

Connecticut Nonprofit Human Services Cabinet

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Children's League of Connecticut

Connecticut AIDS Resource Coalition

Connecticut Association for Community Action

Connecticut Association of Area Agencies on Aging

Connecticut Association of Nonprofits

Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness

Connecticut Community Providers Association

Connecticut Consortium of Legal Services

Connecticut Council of Family Services Agencies

Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services

Connecticut Women's Consortium

Easter Seals Connecticut

End Hunger Connecticut!

Human Services Council

Oak Hill

Planned Parenthood of Connecticut

The Connection, Inc.

Wheeler Clinic

Appropriations, Human Services and Public Health Committees

Public Hearing

September 22, 2008

Re: Federal Block Grants

By: Susan Yolen, Planned Parenthood of CT

Thank you to the Committee Members for this opportunity to speak to you today regarding the federal Block Grant Allocation Plans. My name is Susan Yolen and I am the Vice President of Public Affairs & Communication for Planned Parenthood of Connecticut. Planned Parenthood of CT is a member of the CT Nonprofit Human Services Cabinet, a statewide coalition comprised of 20 nonprofit human service associations and organizations representing approximately 800 nonprofit human service providers. Members of the Nonprofit Cabinet play a vital role in addressing the critical needs that face so many Connecticut residents – we provide the safety net that *anyone* can find themselves in need of in the blink of an eye.

As you know, there are cuts or flat funding to the bulk of the federal block grants. As I am sure you are aware, flat funding actually results in cuts to providers when inflation and other programmatic cost increases are considered. We are all aware of the difficult economic times facing not only Connecticut, but the entire nation. However, I must caution that cuts to the essential services funded by these block grants will only result in increased costs to the state in the long run as many of these services focus on prevention.

The services that my organization, Planned Parenthood of CT, provides are a particularly good investment. Recently revised data from the Guttmacher Institute shows that every public dollar spent on family planning services *saves \$4 within a year* on the health care costs associated with unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease. In tough financial times, an investment in making sure women are able to access family planning services, including reliable contraception is absolutely vital.

Regarding the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), I am sure you all understand the damage that a 30% cut in federal social services funding will do to the lives of countless CT residents who rely on services such as: counseling; legal assistance; case management; substance abuse prevention and treatment; transportation; and protective and special services for individuals with disabilities. These are all services that many of us take for granted – either thinking we will never need them or we will be able to easily access them – but that is not the case for so many CT residents.

As the Cabinet has testified in previous years, we are depending on the state to provide guidance and leadership in making some crucial long-term decisions about block grant funded services. The Legislative and Executive Branches need to consider, long-term, what our priorities are when it comes to block grant funded services and what funding the state is willing to make up for when federal cuts are made. This includes developing mechanisms to make intelligent cuts, only when absolutely necessary, that are based on fair and equitable performance evaluation measures, meaningful contract compliance measures and true cost-benefit analysis.

We have known for years that cuts would come and that time is clearly here with tough economic times on both the federal and state levels. Perhaps that is why the state wisely amassed a \$1.4 billion Rainy Day Fund, for times just like this. As state funded programs are currently suffering budget rescissions, I urge your careful consideration of cuts to block grant funded programs. It is unreasonable to ask anyone to choose randomly between valuable programs and significant,

life-altering needs such as: child care vs. transportation, substance abuse treatment vs. in-home health services, energy assistance vs. food assistance, emergency shelters vs. transitional living. Every need is crucial, every service is important and every life is equally valuable.

Thank you for your time and efforts.

Susan Yolen
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