



February 16, 2017 Public Hearing Testimony before the Connecticut General Assembly Appropriations Committee

Governor's Proposed Budget

Distinguished Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons, Ranking Members, and Members, my name is Amos Smith and I am the President and CEO of the Community Action Agency of New Haven (CAANH). I also serve as Vice Chair of the Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA), the state association for Connecticut's nine Community Action Agencies, or CAAs. **I am here to discuss the Governor's proposed budget, especially the portion around our major funding: the Human Services Infrastructure (HSI)–Community Action Program (CAP) line item in the Department of Social Services (DSS) budget.** We are still analyzing the Governor's budget and plan to work closely with DSS around any changes. Our main concern here today is to let you know how critical the HSI funds are to our Community Action Agency Network.

CAFCA is the state association for Connecticut's Community Action Agencies, or CAAs, the state and federal designated antipoverty agencies empowering people and improving the communities in which they live in all of Connecticut's 169 cities and towns. CAAs provide basic human needs services such as food, shelter, child care, and heating assistance to limited income individuals, children, and families through a comprehensive case management approach called HSI. By utilizing this proven, multigenerational, customer-focused, integrated service delivery system, every customer that comes through our doors is connected to the tools, resources, programs, and services they need to move towards short and long-term economic sustainability.

For more than thirty years, you have made a commitment to support our network in fighting the causes and conditions of poverty by providing some state funding to this effort. With our economy still struggling and with poverty rates stuck above 30% in many of our cities and over 20% in many towns in our service areas, now is not the time to pull back from this essential commitment. Our CAA Network has partnered and worked with you and state agencies since this budgetary commitment was made to support antipoverty agencies as a partner in providing basic services to those who truly need help. This successful partnership has been instrumental in developing a statewide system that is efficient and effective in serving our poorest residents. As a result, our agencies are well-known and trusted in our communities as the place to turn to for help when faced with fiscal hardship.

Every year, Community Action Agencies help families and the state solve problems, avoid crises, and save money. Last year, we served more than 357,500 of your constituents across all 169 communities. We worked with seniors, single parents, individuals, youth, children, and families to pave the way forward and create a better and brighter future for themselves.

Through the provision of case management services, the state's CAA Network has been able to expand the services and programs it offers. Along with managing the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), CAAs now run the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) Case Management Program and the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) Outreach Program. CAFCA and the CAAs can save the state time and money, and help avoid duplicative state administrative efforts by running similar programs for low-income residents across state agencies and as the Administrative Services Organization (ASO) for federal block grants and other state funding streams that require direct service provision and coordinated case management.

In addition to serving as the state's safety net, CAAs hold themselves accountable for results through a Results Based Accountability (RBA) framework much like the one the legislature has endorsed for years. This data reporting method allows our network to efficiently and effectively measure meaningful customer, agency, and community outcomes—ensuring a positive return on investment for the network and our state. You can learn more about the work we do and read stories about who we serve in our 2016 Annual Report, *Realignment, Resilience and Renewal* which can be found at www.cafca.org.

HSI-CAP, the “core funding” for Community Action Agencies, enables us to provide critical, basic services to those who need them most. And, because these funds are used as a match for federal funds, the value of this line item is doubled. This is critical for low income families. Additionally, last year, for every dollar of HSI funds used, \$140 dollars was leveraged for programs to help Connecticut families and communities. That's an additional \$380M in local, federal and private funds for needed programs and services. This is an investment to be proud of, and one worth keeping.

Our network is deeply committed to empowering people in need and improving the communities in which they live, and these efforts have never been more necessary than they are now. Without this continued funding commitment from you, we will be unable to maintain our longstanding partnership with you in fighting poverty.

Thank you for your time, and we look forward to working with you and the Administration to even more effectively support Connecticut's most vulnerable residents in the years to come. I am happy to take any questions you may have.