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REAUTHORIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

EXAMINING PROPOSED LEGISLATION AUTHORIZING FUNDS FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

JULY 10, 2003

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REAUTHORIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

THURSDAY, JULY 10, 2003

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES,
OF THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:20 p.m., in room SD–430, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Alexander (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Senators Alexander, Dodd, and Jeffords.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ALEXANDER

Senator ALEXANDER. The hearing will come to order.

First let me apologize to the witnesses and those who are in the audience for the delay. I was presiding, and we had a vote, both of those things, so it took me a few minutes to get here to get started. But we are looking forward to today's hearing, and I thank you very much for coming.

I want to welcome everyone. This is, as most of you know, the reauthorization of the Community Services Block Grant Program. That program is important. It helps low-income individuals and their families achieve dignity and self-sufficiency, and it accomplishes this by block grants to States, which then distribute the funds to local groups called community action agencies. These agencies in turn use the funds in many different ways to provide a number of social services to help low-income individuals and their families achieve a better quality of life—such things as finding a good job, getting an adequate education or a decent place to live, finding ways to improve household income.

In Tennessee last year—the State I know the most about—the CSBG program served over 100,000 individuals and more than 60,000 families, and of those, 40 percent were elderly or disabled families living on a fixed income, and 90 percent were living below the Federal poverty level.

The Federal poverty level for an individual is about $9,000; for a family of two, about $12,000; for a family of three, about $15,000. So those are the Americans that we are talking about.

Of those who are involved in the CSBG program, about three-quarters who sought housing assistance last year moved from a level of substandard housing to stable housing, and more individuals and more than 500 families moved away from homelessness.

About four out of 10 people who became involved with these programs and who were seeking better jobs obtained better jobs, and two-thirds of those obtained health care benefits that came along with those jobs.

We are interested today in learning not just about the success of the program, of which there are many, but about ways to improve the program. I am especially interested in hearing more from Mr. Horn and others about ways we can help individuals find new and better jobs. We live in a prosperous time on the one hand and a difficult time on the other. There are a great deal of jobs being created, and there are a great many jobs being lost.

I would be interested, for example, to hear how the CSBG program affects those who might have been laid off or lost a job.

We have two panels of witnesses. The first panel is Dr. Wade Horn, Assistant Secretary for Children and Families within the Department of Health and Human Services. His administration within HHS is responsible for administering this program. He has a wide range of responsibilities and a well-known background of reform and helping children and families. We are looking forward to his testimony.

On our second panel, whom I will introduce now, and we will ask you to come up after Dr. Horn, the first witness is David Bradley, executive director of the National Community Action Foundation, who has been involved with this program for a long, long time.

Our next three witnesses are individuals who have actually used the services of CSBG and can tell us a little bit about the program on a first-hand basis—Nathaniel Best, from Knoxville, TN; Michael Saucier, from Berlin, NH; and Winifred Octave, from Worcester, MA.

Our final witness is Mr. Phillip McKain, who is president and CEO of CTE, Inc., which provides CSBG services in the State of Connecticut.

I want to thank everyone again for coming. This is an interesting and diverse group of witnesses who will give us a first-hand perspective. Several of you have statements which you have already prepared; we will take those for the record and ask you to summarize your statements.

First, Dr. Horn, we thank you for coming, and we look forward to your taking whatever time you need to talk with us about the program, its successes, and ways that you think it might be improved as we seek to reauthorize it.

Before we begin I have statements from Senators Kennedy and Harkin.

[The prepared statements of Senators Kennedy and Harkin follow:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR KENNEDY

I'm pleased that Ms. Winifred Octave, a graduate of the Worcester Community Action Council is testifying before the subcommittee today. The Council has achieved remarkable successes in its programs, and Ms. Octave is one of these success stories.

There are 1,000 community action agencies across the country. They serve 34 million people, and almost every county has one. The majority of participants are extremely poor, living at or below 75

percent of the federal poverty line—that's less than $11,300 a year for a family of 3.

Community action agencies provide vital services that help people like Ms. Octave to help themselves and achieve self-sufficiency. Many participants come to these agencies feeling discouraged, with nowhere else to turn.

The agencies provide vocational education, job training and emergency food and shelter. They provide domestic violence counseling, day care, housing, transportation, literacy assistance and English as a Second Language. They give their clients opportunities and hope for the future.

Here's a good example from our state. A single mother and high school drop out came for help in the spring of 2001 after leaving an abusive relationship. She completed a job skills and readiness course and a computer literacy course, and earned credits toward her high school diploma. One year later, she was working as a teller in a local bank and preparing to take her high school equivalency exams for her GED. Today, she is planning to go to college to get a degree in early childhood education. She agrees that before the program, she had a bad attitude. But now she feels like she has a future with attainable goals.

There are countless stories like hers across the country, and with the continuing economic downturn, there will be many others who find themselves needing these services. The national unemployment rate last month reached 6.4%—the highest in more than 9 years, and the largest monthly increase since the September 11 attacks. Since March of this year, nearly 1 million jobs have been lost. With worsening economic conditions and cuts in important low-income programs, we must do more to see that help is available.

What's unique about these agencies is the way in which they are part of the community. Although the funds go to the states, 90 percent are passed on to the local community agencies. A third of the members of each local board must be low-income community residents. Winifred Octave is one of these board members in Worcester. The focus on local input helps to see that the unique and specific needs of the community are known and addressed.

No two agencies are alike, because each agency provides the services that are identified as most needed. This program is one of the few federally funded programs that is so flexible and so targeted in its delivery system.

Programs can include community economic development, job opportunities for low-income individuals, rural community facilities, and the national youth sports program. There is a community food and nutrition program. Individual development accounts also provide support services for low-income persons.

The community economic development program has particular significance for our family. In 1966, when Robert Kennedy was a Senator, he sponsored the legislation that helped create the first thirty community development corporations around the country. Public-private partnerships were launched that revitalized struggling neighborhoods through job and business opportunities for low-income residents.

In those years, we like to think, we declared war of a different kind—the War on Poverty. The nation is still struggling to win that war. We know that these Community Services Block Grants help real people and improve real lives, and I look forward to hearing more about these basic issues from our witnesses today.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR HARKIN

I would like to thank Chairman Alexander for calling this hearing today on the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) and the critical role it plays in alleviating poverty in communities across the country.

In my state of Iowa, CSBG funding is used predominately to fund Community Action Agencies or CAA's, that help low-income families overcome challenges in achieving self-sufficiency. Iowa's CAA's do a remarkable job in carefully identifying needs of communities and then providing a range of programs and activities to expand opportunities for low-income people to escape poverty. This includes resources for employment and training, education, housing, senior services, domestic violence prevention and Head Start.

Last year, CSBG funding provided these and other services to more than 13 million low-income individuals and 6 million families nationwide. In Iowa, approximately 300,000 individuals and 117,000 families benefitted from CSBG.

