



February 21, 2024

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative Exum, Representative Paris, Senator Berthel, Representative Nuccio, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony on HB 5048.

My name is Maryam Elahi, I am the President & CEO of the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut (CFECT). In the last year, CFECT provided \$6 million in grants and scholarships to support the most vulnerable in our communities. A large percentage of these grants support children and youth. While we understand that not every family facing eviction includes children, we also note that a majority do and that we are undermining the physical and mental health of several generations of people in our community by allowing evictions to be enforced.

I respectfully request that the Appropriations Committee increase funding for the State Rental Assistance Program (RAP) by \$16 million. I believe this program is a critical tool in our fight to end childhood poverty and ensure that all children have a fair chance to thrive in Connecticut.

- \$8 million is needed to keep pace with rent increases for existing families being served.
- \$8 million is needed to expand rental assistance to reach 650 more low-income families.

Childhood poverty is a pervasive issue that undermines the potential of countless young individuals in our state. It not only deprives children of their basic needs but also perpetuates cycles of disadvantage that can persist across generations. Access to a safe and stable home is fundamental to a child's development and success, yet far too many families struggle to afford housing in our increasingly expensive rental market.

The State RAP plays a vital role in addressing this pressing issue by providing crucial financial support to low-income families struggling to pay rent. By helping families afford a stable home, this program offers children the security and stability they need to succeed in school, stay healthy, and build a brighter future.

By preventing homelessness and housing instability, this program reduces the strain on our emergency shelter systems, healthcare resources, and other public services. It also promotes economic stability by allowing families to remain in their communities, contributing to local economies, and fostering community resilience.

I urge you to prioritize funding and expanding the State RAP to reach more families in need. By doing so, we can make significant strides towards ending childhood poverty and creating a more equitable society for all our residents. Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Maryam Elahi, President & CEO
Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut

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