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Public Hearing Testimony before the  
Connecticut General Assembly's Appropriations Committee

Governor's Proposed FY 2025 Midterm Budget Adjustments  
Office of Early Childhood

Rhonda Evans, Interim Executive Director  
Connecticut Association for Community Action, Inc. (CAFCA)

February 15, 2024

Distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for holding this public hearing about the Governor's budget proposals for the upcoming fiscal year. 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 that provide a wide variety of services to nearly 200,000 low- and moderate-income people in all 169 cities and towns across the state. More information about Community Action Agencies is included at the end of this testimony.

**I am writing to express our support for additional investments in early childhood care and education proposed by Governor Lamont.**

Unfortunately, despite its importance to our present and future economy, child care has become unaffordable for many. And Connecticut is in extreme need of affordable child care. According to a recent report, we rank ninth in the country for overall child wellbeing, down from seventh in the prior year. Not having access to affordable child care also negatively affects parents by causing them to miss work frequently, scrambling to find coverage or even quit their jobs. We need both federal and state assistance to ensure that we can continue to provide high quality care to our next generation of residents.

**We support the Governor's proposal, which includes the following:**

- Expands access to Care 4 Kids by increasing eligibility from 60 to 65 percent of the state median income.
- Maintains 240 pre-K slots in the Smart Start program, which are currently in jeopardy due to expiring federal COVID relief funding support.

- Creates a “Tri-Share” pilot program in New London County where the employer, family, and state evenly split child care costs for approximately 200-250 children.
- Earmarks \$45M in existing state bond authorizations for child care facility improvements.
- Reallocates ARPA dollars to OEC for operational grants that support child care program stability and workforce compensation for family and center-based program operators.
- Allocates funding to OEC to provide technical assistance and business support to child care operators.
- Creates “navigators” to assist child care workers seeking health insurance and other state benefits.
- Funds additional administrative costs of merging School Readiness and Child Day Care contract programs and subsidizes the establishment of School Readiness Councils in communities without them.

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. These programs not only benefit the children enrolled, but they also allow parents and guardians to go to work knowing that their children are well cared for.

By investing in a multigenerational approach to early care and learning, Community Action Agencies prepare children for future success while helping to ensure positive and improved social, emotional, educational, and developmental outcomes, as well as reducing the achievement gap. And access to high-quality, early childhood care and education programs is essential in helping to break the cycle of poverty.

Let’s continue supporting and investing in affordable child care, helping children, parents, workers, and our economy thrive.

Thank you for your consideration of these important proposals and for your service to our state. Please feel free to get in touch with any questions at [rhonda@cafca.org](mailto:rhonda@cafca.org) or 860-305-2937.

### *More about Community Action Agencies*

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 (inc. SNAP outreach, Meals on Wheels, and Congregate meals)
- Housing and shelter
- Asset development and financial literacy
- 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. A Profile of Services table to this testimony is below and shows the services provided by Community Action Agencies in Connecticut.

