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Public Hearing Testimony before the  
Connecticut General Assembly Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee

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

*In support of SB 487: An Act Establishing the Infant and Toddler  
Early Care and Family Support Initiative*

March 30, 2022

Distinguished members of the Finance, Revenue, and Bonding Committee:

Thank you for holding this public hearing to gather information from the public about important finance initiatives and proposals. 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](#).

### *Senate Bill 487*

CAFCA supports this proposal and is grateful for the Committee's recognition of the need for a sustainable funding source for the early childhood care and education industry. Policymakers, business leaders, and the general public all agree that readily available, affordable, high quality child care is essential to maintaining and growing Connecticut's economy – as well as preparing our next generation of leaders.

Seven of Connecticut's Community Action Agencies provide at least one form of early childhood education for infants through age five, including Head Start, Early Head Start, School Readiness, and other programs. Combined, these agencies served 4,390 children from 10/1/2019-9/30/2020, the most recent reporting period available.

These early childhood programs prepare children for future success by helping to ensure positive and improved social, emotional, educational, and developmental outcomes. They also allow parents and guardians to go to work with the comfort of knowing that their children are being well cared for.

Right now, the child care industry is in danger: child care providers like Community Action Agencies are struggling to hire and retain child care workers, leaving many classrooms closed. Paradoxically, parents and caregivers are paying high proportions of their salaries towards child care, but these payments are not enough to support decent wages for our staff. And, fewer people are going into the child care field, which worries us for the future.

Investing in a statewide Early Care and Family Support account as proposed would create an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 new infant and toddler care spots, allowing Community Action Agencies and other providers to grow their workforce and increase the supply of high-quality child care for this age group.

While this is a good start, we respectfully request that the language of this proposal be expanded to cover early childhood care and education programs for infants through age five. This would provide much needed support to the entire early child care sector and ensure that slots and staffing remain sustainable after children outgrow infant and toddler care, but before they reach school age. Otherwise, there will be internal competition for increased wages and opportunities in infant and toddler care, enhancing staffing and retention issues in other classrooms.

Contracting with child care providers through the Early Care and Family Support account will increase capacity, generate more child care slots, and establish a sustainable source of funding for the future. It is important that this level of sustainability extends to the whole sector, so that all young children can get the high-quality care they deserve through a program that is accessible and affordable for their families.

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.

