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Informational Hearing on the Continuation of  
Emergency Declarations and Limited Executive Orders

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

February 8, 2022

Distinguished members of the Connecticut General Assembly:

Thank you for holding this public hearing to gather information as you consider whether to extend the Public Health Emergency and Governor Lamont's Executive Orders. 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.

*I am writing to express our support for the extension of the Public Health Emergency and the continuation of Executive Order 12D.*

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.

***Support for Extending the Public Health Emergency***

CAFCA supports the continuation of the declaration of the public health and civil preparedness emergencies, as several federal funding sources are contingent on this continuation.

This includes FEMA coverage of 100% of non-congregate housing sources. These resources have been critical in ensuring that our residents experiencing housing instability are able to remain safely housed during the ongoing public health crisis.

Emergency SNAP funding is also contingent on the continuation of the declaration. Throughout much of the pandemic, Connecticut households have received an average of an additional \$154.74/month in SNAP benefits – which totals over \$32 million in federal funds coming into Connecticut each month, to help our residents buy groceries and feed their families. This is particularly important, given the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on low-income people and the rising costs of groceries. It just makes sense to continue to bring in these federal dollars to help low-income people across the state.

As the Department of Social Services' partners in SNAP outreach and enrollment services, Connecticut's Community Action Agencies ask you to help our clients with this continued need.

### *Support for Executive Order 12D*

Connecticut's Community Action Agencies know and understand the critical role housing plays in addressing and reducing intergenerational poverty (especially childhood poverty) and increasing economic mobility. Children who live in safe and stable homes are also more likely to succeed in school and have access to opportunities that help them learn both in and outside of the classroom.<sup>i</sup>

Over the past several years, Connecticut has ramped up its coordinated, focused effort to reduce and address homelessness – and we have seen positive results. And, throughout the pandemic, the State and partner agencies like Community Action Agencies have worked together to protect tenants from eviction. The eviction moratorium helped thousands of people stay housed. The UniteCT program, which came online last spring, has provided over \$200 million of rent and utilities payments to help people stay housed, while also addressing the real crisis that landlords across Connecticut have faced.

Executive Order 12D was put into place with the expiration of the eviction moratorium. The order has protected tenants, by requiring that eligible tenants and their landlords seek relief for arrearages through the UniteCT program prior to moving forward with eviction. It also extended the notice to quit from a 3- to 30-day period.

If this Executive Order is allowed to expire, both tenants and landlords will be placed in a precarious position – including the thousands of tenants and landlords who have already started the UniteCT application process and whose applications are pending. These individuals have followed the rules and many will qualify, but the determination and payment processes are expected to extend into the summer. Without the extension or codification of this Order, those tenants and landlords will not receive these needed federal funds.

Moreover, the state Department of Housing has applied for additional federal funds; if those are awarded, we want to ensure that the protections of Executive Order 12D continue to be in place for both tenants and landlords.

In partnership with others who provide services and advocacy in the housing arena, CAFCA asks that the Legislature codify Executive Order 12D into statute, with the following modifications and/or clarifications:

- **Stay the evictions of tenants with pending UniteCT applications until the landlord is paid (or the application is denied).** A paid landlord is required by UniteCT to withdraw the eviction.
- **Preserve, for the duration of the payout period, the 30-day notice to quit with a right to cure.** Even without UniteCT, a 30-day cure period gives tenants with a small arrearage a chance to get caught up. For tenants who must vacate, whether the State of Emergency is formally extended or not, the reality is that the pandemic has made it extremely difficult for such evicted tenants to find a new apartment in a very short period of time. Early return to a 3-day notice to quit will be damaging to tenants.
- **Ensure that requirements related to new applications are not terminated, as UniteCT could receive further funding.** These protections should be suspended during periods when new applications are not being accepted and automatically spring back if/when additional funding comes into UniteCT and new applications are being accepted.

Thank you to all of you for your consideration of these important elements, and, as always, for your service to our state.

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<sup>1</sup> “The Problem.” National Low Income Housing Coalition. Available at: <https://nlihc.org/explore-issues/why-we-care/problem>