



CAFCA
Connecticut Association
for Community Action

**February 23, 2021 - Public Hearing Testimony before the
Connecticut General Assembly's Human Services Committee**

In support of

**Senate Bill 912: An Act Concerning Funding and Oversight of
Fatherhood Initiatives**

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Distinguished Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons, Ranking Members, and Members, my name is Deb Polun, and I am the 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 serving nearly 200,000 low- and moderate-income people in all 169 cities and towns across the state.

I write today to express our support for Senate Bill 912: *An Act Concerning Funding and Oversight of Fatherhood Initiatives*.

CAAs connect their customers to essential programs and services like employment and training, housing and shelter, energy and heating assistance, early childhood care and education, asset development, and food and nutrition. Through a holistic, comprehensive, multigenerational approach, CAAs work with those in need to plan, achieve, and maintain a realistic path to short and long-term economic self-sufficiency. Last year, we served nearly 200,000 people statewide.

Research shows that fatherhood engagement is critical and beneficial to the growth and development of young children. The Connecticut Fatherhood Initiative (CFI) focuses on these efforts and works towards systems change that helps fathers to be fully and positively engaged and involved in their children's lives. CAFCA currently partners with the state Department of Social Services, serving as the state contractor for CFI, and works with six community-based agencies (one of which is a Community Action Agency) to run the program statewide.

CFI works with fathers with all aspects of their fathering role including the financial and legal responsibilities, as well as helping to foster an emotional connection with their children. This program has a special focus for those who may not live in the same household as their children and helps fathers with their short-term, intermediate, and long-term needs and goals. Finally, it also provides support to mothers and children. The true impact of the program can be seen in the positive results for children and families in our state.

Several Community Action Agencies currently offer parenting- and family-support initiatives and have expressed interest in participating in the CFI program. CAFCA supports expanding the program, and partnering with additional CAAs, as their experience and success in serving this important population makes them essential partners. In closing, I urge you to support S.B. 912. Thank you for your time and consideration.