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# 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.<sup>1</sup>

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: <u>deb@cafca.org</u> or 860-832-9438.

\* Please see attachment

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 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.

## Services Provided by Connecticut's Community Action Agencies

	ACCE88	ALLIANCE	CAANH	CAAWC	CRT	HRA	NOI	TEAM	TVCCA
Financial Literacy & Asset Development			-		- Citt			1274	
Individual Development Accounts	+				X	X			x
Financial Counseling	x	X	X	¥	X	X	X	X	X
Free Income Tax Preparation		X	X	¥	X	X	X	X	x
Child Care & Youth Development									
CT Child Day Care & School Readiness		x		¥	X	X	X	X	x
Head Start		x				X		x	¥
Infant-Toddler/Early Head Start		x			X	X	X	X	¥
Specialized Care & Education					x	x			x
Youth Dev- After School & Summer Programs		x	¥		X	X			
Community-wide Services									
Clothing Drive		x		¥	X	x			x
Food Drive		x		¥	X	X	X		x
Toy Drive		x		Y	x		x	x	
Criminal Justice	·								
Halfway Houses & Re-Entry					x		x		
Employment & Training									
Adult Education		x		¥		x	x		
One-Stop Employment									x
Youth and Young Adults	x	x	x		x	x	x		x
Vocational & Skills Training	¥	x	¥	x	x	x	x	x	
Energy Assistance & Weatherization									
Energy Assistance & Emergency Fuel	x	x	¥	x	x	x	x	x	¥
Matching Payment Programs	¥	x	¥	x	x	x	x		¥
Home Energy Solutions/Weatherization	_				x		x		
Health									
Adult Incontinence Supplies	Т	x					x	x	¥
Counseling: Individual and/or Family	1	x	¥		x	x			
Diaper Bank	<del>                                     </del>	x	¥	x			x	x	x
Health Care Access/Medical Transportation					x	x	x	x	
HIV/AIDS Prevention & Counseling	+				x	x			
Substance Abuse Prevention & Counseling	+				x				
Housing & Shelter									
Affordable and/or Subsidized Housing	x				x	x	x	Г	x
Emergency Rental/Mortgage Payment	¥	x	x	¥	x	x	x	x	Y
Emergency Shelter	x	_			x		x		
Eviction Prevention & Mediation	x	x		x	×	x	x	x	x
Homelessness Prevention/Rapid Rehousing	x	x	x	-	×		x		Y
Supportive Housing - Adults	x			$\vdash$	×	x	×		Y
Supportive Housing - Youth	x			$\vdash$	_	_			x
Nutrition	+ *								_
	T	×		x	×	×	x	x	
Children & Adult Care Food Program	x		x	Y Y	x	x	x		¥
Food Pantries	x				×	x	×	x	
Meals on Wheels/Congregate Meals	+			$\vdash$	x				x
Summer Food Program  Women, Infants & Children (WIC)	x			$\vdash$		<del></del>	<del>                                     </del>	_	¥
	1			$\vdash$					- 1
Seniors	_								
RSVP & Senior Volunteer Programs				¥	X		x	X	¥
Senior Support Services	¥		¥		X	X	X	X	
Strengthening Families									
Family Development/Parenting Education		x	¥		X	X	x	x	x
Holistic Case Management/Info & Referral	¥	x	x	x	×	x	x	×	x