A STATEMENT OF SUPPORT
For the African American Affairs Commission

This statement is written in support of the African American Affairs Commission (AAAC). This commission is crucially needed to address the State of Connecticut's racial, environmental health and educational disparities that disproportionately impact African American children and their families. It is important to know that AAAC has played a key and crucially needed advocacy role in collaboration with the Foundation for Educational Advancement, Inc. and other agencies to address Connecticut's childhood lead poisoning racial, ethic, health and education disparity problems.

Lead poisoning is one of the State of Connecticut's and the nation's most costly and devastating environmental health diseases. It disproportionately impacts African American and Hispanic low income families who live in Connecticut's major cities. According to the Centers for Disease Control's 1997 through 2006 CT Data, there were 16,604 confirmed incidents of CT children under the age of 6 with elevated blood lead levels high enough to put them at risk of life-long disabilities *(These confirmed incidents are based on a screening rate of approximately 25% of CT's children that were screened.)* Seventy years of research supports findings that early childhood lead exposure puts young children at risk of permanent brain damage resulting in learning disabilities, attention deficits, concentration problems, school failure, delinquency, criminal / violent behavior, school drop-out and even death. However, childhood lead poisoning is entirely preventable.

Over the past three years (i.e., 2006 through 2008) the AAAC has worked collaboratively with the Foundation for Educational Advancement to help facilitate statewide coverage of Connecticut Television Network (CT-N) Legislative Informational Forums sponsored by Representative Jim Amann, Speaker of the House, and Senator Toni Harp, Chair of the Appropriations Committee and other legislators. These CT-N Health Education Lead Poisoning Forums have included viewing audience coverage of approximately 1.2 million households. Nationally renowned experts and researchers provided presentations to inform legislators, policy makers, educators, health professionals and the public-at-large about the life long devastating effects of childhood lead poisoning on the neuro-development of children and youth. Cognitive interventions for improving learning for children with disabilities due to lead poisoning, as well as, lead poison prevention, and resources for residential and environmental remediation were also presented during the forums.

These successful initiatives have served as a catalyst for major health policy changes that include the recent implementation of new legislation as of January 2009 for Universal Blood Lead Screening of all children under the age of 3 in CT and the historic establishment of the Centers for Disease Control - Advisory Committee on Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention's National Education Work Group to address the early intervention, assessment and educational related service needs of children who are "Other Health Impaired Due to Lead Poisoning" in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation of the Handicapped Act.

According to the Centers for Disease Control's representative, the Health Education Lead Poisoning Initiatives have been recognized as a model for the nation. Below is a list of the Informational Health Education Forums that AAAC helped to implement with the Foundation for Educational Advancement, Inc., CT Health Foundation, DPH, SDE, DSS, DDS, DCF and other agencies,

- ☑ May 9, 2006 - Educational Implications of Childhood Lead Poisoning Conference and Training
- ☑ **March 14, 2007** - 2007 Health Education Lead Poisoning Legislative Informational Forum included national and state representation from ten states and seventeen (17) Connecticut cities.

☑ January 31, 2008 – School Health Professional Staff – Presenters: Dr. James Comer, Dr. Marie Lynn Miranda, Dr. Vivian Cross and Attorney Larry Berliner, Valarie Johnson, Marla Hines, 211 Info Line, Eileen McMurrer, Birth to Three and Ed Vargas, Cognitive Educator

☑ May 22, 2008 - Health Education Lead Poisoning Legislative Community and Parent Forum - Hosted by Rep. James Amann, Speaker of the House & Senator Toni Harp, Co-Chair of Appropriations

Special thanks to Glenn Cassis, Executive Director, Cheryl Harris Forbes, Public Affairs / Special Projects Coordinator, Denise Drummond, Senior Legislative Secretary and Frank Sykes, Legislative Analyst for their support during the 2007 through 2008 Series of highly successful Health Education Lead Poisoning legislative Information Forums. Also, special thanks to Vanessa Burns, Previous Executive Director of AAAC and staff for their support during the May 2006 forum.

Funding to maintain AAAC's advocacy work is vital to address Connecticut's racial and ethnic disparities.

Sincerely,

Dr. Vivian Cross

Dr. Vivian Cross,
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Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Consultant, and member of
CDC Advisory Committee on Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Work Group