



**C A F C A**

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**Testimony provided to the Education Committee  
Public Hearing on Wednesday, February 28, 2007 re: Governor's Budget  
Submitted by Gwen Eaddy, parent speaking on behalf of Head Start and the  
CT Association for Community Action, Inc.**

Good afternoon Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee. My name is Gwen Eaddy, I am a parent and I am also someone who beat the odds. I am a 40-year-old Black woman with four children who has finished college and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Services. When I started this journey my economic status was well below poverty line. I am successful today in large part because Head Start and the wrap-around support services that Head Start provided.

My children attended the Head Start program run by the Community Renewal Team in Middletown. CRT's Head Start program empowered me to leave a domestic violence situation and focus on improving me and my family's situation. They helped me stabilize my situation by helping me find other programs such as Food Stamps, Section 8, WIC, Medicaid and other support services.

Were it not for agencies such as CRT and their Head Start program, I could not have begun to think about attending college and their continued support helped me to finish college. Head Start did more than education my children. It provided an opportunity for me and my whole family to get out of poverty!

And this is not the end of the story, it's actually the beginning. I took my law school exam last year and am presently applying to law school focusing on children and families rights. I have a good job now and with the help of the Meriden Housing Authority I am beginning to save for the purchase of my first home and I attend a program that helps rebuilds credit and teaches financial management.

One might ask why I would discuss my personal business. I believe it is important for state elected officials to know that services like Head Start are working and they need to be expanded. Please don't stereotype and write off the low-income communities.

If the mentality of many decision makers does not change, continued flat state funding and federal funding cuts to Head Start will severely cripple support services such as parental involvement, literacy, health and dental care, mental health services, job search and the list goes on.

Please consider this my success story the next time decision makers are at the chopping block of funding sources. And there are thousands of other untold success stories of parents and children that Head Start has helped to write.

Please give low-income families the resources, services, and opportunities they need to become taxpayers and productive working class citizens living comfortably above the poverty level and support increasing state Head Start funding. In the long run it pays off. Believe me. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today and I'd be happy to answer any questions.