CAA's are also an integral component in welfare reform efforts. Our welfare caseloads dropped significantly in Iowa since the 1996 Welfare Reform. CAA's contributed to the success by helping previous or current welfare participants initiate family development and self-sufficiency programs to help them achieve economic independence.

There is no doubt that CSBG funding is the glue that sustains CAA's agencies and their ability to provide critical resources and tools to help low-income people. I hear from my constituents that CSBG funding has been particularly helpful recently as the unemployment rate rises. The state budget cuts in social services have also had an extraordinary impact on low-income people.

I am concerned that the President has continually proposed funding cuts for this successful block grant. I am pleased that in my role as Chairman and Ranking Member of the Appropriations Subcommittee that funds CSBG, I was able to significantly increase funding for CSBG which in FY03 received $729 million. And, in the bill that recently passed the Appropriations Committee I was able to minimize the $150 million cut the President proposed in his budget. I plan to work hard to make sure funding for this effective anti-poverty program is maintained and improved.

I look forward to working with members of the Committee and Administration on bipartisan legislation to build on the longstanding success of CSBG as we continue to provide the tools necessary to help people achieve self-sufficiency, especially in these difficult economic times.

STATEMENT OF WADE F. HORN, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Mr. HORN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is good to see you again, and I am very pleased to appear before you today to talk about the President's plan to reauthorize the Community Services Block Grant Act.

The administration strongly supports the concept of community-based solutions to issues related to poverty reduction, and hence we strongly support the reauthorization of the CSBG Act.

My written statement discusses each of the programs under CSBG; I will limit my oral remarks to two programs under the Act that are the focus of the administration's reauthorization program, the Community Services Block Grant itself and the Community Economic Development Program.

The cornerstone of our reauthorization proposal is to strengthen accountability of CSBG to ensure that this significant source of support for low-income families and communities is achieving the best results possible. CSBG services are administered, as you know, in localities across the country, primarily by a network of 1,100 community action agencies, or CAAs, in coordination with other neighborhood-based entities. CAAs have for nearly four decades now garnered experience in addressing the problems of low-income individuals and families.

However, annual awards are not open to competition, and the current law does not provide for a consistent means of assessing minimum standards of performance by community action agencies in order to receive funding.

To address these concerns, the President's 2004 reauthorization proposal calls for the development of and adherence to a common core of national outcome measures for agencies funded under the CSBG, as well as the design of a means to review, monitor, and, if necessary, remove local organizations that are not achieving good results. This builds on the 1998 reauthorization of CSBG, which mandated that by 2001, States be accountable for the performance of their CSBG programs through a performance measurement system. States could design their own system or they could replicate the Secretary's model program, the Results-Oriented Management and Accountability System, known as ROMA.

We plan to use the ROMA foundation as the basis for establishing the national outcome measures. By building this requirement into statute, more consistent data would be collected, and program outcomes evaluated to ensure that CSBG programs are effectively serving at-risk individuals and communities.

Organizations that are not found to be performing at an acceptable level could lose their designation as a service provider for CSBG if acceptable corrections are not made. A State-run competition would be held to designate new community action agencies to replace the agencies that fail to meet the acceptable standards.

Faith-based organizations as well as other nongovernmental community-based organizations would be eligible to apply for funding under the proposed revised authority.

Our objective is to have consistently applied outcome measures to ensure that all agencies administering CSBG can assess their

programs' effectiveness and are accountable for the services supported by the program.

Once enacted, we will be better-equipped to ensure that CSBG funding is made to local community organizations that are effective in achieving the purposes of the Act.

Along with the block grant, the CSBG Act provides the Secretary with discretionary authority to use up to 9 percent of the Community Service Block Grant funds to support employment for community development activities.

Our reauthorization proposal would maintain this authority to support funding for the Urban and Rural Community Economic Development Program. The Community Economic Development Program funds competitive grants to locally-initiated private, nonprofit community organizations called community development corporations, for projects that create employment, training, and business opportunities for low-income community residents.

In the context of this reauthorization, the administration proposes to strengthen the capability of this program by increasing accountability and monitoring and expanding the pool of applicants by redefining entities eligible to receive funding to include other faith-based and community-based organizations. We believe that by casting a broader net, we can make this program work even better for low-income communities and individuals.

In conclusion, the administration believes that these programs are an important part of our Nation's commitment to reducing poverty, but that objective cannot be achieved if we merely seek to maintain the status quo. The President's proposal puts forth the framework for a 21st century model of addressing poverty that requires uniform accountability, supports competition to enable different ways of approaching the problem, and makes certain that the programs supported by funds under the Community Services Block Grant Act provide the highest quality of service.

We look forward to working with this committee as it pursues reauthorization of this important program. I would be very pleased to answer any questions that you might have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Horn may be found in additional material.]

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. Horn.

Senator Jeffords is here, the former chairman of our full committee. Senator, I have already introduced Mr. Horn and the other witnesses, and it is time for questions of Mr. Horn, but I wonder if you have some comments that you would like to make at the outset.

Senator JEFFORDS. No. I will just go right to questions; that is fine.

Senator ALEXANDER. OK. Then, I will ask a couple, if that is all right, and then we will see if Senator Jeffords has some.

Let me ask a larger question about coordination of community services. One of the things that always intrigues me as I work in this area is that we have an inevitable tendency here to look at the world from here down instead of from the individual, and when I am in Morristown, TN or Maryville, TN, and I hear about all these programs, it always occurs to me—how would an individual go about finding out what all these programs are?

I know, for example, in the area of early childhood, prenatal through 8, I think we have counted 69 different Federal programs, plus Head Start, and if I were working in my home community, which I have before, on prenatal through K through 8, it would help me to know what all those different programs are.

There are 1,100 community action agencies. There are 9,000 Head Start centers across the country—something like that.

And you must have thought about this and worked hard on it given your extensive involvement in the area—what can we do to make more intelligible to people in communities the large number of Federal programs and Federal dollars that are available for social services?

Mr. HORN. Well, I think you have identified a very important issue, and I think that you are precisely correct. Sometimes we who work and live in the Washington, DC area see it from our perspective; but from the ground perspective, someone who is in need of services, what they know is not that there might be 55 different spending authorities in the Administration on Children and Families, but what they want to know is, I need help with housing today, or I need help with child care today, and where do I go to get that?

There are lots of different entry points for a single client to go into, but there is often not a single place where they can go to find out about the array of supports that may be available for that individual given what their unique needs might be. I think that is one of the strengths of the community action agencies, that they often bring together a variety of these different resources and funding streams and can communicate to individual clients not just a single-purpose service but rather the array of services that may be available to them, particularly those services that are directed toward poverty reduction.

But still, there are even limits, unfortunately, to coordination because of the nature of the highly categorical funding streams, each with its own reporting requirements, so the typical community action agency may be coordinating 15 or 20 different funding streams, they may have 15 or 20 different reporting requirements, they may have different eligibility criteria, and it may be almost as hard for the service provider to negotiate all of that as for the individual.

