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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 SB 289: An Act Concerning Oversight and Funding
of the Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative*

March 8, 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](#).

As you will see in the attached table, several CAAs provide parenting assistance, including a few who participate in CT's Fatherhood Initiative. CAFCA currently partners with the state Department of Social Services, serving as the state contractor for CFI and two separate Fatherhood initiatives (the Access & Visitation Pilot and the Strategic Planning Framework model).

Senate Bill 289

CAFCA supports this proposal, which would update the Fatherhood statute and create a formal office and advisory council for the program. We also support the inclusion of state funding for Fatherhood programs.

Research shows that fatherhood engagement is critical and beneficial to the growth and development of young children. The Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) focuses on these efforts and works towards systems change that helps fathers to be fully and positively engaged and involved in their children's lives.

CFI works with fathers with all aspects of their fathering role including the financial and legal responsibilities, as well as helping to foster an emotional connection with their children. This program has a special focus for those who may not live in the same household as their children and helps fathers with their short-term, intermediate, and long-term needs and goals. Finally, it also provides support to mothers and children. The true impact of the program can be seen in the positive results for children and families in our state.

Updating the statute, creating an office, and formalizing the advisory council will allow the Fatherhood Initiative to garner the attention and support needed to continue and potentially expand this program.

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

