March 6, 2020 Public Hearing Testimony before the
Connecticut General Assembly’s Education Committee

In Support of

House Bill 5222: An Act Expanding Eligibility
in the Care4Kids Program for Homeless Families

Distinguished Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons, Ranking Members, and
Members, my name is Deb Polun and I am the new Executive Director for the
Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA), the state association
that works with Connecticut’s nine Community Action Agencies (CAAs), the
state and federal designated antipoverty agencies.

I am here to express our support for House Bill 5222, An Act Expanding
Eligibility in the Care4Kids Program for Homeless Families.

As the largest statewide safety net service provider, Connecticut’s network of
Community Action Agencies connect neighbors in need with resources that
stabilize and improve lives and communities. Every year, we work with over
259,000 low- and moderate-income people across the state – including your
constituents – to provide them with vital services like energy assistance, job
training, nutrition, housing support, and early child care and education.

By investing in a multigenerational approach to early care and learning,
Community Action Agencies prepare children for future success. Last year, our
network enrolled over 5,600 children in early childhood services across the
state. We also helped 1,706 people obtain safe and affordable housing; 1,666
people experiencing homelessness obtain safe, temporary shelter; and, 602
households avoid eviction.

Safe, stable, affordable housing and high-quality, affordable child care are key
elements to helping ensure that families are economically stable, parents have
the ability to work, and children develop in a healthy environment. According to
the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, due to inadequate funding, just 1 out
of every 6 children eligible for child care assistance and 1 in 5 families with
children eligible for housing assistance receives it. As a result, many low and
moderate-income families struggle to pay for child care and housing – forcing
them into lower-quality or less stable child care arrangements and housing that

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is overcrowded, substandard, or located in neighborhoods with fewer opportunities for parents and children.¹

The goal of the Care4Kids program is to make child care affordable for low to moderate income families in Connecticut. H.B. 5222 expands eligibility for this critical program for families facing homelessness, providing them with an opportunity to access the tools, resources, and services they need to reach their full potential, including finding better-paying jobs and stable housing, while ensuring their children are taken care of.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to working with you to help ensure all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential in Connecticut.