One thing that the administration would like Congress to consider in the context of a different bill, TANF reauthorization, is the idea of allowing States to experiment or innovate with the so-called super-waiver authority that the President has proposed for putting these various funding streams together more in sort of a seamless system of service delivery.

At the very least, for example, a State could say, Look, what we would like to do is have one data collection system and reporting requirement, because we are often serving the same clients. We do not want to tear down this program or that program, but we sure as heck could save a lot of money and redirect them into services if we had just one data collection system that could report on the report on the services that are being provided.

And from my perspective, if you were to do that, you would start with the family, the client, and work out as opposed to the way

data collection systems are currently structured, which is to start with the service and then ask the question who are we serving. When you start that way, it often sounds as though there is all this unmet need.

For example, in Head Start, we have a data collection system for Head Start, and we ask who is being served, and we pretend as if everybody who is not in Head Start is not being served. We know that is not true. A lot of those kids are in State preschool programs, some are in child care programs. But we do not have a single system of data collection that would tell us that information, so it a long-winded, and I am sorry for the long-winded answer to your question, but you have hit precisely on a very important issue and one that we in the administration are struggling with and trying to figure out how to create a truly seamless system of support services so that an individual knows where to go, and when they get there, the service provider knows all of the various services and supports that are available to that family.

Senator ALEXANDER. Would it even be possible for an individual working in social services, let us say in Knox County, TN to find a list of all the Federal programs that might serve, let us just say children prenatal through 8 in Knox County, TN, or is that money distributed by county?

Mr. HORN. Senator, it is hard for me to know where all the funding streams are for these programs, because I have 56 different spending authorities at ACF, but there are also spending authorities for the same populations not only across other operating divisions in HHS but throughout the Federal Government. It is a maze that is difficult to negotiate, and from the local service provider's standpoint, it is not impossible, and certainly a lot of them are doing a really good job of doing it—and again, I think that is one of the strengths of community action agencies—but it is difficult, and I think the challenge before us here in Washington is to make sure we are not imposing any barriers that make it difficult at the local level.

Senator ALEXANDER. You have not said this, but of course, the real responsibility for that comes back to the Congress, because it is the Congress that creates all the programs, and then you have the responsibility to administer them.

I look forward to working with you more on the issue with this subcommittee particularly on the issue of looking for ways on programs that have to do with children and families, not just with CSBG but with other areas under your jurisdiction as well as the Department of Education, to think of many different ways—you are suggesting one with the welfare bill, TANF—but to see if there are other ways, other options, of rationalizing all these programs and making it simpler for individuals and communities to get into whatever service it is they need.

I have another question, but I think what I will do is stop now and ask Senator Jeffords to ask whatever questions he would like, and then, if there is time, I will come back with mine.

Senator JEFFORDS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Horn, in your testimony, the two main criticisms of the community action agencies are that the agencies are static and that they lack appropriate accountability. Those conclusions are not con-

sistent with our experience in Vermont. However, the President has proposed block grants for the child welfare system and the Head Start programs.

If the current CSBG block grant is static and unaccountable, why should we be moving to block-grant other programs that play such important roles in our communities?

Mr. HORN. Well, with all due respect, Senator, we are not proposing to block-grant either child welfare or the Head Start Program. In both of those programs, what we are proposing is a State option that would allow the State to come up with a plan, in the case of Head Start, to better coordinate Head Start with State-administered preschool programs, but we are not simply saying, Hey, look, what we would like to do is take the Head Start appropriations, apply a State formula to it, send the money out to the States and have them administer it, so long as they do it within the broad context of the authorizing statute.

That is what block grants do, as you know, but that is not what the President is proposing for the Head Start Program. Similarly in the child welfare proposal, we are not proposing to block grant child welfare but rather simply to provide an option to the States in which, if they chose to—and they do not have to choose to—they could get a fixed sum of money over 5 years which they could spend more flexibly than they can currently spend under the Title IV Foster Care Program.

I do not think there is anything inherently wrong with a block grant. The TANF Program, for example, is a block grant, and we think the TANF Program is working pretty well, has a good track record, although we would like to see some improvements.

Our criticism is not that this is a block grant, and block grants are inherently bad, but rather that in this particular case, there is not enough accountability that we think needs to occur to assure the American taxpayer that the investment we are making in this program is achieving results. So what we are suggesting is that we put that results-oriented system in place, and my guess is that what we are going to find is that many community action agencies are doing a terrific job in their communities helping to reduce poverty and helping people lift themselves out of poverty.

So this is not a criticism of block grants per se, but we do think it is time for us to overlay an accountability system on the community action agencies.

Senator JEFFORDS. Your proposal calls for the development of and adherence to national outcome measures for community action agencies. This would move the agencies from local to national standards. The administration's Head Start proposal calls for States to develop their own Head Start standards to move from national standards to local standards. Although we have seen few details, the child welfare proposal seems similar.

Why is the administration pushing in the opposite direction on these programs—and I might add, you oversee them all.

Mr. HORN. Yes, I do. And again, I am not sure that we are comparing apples with apples here. In fact, I think there is a great similarity between what we are suggesting in CSBG and what we are also doing administratively through the Head Start Program. As you may be aware, back in the 1998 reauthorization of Head

Start, there was a requirement similar to what happened in CSBG, that local agencies develop an outcomes-oriented system that they would apply at the local level. And what we have found is that that is not a very useful tool for us to be able to oversee and manage the Head Start Program, because what we have is 1,300 Head Start grantees, and they have 1,300 different ways of determining outcomes.

So we do not know, for example, looking at that disparate data, whether this grantee is achieving good outcomes compared to that grantee. So one of the things we are doing in Head Start administratively is implementing, very similar to this proposal—but we have statutory authority to do it in the Head Start Program—a common core of outcome measures that would be applied across all Head Start programs in the country. It would still allow flexibility for locally-determined outcome measures as well, but there ought to be a common core of outcome measures that everybody assesses. That is what we are doing in Head Start, and that is what we are proposing here.

We are not saying that community action agencies should give up the idea of locally-determined outcome measures. That would be giving in to precisely the mistake that we here in Washington sometimes make, which is believing we know best for every community in America. But rather, it seems to us that it is not unreasonable to ask that each community action agency, given there is some core similarity in their mission—that is, poverty reduction—that there be some core set of common outcome criteria that they apply to all community action agencies.

So we actually see a great similarity between what we want to accomplish through CSBG and what we are also administratively moving toward in the Head Start Program.

Senator JEFFORDS. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Jeffords.

I have one other area that I would be interested in your comments about. Some of the programs for CSBG are funded directly from the Federal Government, and the community economic development is one. And it is there that you talk about enlarging the pool of applicants to include faith-based and community-based organizations. I want to make an observation about that and see what you think.

