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Public Hearing Testimony before the  
Connecticut General Assembly's Human Services Committee

**In support of Senate Bill 364:  
An Act Concerning Supplemental Nutrition Assistance**

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

March 14, 2024

Distinguished members of the Human Services Committee:

Thank you for holding this public hearing today. 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.

**CAFCA supports this bill, which will allow Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to be used for approved restaurant purchases and staggers the distribution of SNAP benefits.**

Community Action Agencies administer SNAP Outreach and help enroll people in the program statewide. Overall, approximately 229,000 households receive SNAP benefits, including 140,700 children. SNAP reduces hunger and food insecurity, and helps people afford nutritious food for themselves and their families.

Traditionally, SNAP only covers foods that can be prepared and eaten at home. This means participants cannot use benefits to purchase food that's hot at the point of sale like ready to eat soup or pre-cooked pizza slices, even from a grocery store.

But some people have trouble preparing meals on their own or may be in a non-traditional housing setting that does not allow for storing and making food, such as elderly, disabled, or unhoused persons. SB 364 expands opportunities for these populations to purchase prepared meals at restaurants with SNAP dollars by requiring the state to participate in the Restaurant Meals

Program (RMP). This opens the door for restaurants across Connecticut to offer discounted meals to eligible SNAP recipients, helping to further ensure the state's most vulnerable residents don't go hungry.

This bill also changes SNAP payments to a staggered payment method of four days per month, keeping the release date close to when families expect it now. This can allow for a more stable and routine distribution of benefits and helps reduce supply shortages at grocery stores. When the state distributes benefits all at once on the same day, stores experience a sudden surge in demand followed by a large drop in demand, making it a) harder for retailers to restock goods and staff appropriately; and b), can result in SNAP beneficiaries being unable to get what they need.

SNAP is our best anti-hunger resource and is proven to lower health care costs and improve health outcomes. It is critical that we make sure every SNAP participant can use the program as intended: to help them afford to eat. We ask for your support of SB 364 to help make this happen.

Thank you for your consideration 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.

