



February 11, 2016 Public Hearing Testimony before the Connecticut General Assembly Appropriations Committee

Governor's Proposed Mid-Term Budget Adjustments

Distinguished Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons, Ranking Members, and Members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Peter DeBiasi and I am the President/CEO of the *Access* Agency. I also serve on the board of directors of the Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA). **I am here to express our opposition to the Administration's mid-term budget adjustment recommendation to 1) eliminate the \$3.1 million Human Services Infrastructure (HSI)–Community Action Program (CAP) line item from the Department of Social Services (DSS) budget; and, 2) move HSI-CAP funding into a new combined DSS line item block grant called Agency Operations.**

CAFCA is the state association for Connecticut's ten Community Action Agencies, or CAAs, the state and federal designated antipoverty agencies empowering people and improving the communities in which they live throughout all of Connecticut's 169 cities and towns. CAAs provide basic services such as food, shelter, child care, and heating assistance to low and moderate income individuals, children, and families through a comprehensive case management approach called HSI. By utilizing this proven, multigenerational, customer-focused, integrated service delivery system, every customer that comes through our doors is connected to the tools, resources, programs, and services they need to move towards short and long-term economic sustainability.

As the state and federal designated antipoverty network, Community Action Agencies hold themselves accountable for results through the use of a Results Based Accountability (RBA) framework much like the one the legislature has endorsed for years. This data reporting method allows our network to efficiently and effectively measure meaningful customer, agency, and community outcomes—ensuring a positive return on investment for the network and our state. You can read more about the work we do in our 2015 Annual Report, *Confronting Challenges, Creating Opportunities*.

Connecticut's Community Action Agency Network has helped families and the state solve problems, avoid crises, and save money. In 2015, our network served more than 347,000 people—your constituents—across all 169 cities and towns. We helped seniors, single parents, children, families, and people with nowhere else to turn tackle the challenges they faced and turn them into opportunities for the future.

Eliminating HSI-CAP, the “core funding” for Community Action Agencies, will severely hinder our ability to provide these critical basic services. The Agency Operations block grant line item allows DSS the discretion to fund, eliminate or reduce services as the agency sees fit, and does not guarantee funding for HSI and the people we serve.

Additionally, this elimination will actually mean a direct cut of almost \$5 million in services to low-income families since these funds are used as a match for federal funds. Last year, for every dollar of HSI funds used, almost \$100 dollars was leveraged for programs to help Connecticut families and communities. Surely that's an investment worth keeping.

As a network we are deeply committed to empowering people in need and improving the communities in which they live, and these efforts have never been more necessary than they are now. We ask that you restore HSI-CAP as a separate line item in the state budget, and look forward to working with you and the Administration to even more effectively support Connecticut's most vulnerable residents in the years to come.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration and I am happy to take any questions you may have.