Have you considered just making it permissible for the community action agencies themselves to work with faith-based organizations, because my guess is that most of them already do. My experience has been that in Nashville, I was chairman of the Salvation Army's Red Shield initiative, which was the Nashville effort over a period of 6 years to help individuals move from dependence to independence under the Welfare Reform Act which was very successful. And when I was listening to the debate in Washington about separation of church and State and faith-based—all that discussion—I realized that in our own community, we were all head-over-heels doing that. I mean, the Salvation Army was the chief sponsor of this coalition, which was basically a mall of social services. The City of Nashville was the manager and funder of the local child care centers. In other words, everybody was all mixed up in

everything, and nobody had even stopped to think about the fact that we were mixing up in effect the church and the State in our little social services activity there.

Then, someone wrote me a letter and said that the First Amendment, the Separation of Church and Powers provision, was intended to apply to the Federal Government, that looking back to Europe where there was a central government and a central church, that our Founders were trying to stay away from that, that our Scotch-Irish pioneers got tired of paying taxes to support the Bishop of the Church of England, and they didn't want a central church.

So my practical experience is that it is fairly easy to work out relationships with faith-based organizations if you are working within a community. Whenever you elevate the whole discussion to Washington and begin to have a Federal application of that, everyone begins to get a little nervous.

I wondered how you thought this might—your idea here about involving faith-based agencies—might work.

Mr. HORN. As a point of clarification, first, under the CSBG, community action agencies already can be faith-based organizations. In fact, as you know, there is a charitable choice provision in the CSBG Act.

What we are suggesting is under the discretionary program that is a direct Federal to local grantee program, the Community Economic Development Program, that currently, the only eligible applications are community economic development corporations, and they are not the only ones, however, that have a history of working in local communities on poverty reduction and economic development. There are other community-based organizations and faith-based organizations that also have a history of doing that.

All that we are suggesting is that when it comes to competing these grants that we open up the eligible pool so that we get the best agencies who have the best record in helping local communities in terms of economic development. And this is not a knock against community economic development corporations; it is simply trying to expand the pool.

Clearly, there are church and State issues when you are talking about providing direct funding from the Federal Government to a local faith-based organization. Certainly a faith-based organization who was successful in getting these moneys could not, for example, discriminate on the basis of somebody's personal faith perspective in delivery of services. A faith-based organization could not use the money to proselytize.

But as you know, the President feels very strongly that we ought to level the playing field wherever it is appropriate to ensure that faith-based organizations are not necessarily shut out from competition in becoming partners with the government in delivering services, and the question ought to be are they effective, not are you faith-based or not faith-based.

But at the same time, it is clear that there are limitations on those faith-based organizations who apply, and we take as our responsibility as overseers of these programs that if a faith-based organization is successful in applying for Federal funds that we make sure they understand that there is a deal here to be had, that in

exchange for accepting Federal funds, you cannot proselytize and you cannot discriminate in the delivery of services.

So I think there are sufficient safeguards administratively that will ensure that church and State separation is preserved.

Senator ALEXANDER. Senator Dodd, who is the ranking member and former chairman of this subcommittee, is very interested in the proceeding. He is on the floor engaged in debate. He had some questions for Dr. Horn, but he will submit those for the record, and he wanted me to say that in case he does not get here.

[Response to questions of Senator Dodd were not received at press time.]

Senator ALEXANDER. Senator Jeffords, do you have any other questions?

Senator JEFFORDS. Yes. I have one final observation I would like to make. The administration is saying, quote: "Head Start is effective, but not effective enough. It needs to be more local," while here, the administration is saying CSBG is effective, but not effective enough, and it needs to be more national.

I am very concerned about these proposals as to why the divergence of opinion here. There is no logic or consistent approach here, it would appear to me. It seems that the only goal of the administration is to undermine the success of effective government programs.

While we can always strive to improve programs, I am concerned that the message here is that no program, no matter how effective, is safe. I want you to know, Dr. Horn, that I am very concerned about these proposals that seem to be conflicting. If you have a comment, I would love to hear it.

Mr. HORN. Well, as a clinical child psychologist who has spent his career advocating for improving the well-being of children, I can assure you that none of the administration's proposals that we are discussing here are designed to undermine effective services.

I think the difference between CSBG and Head Start is that CSBG does not have the kind of outcome and accountability data that we have in place already for Head Start. For example, we have a national random sample of children in Head Start whom we follow every year—a different sample, obviously—through something called FACES, the Family and Children Experiences Survey. And that is where we get the information that tells us that kids do improve in Head Start, but they still lag significantly behind their more economically advantaged peers. And the challenge there is to improve that effectiveness.

Here, I think the challenge is to get a system in place that will tell us how effective the community action agencies are. And again, I have every reason to expect that we will find a number of them are quite effective. But we don't have that system in place yet, and that is what we are trying to do is get that system in place.

Senator JEFFORDS. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator ALEXANDER. Senator Dodd, I have introduced the witnesses, and Dr. Horn has testified and submitted his testimony; Senator Jeffords and I have said what we had to say and asked our questions. So it is your turn, and after that, we will invite the second panel of witnesses to come up.

Senator DODD. Thank you, and I apologize. I was just offering an amendment on the floor of the Senate to the State Department authorization bill, so I apologize for being late, but if you get a chance to offer an amendment on the floor, you had better take advantage of it; it may be light-years before you get another opportunity. Those of you who are familiar with how the Senate operates will appreciate my tardiness.

So I would ask unanimous consent if I could, Mr. Chairman, to include an opening statement in the record and will just express some general views.

Senator ALEXANDER. It will be done.

[The prepared statement of Senator Dodd follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR DODD

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for convening this hearing on the Community Services Block Grant.

I have worked with Community Action Agencies throughout my career in the Senate, particularly those in Connecticut, and have long been impressed with their innovative and creative efforts to address the needs of individuals and families living in poverty.

The Community Action Agencies have a very difficult job. As we all know, there is no magic wand to eliminate poverty or the impact poverty has on families, particularly families with young children. I wish we could give every Community Action Agency a magic wand. But, instead, we rely on them as they each conduct a community needs assessment and set out to individually meet their specific needs within each diverse community.

CSBG funds local programs. The needs within each community vary tremendously. There is a common thread that CSBG serves poor families, increasingly working poor families, but no two communities really are the same. That's what makes each Community Action Agency unique.

In 2001 alone, a quarter-million low-income individuals called upon their local Community Action Agencies in the state of Connecticut for assistance. With the current economy, the demands on these agencies are on the rise nationally.

These families, largely working poor families, have no margin for error or change: rising fuel prices alone, for instance, can put their hard-earned self-sufficiency in a vulnerable state. In Connecticut, individuals in crisis will turn to local Community Action Agencies since they are uniquely positioned to pull together an individualized set of resources and supports to meet the needs of each client.

The variation and diversity found across Community Action Agencies demonstrates the success of the statute in doing what it set out to do: create local responders with the flexibility to vary their efforts as needed in order to meet the particular and immediate demands of their low-income populations and communities.

