



**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 Richard Knoll, President/CEO, TEAM, Inc., on behalf of the  
CT Association for Community Action, Inc. (CAFCA)**

Good afternoon Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee. My name is Richard Knoll and I am the CEO at TEAM Inc., the Community Action Agency in the lower Naugatuck Valley region. I am here today to speak on behalf of CAFCA and to identify a serious gap in the Governor's budget to improve educational outcomes for children because it ignores the needs of those living in poverty. We recommend addressing that gap by expanding Head Start in Connecticut. Head Start is the most effective program we know for improving the education and life outcomes for poor children and that has the potential to contribute significantly to the reduction of child poverty.

We are all aware of the Governor's desire to improve educational and life outcomes for children and we applaud her for this. Research has established that early education improves a child's chance of success in learning and life. School Readiness and DSS Child Care programs deserve more resources and have helped improve child socialization and early learning. However, Head Start provides more comprehensive services than those programs and Head Start services benefit both the child and the parent.

At TEAM, I manage School Readiness programs as well as State-funded Child Day Care and Head Start. My experience has been that there is no program better designed to provide education for low-income children and move parents away from poverty than Head Start. During years when I managed just School Readiness programs, I tried to provide children and parents with the assistance they needed through a variety of methods. However, this is difficult in School Readiness programs because funding is simply for classroom instruction. It does not provide the wrap-around services that so many low-income families need in order to improve their economic situations.

I can not describe the gratification that one has when they witness how Head Start connects parents and children with solutions that can meet their particular needs. The developmental and health screening processes that are inherent in the program's design ensure that all children's issues are identified and addressed early in their learning. Parents have access to literacy, parenting workshops, job search and other support services that help them become better parents and to improve their economic opportunities. No other early childhood program offers these comprehensive services, or is as effective in supporting the development of the parents.

So, my message is rather simple. Connecticut Head Start served 6,570 three and four year olds and Early Head Start served 439 infants and toddlers. 34,366 children aged 0 to 5 (14%) live below the federal poverty line in Connecticut. This means that potentially more than 25,000 of Connecticut's poorest children and families do not receive the benefits of the comprehensive services offered by Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Connecticut.

Federal funding for Head Start has been cut and State Head Start funds have been flat for many years, and when adjusted for inflation, have actually been reduced by 19%. These funds serve the poorest children in our neediest cities. If the state wishes to implement a comprehensive effort to improve child educational outcomes and help their parents move out of poverty, do not ignore Head Start. Invest in Head Start. We call for a \$10 million increase in state Head Start funding over the next 2 years in order to restore services that had to be cut and expand services to those on the waiting lists. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important issue and we look forward to working with your committee.