



**OFFICE OF
STATE TREASURER
DENISE L. NAPIER**

NEWS

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**NAPIER ANNOUNCES \$207,000 GRANT TO HELP LOW INCOME
WORKERS AND FAMILIES ACHIEVE FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE;
TOTAL FEDERAL, STATE AND PRIVATE FUNDING NEARLY \$2.5 MILLION**

*Community Action Agencies In Bristol, Danbury, Derby, New Haven, Norwalk, Stamford, and
Windham to Receive Funds as Part of State's Individual Development Account Initiative*

(HARTFORD) – Speaking at the Connecticut Voices for Children “Family Asset Forum” at the State Capitol complex, State Treasurer Denise L. Nappier said today that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has approved Connecticut’s grant application for an Assets for Independence Demonstration Project grant of \$207,500 as part of the state’s Individual Development Account (IDA) program to help working poor families build assets and improve their financial literacy.

To date, the combination of state appropriations, federal grants and private contributions totals \$2.495 million to support the Connecticut IDA Initiative, advocated by Nappier, approved by the state legislature and administered by the State Department of Labor.

“The health of Connecticut is inextricably tied to the fiscal health of our citizens,” Nappier said. “These funds, and the coordinated efforts of community-based agencies, the financial industry, and government, can provide families with much-needed financial education and asset management skills to achieve a solid footing on the ladder of economic self-sufficiency.”

Labor Commissioner Shaun Cashman said the latest grant will be used to fund 118 accounts for low-income workers and their families through Community Action Agencies in Bristol, Danbury, Derby, New Haven, Norwalk, Stamford and Windham. With matching funds contributed by Fleet Bank and Webster Bank and money allocated by the State Department of Labor, total funding for this project in the overall IDA initiative will be \$415,000.

IDAs are matched savings accounts for low- and moderate-income families to save for first-time home purchases, job training and education or small business start-ups.

“IDAs are a sound investment in our families and communities,” Cashman said in a letter to Nappier announcing the federal grant, “and an important link between the state’s economic development and human service agendas. By convening the Task Force on IDAs in 1999, consulting on the Connecticut IDA Initiative regulations, and continuously advocating for financial education and asset development for low-income families in Connecticut you have helped to bring IDAs to the forefront in our state,” Cashman said.

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Nappier, a strong advocate for financial education and economic opportunity, was a leading force in the establishment of Connecticut's Individual Development Account initiative, beginning with formation of the task force in 1999 that recommended and worked for legislation that created Connecticut's first statewide initiative in 2000. The "Connecticut IDA Initiative" legislation, which established a structure for IDA partnerships between the private sector, community-based organizations and government, also made the state eligible to apply for federal grants to support efforts in the state.

Nappier, the first woman elected State Treasurer in Connecticut history and the only African American woman State Treasurer in U.S. history, was one of the speakers at today's Forum.

The Forum was developed by Connecticut Voices for Children in response to reports released by Voices and the Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED) that ranked Connecticut below average on several key family asset measures. The Corporation for Enterprise Development conducted a state-by-state analysis of family asset outcome and policies, entitled *State Asset Development Report Card: Benchmarking Asset Development in Fighting Poverty*. In partnership with CFED, Connecticut Voices for Children released *Connecticut Family Assets: Asset Outcomes, 2002*.

The reports reveal troubling figures, pointing out that nearly one in four Connecticut households are "asset poor," and that many measures of family assets show Connecticut's minority populations faring far worse than counterparts in other states. The Forum was aimed at providing individuals, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, advocacy groups, and community development groups with an opportunity to discuss asset accumulation and protection with state and national experts. Nappier discussed Connecticut's IDA Initiative.

Other key speakers at the Forum included Robert Friedman, Founder and Chair of the Corporation for Enterprise Development in Washington D.C. and Professor Thomas Shapiro of Northeastern University and author of *Black Wealth, White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality*, Eric Cooper, President of the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education, Judith Greiman, President of the CT Conference of Independent Colleges, Bob Kantor, Director of the Fannie Mae Partnership, CT, and Dudley Williams, State Department of Education.

The Treasurer's Office has partnered with state and national organizations and agencies to develop numerous programs designed to assist working poor families and start-up businesses in personal financial literacy and basic asset management. More information is available at www.state.ct.us/ott

Connecticut Voices for Children is a statewide advocacy organization that seeks to promote the well-being of all of Connecticut's young people through high-quality research and public policy analysis, an active communications program, a commitment to promoting youth leadership and youth voice, and effective citizen mobilization and organizational collaboration.