



March 4, 2014 Public Hearing Testimony before the Connecticut General Assembly Human Services Committee

HB 5323: Proposed Changes to the Child Poverty and Prevention Council

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 to update the membership of the Child Poverty and Prevention Council and consolidate reporting provisions relating to state prevention efforts.

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.

As you may know, the Child Poverty and Prevention Council (CPPC) was created and charged with developing and promoting the implementation of a ten-year plan to reduce the number of children living in poverty in Connecticut by 50%. In addition, the CPPC was tasked with establishing prevention goals and recommendations as well as measure prevention service outcomes in order to promote the health and well-being of children and families in our state. CPPC membership spans across those state agencies that have a stake in the outcome of these goals, and that play a vital role in achieving them.

The proposed addition of Housing, Agriculture, and the Office of Early Childhood Education membership to the council will prove to be an asset to the council's ten-year plan success in many ways. Connecticut's CAAs know firsthand how poverty affects children in all parts of the state, and extending membership to these agencies will help the council to more effectively reach this vulnerable population and achieve what it was set out to do. The three proposed additional agency reporting requirements will also further enhance the efforts of the CPPC. By requiring state agencies to report their anti-poverty information to the CPPC and, in turn, have the Council issue its report based on its goals, eliminates the duplication of two reports and increases the importance of the Council by making it the issuing authority.

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 low-income children and their families as they continue to face economic challenges in this great state.