



CAFCA
Connecticut Association
for Community Action

**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**

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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

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.

¹ Rice, Douglas; Schmit, Stephanie; Matthews, Hannah. "Child Care and Housing: Big Expenses With Too Little Help Available," *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, April 26, 2019, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/child-care-and-housing-big-expenses-with-too-little-help-available>