CSBG provides a framework for a national system of local activists: government leaders, business and community members, coming together to mobilize local resources for monitoring, improving and addressing community-wide responses to poverty. I continue to be impressed with the ability of Community Action Agencies to use CSBG funds to leverage other resources. Nationally, every CSBG dollar is matched by over $14 from other sources.

CSBG supports over 1,144 entities that create a nation-wide network of local first responders in combating the causes and effects of poverty. I thank each of you, not only for testifying today, but for your daily commitment and involvement in these programs and agencies. I look forward to learning how we can use this reauthorization as an opportunity to further improve and strengthen our efforts to combat poverty.

Senator DODD. Let me ask a few questions if I can, and my staff tells me that a number of the questions I would have asked have already been raised, so I will try to keep this relatively brief.

First of all, welcome. It is a pleasure to have you with us.

To begin, having read over your testimony, there was a White House press release in August 2001, which I have with me and will be glad to include in the record, that singles out the Community Services Block Grant as one of the rare—and I am almost quoting here—one of the rare programs that examines through impact evaluations whether the funds achieve the desired results.

I am also aware that ROMA is a mandated accountability system that was pioneered by the community action agencies themselves, not mandated by the administration.

Now ROMA is a mandated component of all local agencies and is nationally recognized as the leading government innovation by folks who ought to know, such as the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

What happened, I guess the question is, between August of 2001 and today to change your mind about the accountability standards or efforts under the community action agencies that they operate?

Mr. HORN. First of all, just as a point of clarification, ROMA is not a mandated system in terms of local agencies. What is required in the 1998 reauthorization, as you know, is that every community action agency must have a system of assessing results and the impact of their services. The local agencies can come up with their own, States can come up with their own system and apply that to the local agencies, or the local agencies can adopt the Secretary's model program known as ROMA.

So ROMA is not mandated at the moment for all community action agencies. But it is true that ROMA was developed in partnership as a bottom-up, not top-down, system of accountability that many—not all, but many—community action agencies in fact do participate in. And what we are suggesting is that we have statutory authority to require a common core of outcome measures, which will be largely based upon the ROMA system, be applied to all community action agencies so that we can have for the first time consistent data across the board.

So we think that ROMA is a good system but at the moment do not have the statutory authority to require the community action agencies to actually deliver it. I think it is a testament to that system that so many do, but there is not a statutory authority to require it.

Senator DODD. In your testimony, you give these community action agencies sort of mediocre performance grades. That is how I read your testimony. Is that an accurate description?

Mr. HORN. I think the accurate description is that we do not have a good sense about how effective they are, and that is what

we are trying to do is implement a system to get a better sense of that in terms of impact, not in terms of just process.

Senator DODD. Because when you look at the HHS Annual Agency Performance Reports and the statistical reports, it looks as though they have exceeded targets set by the Department; is that not true?

Mr. HORN. It is true that there are some targets that we set that——

Senator DODD. Overall, they exceeded them.

Mr. HORN. Well, again, many of them unfortunately are process-oriented and less outcome-oriented, and what we would like to do is a more outcome-oriented system.

Senator DODD. You are still calling that mediocre. You know, most government agencies, when they get those kinds of numbers, I would call it better than mediocre. I wish we could have that kind of results in other agencies.

Mr. HORN. I do not think I would characterize my testimony as indicating that we have a strong belief that we have mediocre results in this program.

Senator DODD. All right. I appreciate that.

The discretionary programs that you mentioned such as the Rural Community Facilities Grant Program, aren't they in fact not duplicative in nature, but rather a program that supports the start-up and planning stages of what down the road might lead toward EPA funding but for which EPA does not fund at the preliminary planning level. The need in rural America is obviously very great—and I know you know that. Close to $14 billion is necessary to help rural communities adequately their wastewater needs, and if we eliminate the Rural Community Facilities Program, how will remote and small communities—I have some in my State despite the size of my State, and I know that my chairman has many rural and more remote communities in his larger State—how do they tap into the expertise needed to successfully navigate the extensive and thorough planning process that must predate any application to the USDA and EPA if they don't have that kind of support and help?

Mr. HORN. Well, we believe that the Rural Community Facilities Program is duplicative of programs both in the EPA and the USDA, and not only do we think they are duplicative, we think that the expertise for actually managing those kinds of programs is more directly found in EPA and USDA than in HHS.

Senator DODD. You really think they are that duplicative?

Mr. HORN. Yes.

Senator DODD. All right. I have a couple more questions, Mr. Chairman, but in the interest of time, we will submit a couple more to you in writing. And I am glad at least to hear you think that your report was not a mediocre analysis. I will consider that my victory for the afternoon.

Senator ALEXANDER. Mr. Horn, thank you very much for coming.

I will now ask the second panel to come forward and take their seats.

Senator Dodd, I was saying a little earlier that we have David Bradley, who has been deeply involved with the community action agencies for a long time; we have three individuals who have taken the advantage of being a part of CSBG services whom we welcome

especially today; and we have Mr. McKain from the State of Connecticut, who provides those services. So we have testimony already, but if you might summarize your testimony or tell your stories, we will start with Mr. Bradley and go to Mr. McKain next, and then we look forward to hearing from the three of you.

Mr. Bradley, welcome.

STATEMENTS OF DAVID A. BRADLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL COMMUNITY ACTION FOUNDATION; PHILLIP McKAIN, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, CTE, INCORPORATED, AND PRESIDENT, CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY ACTION; NATHANIEL BEST, KNOXVILLE, TN; WINIFRED OCTAVE, WORCESTER, MA; AND MICHAEL SAUCIER, BERLIN, NH

Mr. BRADLEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you Senator Dodd. I have testimony that I would like to just submit for the record and give some brief oral comments.

I must express my gratitude for not only the invitation to appear here today but even more for this subcommittee's history of concern and support of community action, the Community Services Block Grant, and most important, the low-income communities it serves.

Since its beginning in 1964 through the creation of the Community Services Block Grant in 1981 and up to today, every reauthorization that this committee has worked on has resulted in the strengthening, improvement, and further focusing of the Community Action Program.

We know that it can be further improved, and as always, we have some proposals that we are presenting to you in anticipation of a strong bipartisan reauthorization effort.

There is much that we agree with the administration, but I must say that as an important partner in fighting poverty, there are a couple of things that overall are disappointing about the administration's views on the Community Services Block Grant.

First, in the budget submission, there was discussion that community action agencies are a "static" group of agencies. The word "static" can mean a couple of things—one, community action agencies are not updating their programs to address the poverty conditions of today. Our witnesses and the panelists here today will tell a different story about how community action agencies and the Community Services Block Grant makes a real difference in today's lives.

For the record, I have prepared innovative approaches going on in every State, for every member of the subcommittee—examples of the laboratory innovation of meeting today's needs. I would like to also submit that for the record.

The other meaning of "static" is the same old organizations getting CSBG funds. This complaint could reflect an honest mistake about the role of Congress and how they have assigned community action agencies their unique responsibilities in the low-income community.

