



C A F C A

Connecticut Association for Community Action, Inc.
555 Windsor Street, Hartford, CT 06120
860-560-5845 - www.cafca.org

Testimony regarding Bill 1338: an Act Cost of Living Increase for Private Providers of Health and Human Services; and Bill 1396: an Act Concerning the State Purchase of Service Contracts for Health and Human Services

Submitted by David MacDonald, Connecticut Association for Community Action, Inc.
Human Services Committee Public Hearing, March 13, 2007

Connecticut's Community Action Agencies (CAAs) are the federally-designated anti-poverty agencies and operate a statewide, results-based social service network for low-income people. Last year, our agencies served more than 107,000 families. Our statewide Human Services Infrastructure (HSI) system is an innovative response to the need to have a more efficient service delivery system. However, years of flat state and federal funding are severely straining this system. That is why CAFCA and CT's CAAs support Bills 1338 and 1396.

Bill 1338: An Act Concerning a Cost of Living Increase for Private Providers of Health and Human Services

CT CAAs provide a wide range of services, including employment and training, early childhood services such as child care, school readiness and Head Start, energy assistance and weatherization, financial counseling, eviction prevention, transitional housing and homeless shelters, food pantries and emergency services, case management, alternatives to incarceration, AIDS and substance abuse prevention, and many others. Some of these services are through federal funds, some through state funds and other programs utilize both federal and state dollars.

The COLA proposed in Bill 1338 needs to apply to all state agencies, especially DSS and DOC, and should include federal pass through funds. For example, Head Start has not seen an increase in 5 years from the federal government and that amounts to a 19% reduction when accounting for inflation. Our workers desperately need the COLA and we are losing our best trained teachers. Already our agencies have had to start reducing services and without a COLA, will have to consider closing Head Start classrooms.

The quality of staff is also imperative in human services where the relationships between staff and clients/consumers are pivotal to achieving successful results. Since salaries have stayed low for many years, turnover in some programs is quite high. This reduces productivity and negatively affects client outcomes. If the General Assembly is serious about Results-based Accountability, then services need to be funded appropriately to get the desired results.

CAFCA supports the minimum of a 7% COLA in SFY08 and a 5% COLA in SFY09. While this does not make up for decades of under-funding, it does provide the increase of dollars needed to prevent the nonprofit social services sector from falling further behind. We also ask that you include federal pass through funds in this COLA bill.

Bill 1396: An Act Concerning the State Purchase of Service Contracts for Health and Human Services

This bill allows the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to waive competitive procurement requirements in contracts between the state and private providers of health and human services as needed. This is necessary not to avoid competition, but to protect vital and critical services from being competitively bid when doing so risks the health and safety

TO: Human Services Committee

DATE: March 13, 2007

RE: Raised Bill No. 1382 An Act concerning Professional Assistance to Persons Providing Child Care Assistance

Dear Senator Harris, Representative Villano, and Members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Bertha Pleasant and for the past 16 years I have run an in home daycare in Bridgeport. I urge you to support Raised Bill 1382 for several reasons.

First I would love to do more for the children such as take them on field trips to museums in the area with other childcare providers but I cannot afford to do so. If Bill 1382 is passed, then grants will be available according to section 2a for networking and collaborative endeavors with other child care providers. I would also like to buy more toys and educational materials if grant money is allotted to in home child care providers.

Secondly, I cannot afford to pay for quality health insurance. I am widow and when my husband passed I lost my health insurance. Because I am self employed, the prices to pay for my own health insurance is too high, therefore I currently have no insurance. This job is so rewarding, but many times I feel unappreciated. I open my home at 6:30 am and close at 6:00pm. I would like to see an increase in the rates of the Care 4 Kids program for the parents as well as providers making at least minimum wage.

I support joining with fellow licensed and unlicensed providers to raise standards. By gaining a greater voice in decisions affecting childcare we can reduce turnover and stem the loss of experienced providers, and continue consistent care for children by negotiating fairer wages, affordable health care, and opportunities for training for home based providers. Every single day I get calls to see if I have any vacancies in my daycare and I do not. In my 16 years, I have never had an open space because I take pride in the service I provide.