action Agency of Western
Connecticut, Inc.**

34 Woodland Avenue
Stamford, CT 06902
203-602-8833

78 Triangle Street
Danbury, CT 06810
203-744-4700

1 Park Street
Norwalk, CT 06851
203-939-9650

Community Renewal Team, Inc.

330 Market Street
Hartford, CT 06120
860-761-7934

44 Hamlin Street
Middletown, CT 06457
860-347-4465

Human Resources Agency of New Britain, Inc.

336 Arch Street
New Britain, CT 06051
860-225-1084

55 South Street
Bristol, CT 06010
860-584-2725

New Opportunities, Inc.

232 North Elm Street
Waterbury CT 06702
203-575-9799

59 Field Street
Torrington, CT 06790
860-482-9749

55 West Main Street, 3rd Floor
Meriden CT 06450
203-639-5060

TEAM, Inc.

30 Elizabeth Street
Derby, CT 06418
203-736-5420

**Thames Valley Council for Community
Action, Inc.**

83 Huntington Street
New London, CT 06320
860-444-0006

401 W Thames Street, Unit 201
Norwich CT 06360
860-889-1365

CAFCA, Inc. (Statewide Contact)

300 Plaza Middlesex
Middletown, CT 06457
860-832-9438