In 1964, the Nation decided to establish permanent local institutions run by boards that represent a partnership with the low-income community, business, and private nonprofits including religious communities and local government. Board structure was en-

gineered to allow stability, legitimacy, and the freedom to customize local anti-poverty responses using whatever resources could be developed.

This committee and all of your predecessors, regardless of the party holding the chair, has maintained that the design and principle of community action is worth continuing. Every grassroots group in the country sometimes dub themselves "community actin" nowadays, but the network of 1,100 CSBG grantees is different. Its members have the credibility and integrity to administer about $9 billion a year, including over half a billion dollars from private donations. They serve more than 13 million people a year, one out of every four people living in poverty, with integrated, responsive programming.

And of course, if you support a national institution of community action, you need to ask what CSBG contributes to community action agencies to do their job. Some thing that CSBG is basically funding for direct services, projects, or even grants to individuals—money that makes up the shortfall in other government funds—but it is more than that.

CSBG is the money that community action agencies use to do the unique local job they are assigned. I would like to quote to you the best description I think ever written of community action, and I quote: "While the operation of programs is the CAA's principal activity, it is not the community action agencies' primary objective. Community action agency programs must serve the larger purpose of mobilizing resources and bringing about greater institutional sensitivity. The critical link between service delivery and improved community response distinguishes the community action agency from other agencies. A CAA's effectiveness, therefore, is measured not only by the services which it directly provides, but more importantly by the improvements and changes it achieves in the community's attitudes and practices toward the poor and in the allocation and focusing of public and private resources for anti-poverty purposes."

Mr. Chairman, those words were expressed by then OEO Director Donald Rumsfeld, published in 1970. They have reinforced and clarified the community action mission for 33 years.

Our Results-Oriented Measurement and Assessment system which Senator Dodd was involved with in 1998 in creating the environment to measure outcomes—called ROMA now—does not just measure CSBG results—it measures community action agency results, all $9 billion, and 13 million served by over 500 different combinations of projects.

As Senator Dodd pointed out, in 2001, it was singled out by the White House as an innovative program for measuring agency results; and as Senator Dodd also pointed out, it was a semifinalist at the Kennedy School of Government for the prestigious Innovations in Government Award.

Since 1981, we have tried through every reauthorization to require better performance for all partners in this program. With that, we do not disagree with the administration. We want the program—all particular partners in the program—to do better, to have more measurable outcomes, and to continue helping the low-income. But to do that, we also need to make sure that during this

reauthorization, as we look at the role that community action agencies play and their outcomes, that we also assess the effectiveness, the performance, and the partnership of both State and Federal.

We have given the committee some good ideas, we think, on reauthorization, and we are proud of those ideas; we are proud of how we think we can improve the Community Services Block Grant.

But just as important as the pride we take in what we offer the committee as our suggestions for reauthorization language, we are also proud of the witnesses here today who will be able to tell you a story about, that community action agencies and the Community Service Block Grant have made a real difference in their lives and communities.

Thank you very much.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Mr. Bradley. Do you remember who was Mr. Rumsfeld's assistant in 1970?

Mr. BRADLEY. Yes. Are you ready? Some guy named Dick Cheney.

Senator ALEXANDER. That was him. [Laughter.]

Senator DODD. He probably wrote that.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bradley may be found in additional material.]

Senator ALEXANDER. Mr. McKain, thank you for being with us today.

Senator DODD. If I may, Mr. Chairman, Mr. McKain is my constituent——

Senator ALEXANDER. Why don't you introduce him?

Senator DODD. Well, this is a wonderful human being, and we are very proud of him in Connecticut. He has done more than 30 years of commitment to community action and to serving the underprivileged. In fact, if you list—and I do not know how you do this—I read the list of organizations that he is a member of in the Greater Stamford Area in Connecticut, and it is breathtaking. In addition to that, he is very active in his own church and is just a remarkable human being. But for 10 years, he has been a responsible steward for CSBG's mission in the area of successfully advancing local and State accountability, and currently is president of the Connecticut Association for Community Action Agencies throughout the State; that is how highly-regarded and respected Mr. McKain is.

It is truly an honor for me, Mr. McKain, as a member of this committee, to have you here with us today and to thank you publicly for a lifetime of service to your community. You are a true patriot, I want you to know, and we thank you.

Mr. MCKAIN. Thank you, Senator, very much. My mother would be very happy to hear you say that. She taught me community service.

Mr. Chairman and Senator Dodd, I really want to thank you for inviting me here to testify on behalf of the reauthorization of CSBG. I was here some 5 years ago to talk about CSBG and to really talk about the Results-Oriented Management and Accountability System, which community action agencies have really worked hard at implementing, so I want to again come to tell you today what it has all meant.

You have my testimony, and I am going to submit it for the record.

I also want to submit for the record from the commissioner of the Department of Social Services, Patricia Wilson Coker, which she wrote to Senator Dodd on June 30 in which she talks about the value of CSBG to the State of Connecticut and how she is partnering with the community action agencies to in fact implement some very, very innovative approaches to human services delivery in the State of Connecticut.

That is really what I want to talk about, because Chairman Alexander, when I was listening to your opening remarks, you talked about the array of services and how do we think differently about how we coordinate services and help the client or the customer—I like to call them "customer"—how we help the customer of our services be able to really enter into the system and also get out of the system and become self-sufficient in a way that is not confusing to them.

I want to really commend the Senate and Congress for passing the Community Services Block Grant, because the genius of the Community Services Block Grant is that you have in your own hands right now at the Federal level a block grant program that in fact can be the basis for bringing all of this together. That is what we are doing in Connecticut.

We looked at the system in Connecticut and said that the fragmented and confusing system for the Department of Social Services delivery system needed to be modeled, frankly, after what we do at community action in terms of a comprehensive approach where the client comes in and takes a look at all the services and getting them to them.

So we got together and, using CSBG funds, were able to put together a technology-oriented system where we bought the software and incorporated the Results-Oriented Management and Accountability outcomes into that system and sat down with Governor Rowland and his staff and the commissioner of the Department of Social Services and said this is a new way in which we should be taking a look at the delivery of human services.

As a result, the commissioner turned to the community action agencies for implementing programs for the disabled in a time of crisis when they were faced with budget cuts, because in her words, she said the community action agencies, through their CSBG-funded programs and how they have been able to come together is the only system at the State level that she can turn to to make sure that the low-income and the disabled and those who are underserved can be served.

So, Senator, when you talk about how do we help the client navigate through this system, you have the Community Services Block Grant that can be designed to do that. And I would say that that is not a static system. The beauty of the Community Services Block Grant in Connecticut is that we can respond very quickly to needs. We have now created what we call the Human Services Infrastructure Program which in fact will be a one-stop self-sufficiency. We partner with DSS, the Department of Social Services, but also InfoLine, which is a Statewide information and referral system funded by the United Way, in which we will in fact have one portal

which low-income persons can come through so they can then take a look at the array of services that their family needs. If they need DHHS eligibility for services, we get them there; if they need another sort of service, we get them there. But we keep a case management system going where we can in fact work with that family all the way through to self-sufficiency.

