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for Community Action

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Comments by Deb Polun, Executive Director  
before the Connecticut General Assembly's  
Appropriations and Human Services Committees

Informational Forum on the  
Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) Allocation Plan for FFY 2021

September 21, 2020

Distinguished Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons, Ranking Members, and  
Members of the Appropriations and Human Services Committees:

Thank you for holding this informational forum on the FFY 2021 Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) Allocation Plan. The Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA) is the state association that works with Connecticut's nine Community Action Agencies (CAAs), the state and federal designated anti-poverty agencies serving over 250,000 low-income people in all 169 cities and towns across Connecticut. We are pleased to be here to support the Department of Social Services' (DSS) FFY 2021 SSBG Allocation Plan.

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, 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 economic self-sufficiency.

For the past 5 years, CAFCA has successfully administered the SSBG Case Management (SSBG CM) program in partnership with Community Action Agencies statewide. A map of SSBG CM catchment areas and agency contact information is included as an attachment to this testimony.

SSBG provides a unique kind of case management. This is because CAA case managers work with vulnerable or at risk adult customers on service provision that facilitates self-sufficiency. Customers are able to work with agency staff for as long as they need, which can range from a few weeks to several months, and sometimes more than a year. Individuals and families who receive SSBG CM must meet specific income guidelines (i.e., below 150% of federal poverty level), residency requirements (i.e., must live in Connecticut) and be part of a vulnerable population. This could be someone who needs mental health treatment, has a physical disability, or is housing insecure.

As with other services provided by Community Action Agencies, SSBG case managers utilize a holistic approach and conduct a full assessment of a customer's needs. This includes things like housing, employment, education, health, and more. Then, together, the case manager and customer set goals, such as achieving a GED, or finding and retaining a new job.

Through the provision of these services, our agencies helped 3,425 eligible individuals over the past year apply for benefits and critical, basic needs services; receive treatment, health, shelter, and transportation services; search for and apply to jobs; and, learn about money management and budgeting.

It is clear SSBG CM works for Connecticut. Of those served:

- 60% seeking housing services obtained services that allowed them to prevent or escape homelessness;
- 89% seeking a basic needs service obtained that service;
- 86% seeking public assistance benefits received eligible benefits; and,
- 59% of those who sought employment have obtained employment.

It is important to note that COVID-19 did impact the number of people who received SSBG CM services this past year. However, since the pandemic hit, Community Action Agencies have successfully transitioned to remote service delivery and SSBG CM services, helping to ensure those facing financial struggles continue to receive assistance. Additionally, vulnerable or at-risk populations affected by COVID-19 are more likely to experience things like unemployment or loss of housing – making SSBG CM even more important during this time.

