



March 3, 2014 Public Hearing Testimony before the Connecticut General Assembly Education Committee

SB 25: Establishing the Office of Early Childhood

Distinguished Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons, Ranking Members, and Members, my name is Rhonda Evans, Deputy Director of the Connecticut Association for Community Action, Inc. (CAFCA). **I am here to express our support for establishing an Office of Early Childhood.**

By way of background, CAFCA is the state association for Connecticut's eleven (11) Community Action Agencies (CAAs). CAAs are the state and federally designated agencies tasked with alleviating the conditions and causes of poverty. Our network serves all 169 cities and towns and utilizes a Results Based Accountability (RBA) framework to report outcomes. We collaborate across silos with state government and other nonprofit providers and businesses to help families avoid financial crisis as well as empower people with job training, energy assistance, child care, and other vital supports to reach economic self-sufficiency. In many instances we serve as a single point of response and triage for families. Our agencies administer an early intervention strategy approach through a variety of programs and services to efficiently and effectively reach families in the best way possible. We provide support, assistance and renewal for families when other support services have ended and, in doing so, we serve more than 360,000 people annually in each and every part of the state.

The establishment of an Office of Early Childhood is a critical asset to children across Connecticut. Our agencies know just how important and effective early childhood care and education is to the development and well-being of our state's most vulnerable population. Connecticut's community action network serves low-income children each and every day through programs such as Head Start, child day care, and school readiness. These services are vital in helping children and their families build solid foundations for the future. The Office of Early Childhood will not only enhance these efforts, but will provide a voice for all young children across the state by ensuring that early childhood policies, funding streams, and programs/services support families, providers, educators, and communities—all who play a critical role in the life of a child.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. We look forward to working with you and the Administration to even more effectively support Connecticut's children and their families in this great state for years to come.