

**Testimony provided to the Human Services Committee  
February 28, 2008**

**Submitted by Amos Smith, President/CEO  
Community Action Agency of New Haven, Inc.**

Thank you, Senator Harris, Representative Villano, and members of the committee for this opportunity to provide testimony regarding the energy assistance program. My name is Amos Smith, and I am the President/CEO of Community Action Agency of New Haven, and I am accompanied by Cassandra Floyd, Associate Director of Energy Services and HSI. Today I am speaking in opposition to HB 5616: An Act Concerning the Administration of the Low Income Heating Energy Assistance Program. We believe this act is unnecessary and will only cause confusion and inefficiency in the energy assistance application process.

Last year at CAANH we served over 13,000 families in our energy assistance program which represented over 22,000 individuals. This was the largest number of clients served in the history of the organization. We also served over 450,000 meals to seniors and are often the only outside contact some of our senior citizens have throughout the week.

We have generated efficiencies in all of our programs and services and believe it is benefiting clients. For instance, we provide same day certification to energy assistance clients, daily pick-up of applications from our field sites, and shorter waiting times of between 10-20 minutes at our main site. Field site applications are being processed within 24-36 hours. To date, we have processed approximately 8,123 clients for energy assistance even though we started a month later than last year. A major or qualitative change in our services is mark by the lowered number of applications pending certification, which hovers at about 50-60 compared to over 500 applications in previous years. This ladies and gentlemen, is among the best in the state. We're servicing a region and the program should remain regional and with providers who have a proven record.

The only problem we have experienced with the energy assistance program has been in the software that was developed to process the applications. I want to note that the

software that we use was developed under the direction of the staff at DSS and the vendor and Community Action Agency staff just operates the program as designed by the state.

We have offered to provide computer access to all of the towns that provide intake for energy assistance as well as our community partners and only four (4) of the thirteen (13) sites have indicated an interest in receiving that level of support. We are eager to continue our work with these partners but they have to be interested in working to improve services too. What we need is to have legislators work with us to convene all stakeholders so that we can put this discussion to rest and focus on servicing the residents in the five towns served by this program.

When we came before you last year I said that I was hired to transform and change the organization. We are a changed organization as evidenced by the things noted above. Most importantly, this evidence is also provided by having a spirited, competent and committed group of Board of Directors as well as a better trained staff.

We thank you for this opportunity to speak and I look forward to speaking with each of in more depth about the progress of the agency.