



**Testimony Supporting H.B. 5439: An Act Concerning
The Elimination of Asset Limits in Certain Public Assistance Programs**

Derek Thomas, M.P.A.
Human Services Committee
March 3, 2016

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, and Members of the Human Services Committee:

I am the Fiscal Policy Fellow at Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based public education and advocacy organization that works statewide to promote the well-being of Connecticut's children, youth, and families.

I am submitting comments in support of **Raised Bill No. 5439, An Act Concerning the Elimination of Asset Limits in Certain Public Assistance Programs.**

Encouraging Self-Sufficiency: Eliminating the TFA asset test will encourage families to develop behaviors that lead to self-sufficiency by promoting the accumulation of savings. Asset limits are counterproductive to the aims of the TFA program by forcing families to spend down longer-term and emergency savings in order to continue to receive TFA benefits, which creates a cycle of reliance on those benefits.

Administrative Efficiency: Every time a family applies for TFA, or has their eligibility predetermined, a caseworker must investigate the family's assets – this requires an extensive number of checks. However, very few families applying for TFA have significant savings. Most recently, the Illinois Department of Human Services found that only 8 cases in 192,000 asset limit checks in 2012 were over the limit – this cost the state more than \$960,000 to enforce.¹

Moving out of poverty, achieving economic self-sufficiency and the subsequent accumulation of assets can be considered three rungs of a family's financial stability. Owning assets and economic security go hand-in-hand.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of Raised Bill H.B. 5439. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or need additional information. I can be reached at dthomas@ctvoices.org or (203) 498-4240 (x 114).

¹ Sprague, Aleta and Black, Rachel. New American Foundation. State Asset Limit Reforms and Implications for Federal Policy. October 2012. Retrieved from: https://static.newamerica.org/attachments/3826-state-asset-limit-reforms-and-implications-for-federal-policy/SpragueBlackFinal10.31.12_0.557490fb36df433a80bd5cb2f3885e5d.pdf