



Testimony before the Appropriations and Human Services Committees
Roderick L. Bremby
Commissioner
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Good morning, Senators Harp and Musto, and Representatives Walker and Tercyak and members of the Human Services and Appropriations Committees. My name is Roderick L. Bremby and I am the Commissioner 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 (SSBG) program and the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program.

Social Services Block Grant

The FFY 2013 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, legal services, protective services for adults, special services for persons with developmental disabilities, persons with visual or auditory impairments, substance abuse and transportation.

For FFY 2012, the SSBG was funded at a national level of \$1.7 billion. Connecticut's available SSBG dollars included the block grant award of \$19,569,572. This block grant may be subject to reductions at the federal level as a result of the Budget Control Act of 2011 to reduce the deficit. The magnitude of such funding reductions is unknown at this point. Should the sequestration require funding reductions of 10 percent or more, the Department intends to include stakeholders in an advisory process that will help to determine priorities for funding categories of service.

Although Congress has not yet approved the SSBG allocation for FFY 2013, the proposed plan before you is based on an estimated federal allocation of \$19,569,572. In 1998, Connecticut received \$28,494,775 in SSBG funding. Last year, Connecticut received approximately 31% less in SSBG funding than what was received in 1998.

In terms of funding for the FFY 2013 SSBG Allocation Plan, we are in the same situation as last year. The total Social Services Block Grant for FFY 2012 available to be expended is expected to be \$19,569,572. It is estimated that \$3,890,726 in carry-forward funds will be available for FFY 2013, mostly from the Home Based Services category. Initially the Home Based Services (Essential Services) program was closed when the program was projected to be overspent. DSS reopened the Essential Services program in late 2011 and

caseloads are gradually increasing. Based upon a spending analysis; the Department forecasts Home Based Services (Essential Services) caseloads and spending to be back to normal levels during FFY 2013.

The department does not anticipate that there will be any carry-forward funds from FFY 2013 into FFY 2014. The department wishes to ensure that our contractors are able to plan for a full year of funding without any concerns of adjustments during the program year. In addition, as many of you may remember, the department intends to competitively procure certain categories of service. We will work with the Governor's new non-profit human services liaison, Terry Edelman, to determine the best way to procure these services with minimal disruption to clients.

As many of you know, federal funding levels are rarely settled prior to the beginning of the federal fiscal year. In fact, the final FFY 2012 SSBG allocation was not known until February. We remain hopeful that Congress will provide level funding for this important block grant. In the event that the anticipated dollars are more or less than our SSBG allocation plan, allocations will be adjusted proportionately.

The SSBG plan also includes \$26,678,810 that will be transferred from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant. 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, housing services, independent and transitional living, 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.

The department also allocates SSBG funds for the above-referenced services to other state agencies, such as Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Department of Developmental Disabilities, Office of Protection and Advocacy, Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) and the Commission on Deaf and Hearing Impaired (CDHI) (due to state agency consolidations, BESB and CDHI are now consolidated within the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)). These state agency consolidations do not affect the allocations to those agencies. SSBG funds are utilized by other state agencies for various social services programs.

The last page of my testimony includes a list of several technical corrections to the SSBG plan that we intend to make to the plan prior to submitting to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Community Services Block Grant

Based on the six-month Continuing Resolution recently passed by the House and Senate and signed by the President on September 28, 2012, we anticipate that CSBG will be

level-funded this year. Therefore, we have prepared this year's allocation plan on level funding in the amount of \$8,132,631.

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, the faith-based and the advocacy community, CAAs strengthen families and their environments, which help poor 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
- administrative and support costs that are not covered by other funds.

The state's Community Action Agencies (CAAs) operate vital programs such as energy assistance, eviction prevention, weatherization and child day care. As reported in the 2012 CSBG-IS Report, the CAAs provided services to 423,772 Connecticut residents. Those services include:

- Employment and Training, assisting 2,856 unemployed individuals obtain employment, and 3,078 individuals acquire skills and competencies required for employment.
- Financial Literacy and Asset Development, where 3,376 individuals demonstrated an increased knowledge of skills to manage income and increase savings through various asset-development programs
- Early Childhood Programs, where 6,057 children aged 0 to 5 attended quality programs that developed school readiness skills. 4095 children participated in pre-school activities and were developmentally ready to enter Kindergarten or 1st grade.
- Housing and Shelter Services, where 2,394 households/families obtained and/or

maintained safe and affordable housing. 3,860 households/families received either emergency shelter or emergency rental/mortgage payments.

- Energy and Weatherization Assistance, helping 132,575 households avoid heat or utility termination, or other fuel crisis through fuel or utility payment
- Nutrition Services, providing emergency or supplemental food to 37,929 households
- Elderly Support, assisting 21,882 seniors maintain active, independent living through specific services such as senior centers, home delivered meals, or home care
- Youth development and After School Services, helping 748 youth improve their social/emotional development and 2003 youth improve their health and physical development. 1,208 youth increased academic, athletic and social skills through participating in before or after school activities.
- Health Services, to include Health Access Services, Counseling, as well as AIDS Prevention and Counseling, insuring that 4,039 individuals obtain access to needed healthcare.
- Family Strengthening & Fatherhood Programs, helping 4,315 parents and other adults learn and exhibit improved family functioning skills.

This year's plan allocates 90% of the 2013 federal block grant to the state's CAAs and the Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA). States are allowed, per federal CSBG regulations, to use up to 5% of the annual CSBG award to cover administrative costs (to include salaries, fringes and overhead, as well as other expenses supporting the state's administrative, oversight and monitoring role), with another 5% for discretionary purposes. DSS will follow CSBG guidelines and use 5% for administrative costs and 5% for discretionary purposes. DSS will use discretionary funds for training, technical assistance, compliance monitoring, and special initiatives to strengthen the CAA network.

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 ensure 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 towards self-sufficiency.

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 (greater than 20%) to funding the department would have to review our priorities; as some restructuring, consolidation and sharing of resources would have to occur.

Thank you, my staff and I are available should you have any questions.

Technical Corrections to SSBG Plan

Errata

Pg. 3: The count of 12 service categories coincides with the number of Service Code's listed in the chart on page 12.

Pg.12: On page 12 in Note 4 the word long should be corrected to longer.