



February 17, 2012 Public Hearing Testimony before the  
Connecticut General Assembly Appropriations Committee

**Governor's Bill No. 5014**  
**AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES AND**  
**REVENUES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2013.**

Distinguished Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons, Ranking Members, and Members:

My name is Edith Pollock Karsky, and I serve as Executive Director of the Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA). I am here to support Governor Malloy's preservation of the Human Service Infrastructure – Community Action Program (HSI) line item within the Department of Social Services.

By way of background, CAFCA is the state association for Connecticut's eleven (11) Community Action Agencies (CAAs). These are the local agencies designated by the federal and state governments as partners in helping people work their way out of poverty. Our network serves all 169 cities and towns utilizing a Results Based Accountability framework to report our outcomes. We collaborate across silos with state government to help families avoid financial crisis, and empower people with job training, energy assistance, child care, and other vital supports to regain their financial footing if they do experience poverty. We administer economic empowerment programs to more than 300,000 people annually, empowering families and strengthening communities in each and every part of the state.

The HSI is a customer-focused, integrated service delivery system that helps stabilize communities by giving families the tools they need to rejoin the economy. Among so many other accomplishments, the HSI allows parents to work, unemployed persons to receive job training, seniors to remain independent, and low-income families to cut and cover their energy costs. With the HSI, our *proven* programs give families a fighting chance.

Moreover, it is the HSI line item that makes it possible for CAAs to recruit additional corporate and private funding and partners to optimize the effectiveness of the public's investment in strong Connecticut communities and a resurgent state economy. For instance, it is what makes it possible for us to offer, among many other programs, free income tax assistance at our Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites. This service returns much needed funds to Connecticut families and communities. CAA VITA sites return more than \$11 million dollars back to our state each year, with even more expected this year thanks to the new Connecticut Earned Income Tax Credit (CT-EITC). By necessity, families spend this money on such items as food, housing, child care, health care, utilities, and transportation in their local communities.

Especially in these tough times as everyone is forced to do more with less, it is worth noting that CAAs are held by federal requirements to strict standards of accountability. In keeping with our tradition of accountability, I have attached our 2011 Annual Report "Empowering People & Building Communities" to this testimony. Additionally, I am pleased to highlight some of the following results achieved by our agencies.

*How much did we do?*

- ✓ More than 373,000 people in more than 160,000 families benefited from CAA services.
- ✓ More than 55,000 people received referrals to other necessary services.

*How well did we do it?*

- ✓ CAAs leveraged more than \$10.20 for every dollar of baseline funding.
- ✓ Volunteers contributed more than 830,000 hours of support—the equivalent of about 399 full-time employees—to agency efforts to the fight against poverty.
- ✓ Over \$11.3 million were returned to our state's economy through free tax preparation assistance.

*Is anyone better off?*

- ✓ More than 6,300 people obtained employment.
- ✓ More than 31,000 senior citizens maintained independent, active lifestyles.
- ✓ More than 43,000 people learned about energy conservation.
- ✓ More than 6,700 pre-school-aged children are better prepared to start school.
- ✓ More than 2,400 households gained safer, more stable housing.
- ✓ More than 117,000 households stayed safe and warm through winter months.

And all of these outcomes have been accomplished despite the significant challenge thrust upon CAAs by years of funding cuts. With regard to the HSI line item in particular, Connecticut's financial support of our CAAs has decreased dramatically, *even as we are asked to do more to help families rejoin the economy*. Over the years, we have streamlined operations and found efficiencies through collaboration and technology, and we continue innovating to enhance our effectiveness and efficiency.

Thank you for your time and consideration. And thank you for understanding that Community Action Agencies, as jobs engines and employers in partnership with the State, are a vital part of Connecticut's revival. We look forward to working with you and the Administration to even more effectively support Connecticut's revival in the year ahead.