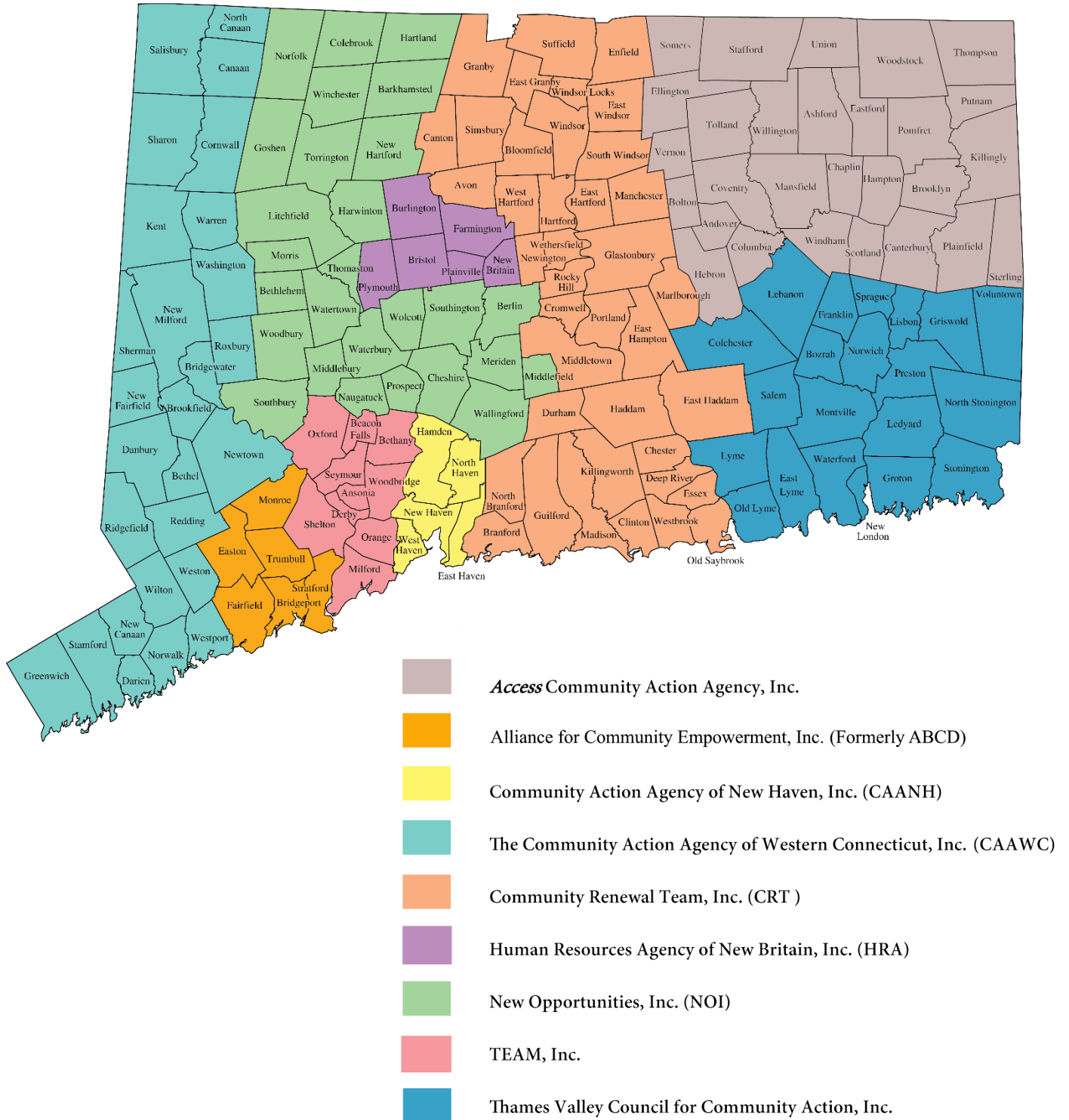
Again, I would like to thank Commissioner Gifford, Deputy Commissioner Brennan, State SSBG Administrators, and the General Assembly – especially the committees represented here today – for continuing to understand the importance of supporting the critical work Connecticut's Community Action Agencies do to empower people in need and improve communities across the state. CAFCA looks forward to continuing to efficiently and effectively run this critical program for the State of Connecticut. We look forward to working with you as we continue serving the state's most at-risk and vulnerable populations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



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## Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) Case Management Service Provider Map





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## Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) Case Management Service Provider Contact List

### Access Community Action Agency

1315 Main Street  
Willimantic, CT 06226  
860-450-7400

231 Broad Street  
Danielson, CT 06239  
860-412-1600

### Human Resources Agency of New Britain, Inc.

336 Arch Street  
New Britain, CT 06051  
860-225-1084

55 South Street  
Bristol, CT 06010  
860-584-2725

### Alliance for Community Empowerment, Inc. (Formerly ABCD)

1070 Park Avenue  
Bridgeport, CT 06604  
203-366-8241

### New Opportunities, Inc.

232 North Elm Street  
Waterbury CT 06702  
203-575-9799

59 Field Street  
Torrington, CT 06790  
860-482-9749

### Community Action Agency of New Haven, Inc.

419 Whalley Avenue  
New Haven, CT 06511  
203-387-7700

55 West Main Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Meriden CT 06450  
203-639-5060

### The Community Action Agency of Western Connecticut, Inc.

34 Woodland Avenue  
Stamford, CT 06902  
203-602-8833

66 North Street  
Danbury, CT 06810  
203-744-4700

1 Park Street  
Norwalk, CT 06851  
203-939-9650

### TEAM, Inc.

30 Elizabeth Street  
Derby, CT 06418  
203-736-5420

### Thames Valley Council for Community Action, Inc.

83 Huntington Street  
New London, CT 06320  
860-444-0006

401 W Thames Street, Unit 201  
Norwich CT 06360  
860-889-1365

### Community Renewal Team, Inc.

330 Market Street  
Hartford, CT 06120  
860-761-7934

44 Hamlin Street  
Middletown, CT 06457  
860-347-4465

### CAFCA, Inc. (Statewide Contact)

300 Plaza Middlesex  
203 Main Street  
Middletown, CT 06457  
860-832-9438