



CAFCA
Connecticut Association
for Community Action

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)

Dr. Marlo Greponne
Human Resources Agency
of New Britain, Inc.
(HRA)

William Rybczyk
New Opportunities, Inc.
(NOI)

David Morgan
TEAM, Inc.

Deborah Monahan
Thames Valley Council
for Community Action,
Inc. (TVCCA)

Public Hearing Testimony before the
Connecticut General Assembly Housing Committee

Deb Polun, Executive Director
Connecticut Association for Community Action, Inc. (CAFCA)

*In support of SB 201: An Act Establishing
The Healthy Housing Assistance Pilot Program*

March 1, 2022

Distinguished members of the Housing Committee:

Thank you for holding this public hearing to gather information from the public about the importance of affordable, accessible housing in Connecticut. The Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA) is the state association that works with Connecticut's nine Community Action Agencies (CAAs), the state and federally designated anti-poverty agencies serving nearly 200,000 low- and moderate-income people in all 169 cities and towns across the state.

As the largest statewide safety net service provider, Connecticut's network of Community Action Agencies connects neighbors in need with resources that stabilize and improve lives and communities. These services and resources include, but are not limited to:

- Nutrition (SNAP, Meals on Wheels, Congregate Meals for older adults)
- Housing and shelter
- Asset development and financial literacy
- Energy and heating assistance
- Job training
- Early childhood care and education

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 and success.

I have attached a Profile of Services table to this testimony, which shows the services provided by Community Action Agencies in Connecticut.

Senate Bill 201

CAFCA supports this bill, which would establish a pilot program to allow up to fifty low-income families who have a child with persistent asthma to move to high opportunity areas.

Connecticut's asthma rate is higher than the national average; in fact, with 11% of Connecticut's kids having been diagnosed, Connecticut is the **least healthy state** for kids aged 0-17 with asthma.¹

This bill provides an opportunity for low-income people – who are disproportionately reflected in our asthma rates – to move to higher quality housing. The reason this matters is that asthma is linked with indoor environmental triggers that are often found in old, substandard housing stock: dust mites, cockroaches, rodents, and molds, among others. A few innovative programs in Connecticut have made efforts to remediate some of these triggers through home visitation and education; this bill provides another approach by providing the opportunity to move to better housing, which would not trigger the child's asthma.

Ideally, all of Connecticut's housing stock would be brought up to healthier air and environmental standards. Ideally, all of our residents would have access to safe, accessible, affordable housing that promotes health. And, ideally, all of our towns would be “high opportunity zones.”

However, until we attain those goals, this pilot program is a worthwhile effort to improve the lives of children with asthma and give them the best opportunity for good health and high quality of life.

We ask for your support of this bill.

Thank you to all of you for your consideration of this important proposal, and, as always, for your service to our state. Please feel free to get in touch with any questions: deb@cafca.org or 860-832-9438.

* Please see attachment

¹ America's Health Rankings analysis of National Survey of Children's Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB), United Health Foundation, AmericasHealthRankings.org, Accessed 2022.