That is what we are doing with CSBG funds, and it could not have happened without CSBG. So when you read the commissioner's letter, and you see the examples, you will see what the value of community services is all about, and what Dave Bradley is talking about when he talks about what we are all about.

We are about change at the State level and bringing about innovation, but also more important, I want to talk to you about how we go about community change at the local level through CSBG. I can talk about my situation in Stamford. The Senator is correct. I am part of almost every board and commission in Stamford—but that is for a reason. The reason is because that is what the mission of the Community Services Block Grant is—to mobilize private and public resources to address the basic causes of poverty, and we do that.

So the local community, for example, recently turned to us because Stamford, which is a highly affluent area, had a very serious issue related to affordable housing. They asked the community action agencies to bring together the business community, faith-based community, public officials, the nonprofit housing developers, the private developers, to bring about a situation where we can take a look at how do we create affordable housing for the working poor—the nurses' aides, the teachers' aides, even some of the local policemen, who have not been able to live in the community.

What we did through that collaborative that we used—and CSBG dollars were involved—we were at the place where they met, we provided the food, the minutes of the meetings, and we kept everybody on task because everyone comes at things a different way. But that is the beauty of the Community Services Block Grant is bringing the community together to create an environment so that the needs of low-income people are not just met on the direct service level, but the environment is created in the community so that there is sensitivity to those needs. And as a result of that, Stamford has a zoning law. The mayor created a task force, and we now have recommendations for affordable housing; we have an inclusionary zoning law that in fact requires that at least 12 percent of the housing that is developed in Stamford, whether it is through a private developer or a nonprofit developer, has an affordability requirement along all the areas of income that exist, because as the Senator knows, in Stamford, CT, if you just do it by the standard HUD definition, a lot of people will still be left out. So we were able to be creative and create an income tier that in fact creates affordable housing as a result.

This has not hurt the housing market. The developers are developing housing. We have created housing for, as I said, nurses and nurses' aides and teachers' aides. In fact, we have a goal of creating 300 units a year, and we are working on that. But that would not have happened, Senators, without a CSBG-funded entity having the trust of that community to bring this issue together.

The other issue—and I know I am going over my time——

Senator ALEXANDER. Please finish, but we need to get to the other witnesses.

Mr. MCKAIN. I will finish. Let me just say that in fact the State turned to community action agencies because they knew we had a flexible funding stream in order to bring changes. The local community turned to us because they knew that we had trust and commitment to the poor so that we could bring about change. And individuals turned to us because they have changes in their lives, and the one thing that makes that happen is the Community Services Block Grant, and that is the genius of it, because they know that there is a flexibility there that allows them to meet their goals.

So I want to thank you for allowing me to testify today, and I will be more than happy to answer questions.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you for taking the time to come today and for your service to our country and your community.

[The prepared statement of Mr. McKain may be found in additional material.]

Senator ALEXANDER. Now, we asked a couple of our other committee members, our chairman, Judd Gregg, and our ranking member, Senator Kennedy, and then I did the same—we thought it might be interesting to hear from what Mr. McKain calls "the customers."

So, Mr. Best—Pastor Best, I guess I should say—Ms. Octave, Mr. Saucier, I am going to ask each of you to take just 3 or 4 minutes and introduce yourselves to us and tell us how you saw things from your point of view. And I cannot help—I hope you will excuse me, but Pastor Best is from Tennessee, and it is even better than that—there is only one movie that I have watched six times in my whole life, and it is, "Oh, Brother, Where Art Thou?" and he sang in it. So he is a pretty big deal to me just for that reason.

So, Pastor Best, thank you very much for coming, and we welcome you to our hearing.

Mr. BEST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Senator Dodd.

I am very honored to be here to speak on behalf of this great organization because it literally changed my life in so many ways. My daughter is serving in the navy right now, and she has just about completed her fourth year, but in her second year, she said, "Dad, you really need to go back and finish up some old business in my life." I did not get my high school diploma, and I always wanted to go back and get it, but there were some things that I had achieved in the music field, and I was just ashamed, and I thought that maybe people would look at me strange or funny if I went to school to try to get my G.E.D. because of all the other accomplishments that I had made.

But 1 day, my wife and I sat down with our daughter, and we talked about it once when she came home, and I said, "You know, I am going to go back and do this. I am going to go and do it for you and my daughter."

So when I got to the school, there was a lady named Dr. Collins, and I said, "I am here, I want to get my G.E.D., and I want to do it for my wife and daughter."

She said, "I am sorry. You need to go back out the door."

I said, "What do you mean?"

She said, "Well, if you are not going to do it for yourself first, then you are really just wasting your time." When she said that to me, a light just went off on me, and I said, Oh, my God, this is what it is about. I have to want it. So it just sparked something in me.

So I went through the class, and I did get my G.E.D., and they were very kind to me during that time. They made me feel like I was family. It was not just an organization. They made me feel like family. And I wanted to be a part of it even after I got my G.E.D.

So once I got that, it sparked up so much energy in me until I went out and started doing other things in music, and I was able to do that movie. Since that time, I was put in two Halls of Fame, I was able to sing at the Grand Ole Opry—things that I have always wanted to do as a child I was able to accomplish because of what I had gotten from them in that program. They pushed me in an area that I did not think I could go any more.

After that, I wanted to be a part of it, so my wife and I started a scholarship fund in Nashville at Metropolitan Action, and it is designed for children who get their G.E.D., but they do not have enough money to get their books for school. So my wife and I wanted to do a scholarship fund for that purposes, and every year at the graduation, I go to Nashville and provide services as far as a system for the graduations. I just want to be a part of it.

I was listening to what was being said today about the faith-based organizations, and I am a pastor, and I always look to see how the church can do more for the community. But when I heard that, I got to thinking about the fact that we have a lot of pastors and churches that will put people in positions for these types of things because they know them—"I know you, and you are my friend, so I will put you there"—but they do not really have the knowledge to be in those positions. That is why I feel really close to Metro Action, because they take time. And then, the Bible says "Study to show thyself approve unto God; a workman needeth not be ashamed, but rightly dividing the word of truth."

I believe that these people who brought me through the program really care about what they are doing, and they study to make sure that you know what you are doing when you leave there.

So I just want to say that whatever I can do to assist them, I want to be in there all the way, and I am very honored to be here to speak on their behalf.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Pastor Best. That was 2nd Timothy 2:15, right?

Mr. BEST. That is right. Second Timothy 2:15, that is right.

Senator DODD. I am not going to challenge that, I want you to know. If we had a little more time, we would have you sing for us right here in the committee room.

Senator ALEXANDER. I want you to know that we were working yesterday in the Senate—and I am sure that Senator Dodd is all for this—we were working yesterday in the Senate on an anti-piracy bill so that when your records or your movies play, you get paid for it—and the scholarship fund might grow more.

