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for Community Action

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Comments by Rhonda Evans, Executive Director
before the Connecticut General Assembly's
Appropriations, Human Services, and Public Health Committees

Public Hearing on the
Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) Allocation Plan for FFY 2025

September 16, 2024

Distinguished Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons, Ranking Members, and Members
of the Appropriations, Human Services, and Public Health Committees:

Thank you for holding this public hearing on the FFY 2025 Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) Allocation Plan. The Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA) is the state association that works with Connecticut's nine Community Action Agencies (CAAs), the state and federal designated anti-poverty agencies serving over 200,000 low-income people in all 169 cities and towns across Connecticut. On behalf of Connecticut's Community Action Network, we are pleased to support the Department of Social Services' (DSS) FFY 2025 SSBG Allocation Plan.

For nearly a decade, CAFCA has successfully administered the SSBG Case Management (SSBG CM) program in partnership with DSS and Community Action Agencies statewide. This program helps Connecticut's most vulnerable adults and families remain housed, gain employment, stay fed, receive treatment, access critical basic need services, and learn valuable money-management and life skills. A map of SSBG CM catchment areas and agency contact information is included as an attachment to this testimony.

Our experience and history of positive outcomes shows that this program works for Connecticut. From 10/1/2023-6/30/2024, CAAs helped 3,400 eligible individuals not only receive over 13,500 services, but achieve the following:

- 72% seeking housing services obtained services that allowed them to prevent or escape homelessness.
- 84% seeking a basic needs service obtained that service.
- 70% seeking employment have obtained employment.
- 69% seeking an improved employment situation have obtained it.
- 75% seeking medical treatment received referral and subsequently received appropriate medical care.

It's important to note that SSBG CM is a unique type of case management. This is because SSBG case managers work with vulnerable or at-risk customers and utilize a holistic approach to service delivery, beginning with a full assessment of their needs in areas like housing, employment, education, health, and more. They also work with them to create a comprehensive, goal-oriented service plan with a realistic path to self-sufficiency. Examples of these goals include achieving a GED, finding and retaining a new job, or stabilizing housing. Customers can work with agency staff for as long as they need, ranging from a few weeks, months, or even over a year. Individuals and families who receive SSBG CM must also meet specific income guidelines (i.e., below 150% of federal poverty level), residency requirements (i.e., must live in Connecticut) and be part of a vulnerable population, i.e., those who are underemployed, need mental health treatment, have a disability, is housing insecure, or need supportive services to remain in their community.

Much like SSBG CM, CAAs understand that every customer they serve has different needs and circumstances, and uses a holistic, comprehensive, multigenerational approach to not only help them access critical programs and services, but plan, achieve, and maintain long and short-term economic stability. Our Community Action Agency Network looks forward to continuing to provide SSBG CM to vulnerable or at-risk individuals and families across Connecticut in the coming year.

I would like to thank Commissioner Barton Reeves and her team, as well as the General Assembly and the committees represented here today, for continuing to support the critical work Connecticut's Community Action Agencies do to empower people in need and improve communities across the state. CAFCA looks forward to continuing to run this critical program efficiently and effectively for the State of Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and consideration.