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Public Hearing Testimony before the  
Connecticut General Assembly Human Services Committee

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

*In support of HB 5342: An Act Concerning Membership of  
the Low-Income Energy Advisory Board*

March 10, 2022

Distinguished members of the Human Services Committee:

Thank you for holding this public hearing to gather information from the public about a variety of programs and services administered by the Department of Social Services. 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.

**Our vision is a just and equitable world where socially and economically disadvantaged people thrive and reach their highest potential.**

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
- Income tax assistance
- 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. You can find your local Community Action Agency [here](#).

### *House Bill 5342*

CAFCA supports this proposal, which would expand the membership of the Low-Income Energy Advisory Board (LIEAB).

I have served on LIEAB two separate times: many years ago, as the representative from the CT Commission on Aging, and more recently, in my role as the Executive Director of CAFCA.

LIEAB meets every other month to discuss the Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (CEAP) and other energy-related and weatherization-related programs. A variety of different stakeholders – including representatives of the utilities, oil delivery companies, relevant government agencies, and organizations serving energy assistance customers – discuss how the program is working and identify areas for improvement. During the off-season, LIEAB meetings can focus on how the program operated in the past, and issue recommendations for the upcoming year.

These collaborative conversations have proven fruitful, particularly in the past few years, as we have worked to modify program delivery to meet increased needs and changing circumstances during the pandemic. The meetings also serve to develop important relationships among the participants, which help with problem-solving individual cases as they arise.

The bill would allow for more community-based representation on LIEAB, including the addition of another representative from the Community Action Agency network. The additional voices will help LIEAB be more responsive to issues such as clean energy, renters' rights, weatherization needs, and other issues that have arisen during the pandemic and resultant economic downturn.

We ask for your support. 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](mailto:deb@cafca.org) or 860-832-9438.

\* Please see attachment

