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Public Hearing Testimony before the
Connecticut General Assembly Planning and Development Committee

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

*In support of HB 5429:
An Act Concerning Transit-Oriented Development*

March 14, 2022

Distinguished members of the Planning and Development Committee:

Thank you for holding this public hearing to gather information from the public about important zoning laws and development activities 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.

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 5429

CAFCA supports this bill, which would allow for more affordable housing within a half-mile radius of public transit stations in 40 cities and towns across Connecticut.

Due to high costs, many of the customers at our Community Action Agencies do not own or have access to a car. For them, living near public transportation is paramount in getting to work, running basic errands, and even going to school. Many local zoning laws, however, make it difficult to build housing in these areas, often leaving limited living options for our customers and others who rely on public transportation to make ends meet.

“Up-zoning” near transit stations and building more multi-family homes in these areas is one way to address a real and worsening issue in Connecticut – the lack of housing that is affordable to people in a range of incomes. By increasing housing stock, housing prices will lower and more affordable and diverse living options will be created for people of all ages and income levels, including our most vulnerable residents. This will also support overall economic development by bringing more foot traffic to local businesses, creating new opportunities for property owners, and helping employers attract more workers. We have seen examples across the world that people enjoy living in walkable, bike-friendly communities with good public transit; in addition to having a vibrant environment, transit-oriented communities create economic opportunity both in the short- and long-term.

We would like to thank the committee for including in this proposal the affordability provisions that states that, in any development of six units or more in transit zones, 10% of the units must be affordable. This is important in providing accessible housing for low-income individuals, as well as those just getting started in the workforce. However, we would like to see the committee remove the exemptions for towns without water infrastructure and the parking requirements. These keep too many communities closed off and add too much cost to residents, many of whom will not have cars and therefore will not need parking.

Addressing the housing crisis is one of the most important components of our vision for a more just and equitable world. Supporting initiatives and funding for more affordable and diverse housing options, like transit-oriented development, will help individuals and families thrive, reduce intergenerational poverty, and increase economic mobility.

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 or 860-832-9438.

* Please see attachment

