Connecticut Department of Social Services

Making a Difference

Testimony before the Appropriations and Human Services Committees

Social Services Block Grant and Community Services Block Grant

Proposed 2010/2011 Allocation Plans

September 22, 2010

Good morning Senators Harp and Doyle, Representatives Geragosian and Walker and members of the committees. My name is Claudette Beaulieu and I am the Deputy Commissioner for programs at the Department of Social Services (DSS). I am here before you to seek your approval of the Governor's allocation plan for the Social Services Block Grant Program (SSBG) and the Community Services Block Grant Program (CSBG).

Social Services Block Grant

The FFY 2011 SSBG Allocation Plan provides funding for services in 12 of 29 federally defined service categories, including case management, counseling, family planning services, home-based services, independent and transitional living services, information and referral, legal services, protective services for adults, special services for persons with developmental disabilities, persons with visual or auditory impairments and substance abuse.

For FFY 2010, the SSBG was funded at a national level of $1.7 billion. Connecticut's available SSBG dollars included a block grant award of $19,629,594. In May 2010, Connecticut's allocation was reduced by $163,307 due to a drop in Connecticut's population for a total grant to the state of $19,466,287. The Department was able to absorb that reduction through other program underruns and we did not have to pass that reduction on to our other state agencies and grantees.

For the FFY 2011 SSBG Allocation Plan, since Congress has not yet approved the SSBG allocation we have been directed to submit our allocation plan based upon the previous year's national funding level of $1.7 billion. The SSBG proposed plan before you for FFY 2011 is based on an estimated federal funding allocation of $18,492,973. Historically, the federal funding available for the SSBG program has decreased substantially over the years. In 1998 Connecticut received $28,494,775 in SSBG funding and each year since then it has been reduced. Connecticut received approximately 31% less in SSBG funding in 2010 than what was received in 1998.

In terms of funding for the FFY 2011 SSBG Allocation Plan, we are in the same situation as last year. However, in view of the reduction to our SSBG program in May 2010, and our projected estimated reduction of five percent in the federal budget, we have prepared our plan based upon a funding level of $18,492.973. In the event that Connecticut receives an increase to our estimated projection, we will adjust our State Plan allocation levels accordingly. We have taken this conservative approach so that our contractors may have time to plan.

Also, please note that actual allocations from HHS to the states can vary based on the state's increase or decrease in population. We have not been notified of any projected changes.

We do not anticipate having any carry over funds from FFY 2010 and therefore our total funding level for FFY 2011 is $18,492,973.

As many of you know, federal funding levels are rarely settled prior to the beginning of the federal fiscal year. We will not be sure of this until the federal budget is voted on and passed by both houses. (Our final 2010 SSBG allocation was not known until January of this year.) We remain hopeful that Congress will provide level funding for this important block grant. In the event that the dollars received differ from what is assumed in the plan, our SSBG allocation plan includes contingency language to adjust allocations in proportion to amounts shown in the plan.

The SSBG plan also includes $26,678,810 that will be transferred from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant (TANF). The transfer of TANF funds to the SSBG is reflected in the department's budget as approved by the General Assembly. These funds must be appropriated to grantees that operate programs providing services to children and their families. The bulk of these funds provide services for child care, children's residential services, emergency shelters and the human services infrastructure. A list of the specific programs, amounts transferred from TANF for those programs and the appropriate SSBG service category are included in the plan on page 8.

Community Services Block Grant

Although the federal budget has not been finalized, we prepared the plan in anticipation of level funding for Connecticut of $8,393,383 for another year..

CSBG is the core funding source for the state's community action network. Community action agencies (CAAs) help low-income people to become self-sufficient. The community action network improves living conditions and helps people have a stake in their community. Working in partnership with other service providers, businesses, and the faith-based and the advocacy communities, CAAs strengthen families and their environments, which help low-income people to lead more secure lives.

CSBG funds support a wide range of services and activities having a measurable impact on the causes of poverty in areas of the community where poverty is a particularly acute problem. Funds can be used for:

- addressing the needs of youth in low-income communities;
- securing and retaining meaningful employment;
- attaining an adequate education;
- making better use of available income;
- obtaining and maintaining adequate housing and a suitable living environment; and
- administrative and support costs that are not covered by other funds.

The state's 12 community action agencies operate other vital programs, such as energy assistance, eviction prevention, weatherization and child day care. In FFY 2009, the CAAs reported providing services to 387,324 Connecticut residents.

At DSS, we continue to work closely with the CAAs to blend the federal CSBG and state Human Services Infrastructure (HSI) funding to maximize CAA resources in these challenging fiscal times. This unique partnership represents a real commitment to improve Connecticut's human service delivery system and ensures a more consistent experience for providers and clients. The framework of this system is a "one-stop" model of human service delivery called HSI, a system that enables the community action agencies to work as a single services network, and to report on the outcomes of services and document the progress of low-income people toward self-sufficiency.

The CAAs use CSBG funds to leverage additional resources and develop innovative approaches to building the assets of low-income people and their communities.

This year's plan continues to address contingencies if level funding is not received. Any increases most likely would be proportionately shared across the CAA network, but in the event of any significant cuts to funding, some restructuring, consolidation and sharing of resources would have to occur. Additionally, the Department could elect to allocate less for Discretionary Projects, allowing more than the minimum of 90% of the CSBG funds to go to the CAAs.

Technical Corrections to SSBG Plan:

Page 14: 51 adults should be 1,787 adults (under the numbers served for Home-Based Services)

Page 15: providers instead of provides (under the objective for Information and Referral)

Page 15: referral instead of feral (under the objective for Information and Referral)

Page 17: should be TANF or TANF-eligible instead of welfare (under the grantor agency activity for Transportation)

Page 17: 7,774 adults and 35 children instead of 2,342 adults and 33 children (under the numbers served for Transportation)