Mr. BEST. Oh, great. Thank you.

Senator DODD. I am all for it. In fact, I have a bill—I have an idea on that as well that I want to share with you.

Mr. BEST. Go to work.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you for that.

Now, Ms. Octave is from Worcester, MA—I had to learn to say that later in my life. Senator Kennedy is a great admirer of yours, and he asked me to especially say to you and to the hearing today that he, like Senator Dodd, is very active in the floor debate this afternoon, and he is caught there right now and will not be able to be here to give you the kind of proper introduction that Senator Dodd and I did for those from our home States—but that is not because he did not want to. So you are very welcomed. Thank you for coming, and maybe you could introduce yourself to us and tell us your story.

Ms. OCTAVE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Senator Dodd, members of the panel.

I want to thank you first of all for the opportunity to offer my testimony. My name, as you know, is Winifred Octave. I was born on the Island of St. Lucia in the West Indies. I emigrated to the United States in 1979, and I started working for Merrill Lynch and Company in New York and then in New Jersey.

In 1994, I moved to Worcester, MA with my three kids, and I worked for a law firm as a legal secretary until the year 2000, when the company went out of business. At that time, I was faced with some big problems. I did not have a job, and at the same time, I was living in a condo, and the condo was up for sale. I was told that I had to move out.

So I went to the unemployment office in the year 2002 and applied for benefits and to look for a new job. At that time, I was told that I did not have enough computer skills, so I asked them what could they offer to me, and they gave me a listing of schools that they could send me to. One of the schools was Worcester Community Action Council; there was a computer training program at that school.

I did not have a car, so I made the choice to go to that school. At that time, I thought that was a godsend, because when I went to Worcester Community Action Council, a lot of things that I did not even know existed were right there.

First of all, I went into the training, and they taught me computer skills, resume writing, and even a little bit about clearing your credit, budgeting—a whole lot of stuff. It started opening my eyes, you know, to a different world.

I found out they had a board of directors, and I wanted to know about the board of directors, and they told me, so I got interested and wanted to become a member. I became a member of the board of directors, and I have been on the board of directors from 2000.

I went to school for 12 weeks and learned all the computer skills and all of those good things that I told you. Everyone at Community Action Council was helpful—everyone. At the same time, once I was at the school, I was looking for an apartment, so they referred me to a lot of different agencies, and one of the places I was referred to was the CDC. I went to apply for an apartment over there, and they did not have any apartment at the time, and I was about to move out. So they referred me to Friendly House, and all they had at that time was a shelter for me and my kids. It was kind of hard, but that was the only thing they had, so at the time,

I put my things in storage and did not have anywhere to stay. But I stayed on the board and kept learning everything that I could learn about it.

Then, the CDC developed a new home, and they had a lottery, so I applied for the new home. I did not have any money at that time, but I was saving with the budgeting I learned at the school; I started putting a little something on the side. The Worcester Community Action staff helped me, and when I applied, I was selected to get the house.

Now I live in a two-family house. I own my own house with my three kids, and I am very happy because of Worcester Community Action Council.

Now I am a mouthpiece for Worcester Community Action Council. I go around telling people; people come to me asking me about the different services, because Worcester Community Action Council has prevented me and my children from being dependent on the State—that is one of the things. Right now, I am very happy, and when I look back, I think that it was like a husband that I did not have, because you need another hand, but they came right at the same time to help me, and I am very proud for all of those things.

Senator DODD. That is a wonderful description.

Senator ALEXANDER. Not all husbands are that helpful.

Senator DODD. I know, yes. [Laughter.] It is going to become a popular "husband" when you compare it to some of those out there.

Ms. OCTAVE. They have helped me so much and changed my life. At the board, since I live in the neighborhood and I know what the community and the neighborhood problems are, when I sit at the board meetings, I share and I give little solutions on how to maybe correct some of the problems in the community.

One of the things that I am working on now is—I live in the Belmont Street area, and there is nothing for the young kids in my neighborhood to do, so they hang out on the streets—so we have invited agencies and all the neighbors in the community to come in and talk so we can find out some ways to have a youth center for the youth in the program. I am working very hard to get that in the area.

I think that as a WCAC board member, I can help others like I have helped myself very much. Because of the services I received, I am self-sufficient, and I am very proud of WCAC. Yesterday, my daughter said, "Mommy, do you know what? I am so proud of you that you are going to see Senator Kennedy and all those big Senators. Maybe if you did not get laid off and WCAC was not around, there is no way you would be going there." She is so happy for that, and she said, "I want to become a member of the board of WCAC." She is only 13, but she sees how it has helped me and changed my life, so she wants to be a member.

Another thing I am doing now—at Worcester Community Connections, we have different little committees, and one of the committees deals with DSS. I found out that they needed foster parents in the Worcester area, so I signed up, I completed an 8-week class with DSS, and I am waiting for my first foster child.

I am speaking for the board of directors at WCAC, and I want to thank you for the support of the Community Services Block

Grant and for making it possible for millions of families like myself to have a better life. And once again, thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you.

Senator DODD. Thank you.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you very much for coming.

Mr. Saucier, Senator Judd Gregg is the chairman of our full committee, and he is from New Hampshire.

Senator DODD. You must have spent some time up there.

Senator ALEXANDER. I did spend a little time. [Laughter.] I even know that Mr. Saucier is from Berlin; is that right?

Mr. SAUCIER. Yes, and that is the correct pronunciation.

Senator ALEXANDER. And not many people know how to say Berlin.

We welcome you. Please introduce yourself. We look forward to hearing what you have to say.

Mr. SAUCIER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Senator. I just want to thank you for the honor of being here. I keep getting the feeling that any time now, I will wake up, and I will be back in my cubicle at work—it is like a dream to me to be here.

I feel very strongly about giving my testimony about what impact Community Action had in my community and in my life personally.

I am from northern New Hampshire, from a small community, and the community has always been largely dependent on one industry. Until a couple of years ago, everything was going fine. Everybody goes about their daily lives, and I was able to have employment in the local paper mill, bring up a family; everything was normal, I had two kids in college—and all of a sudden, the bottom just dropped right out from under us.

The bill that I was working for filed for bankruptcy, and we were almost 900 people who were out of work all of a sudden. It happened very quickly—like 1 week you are at work, life is normal, and a couple of weeks later, you are all standing in line at the employment department, wondering what do we do next, what is going to happen.

One day while I was at the employment department getting some counseling as to how to prepare my resume and look for work, I had an encounter with a person who worked for Community Action. There were so many people there, I had to make an appointment to meet with him. I was not quite sure what Community Action programs actually did, because I was never unemployed and never had anything to do with Community Action programs.

I found out that no matter who you are, things can happen very quickly, and sometimes you find yourself being in need of some direction.

When I met with this Community Action employee, he started asking me what plans I had for my life, what I had planned for my future, what direction I wanted to take, and what I needed, my immediate needs and my future needs, because he was telling me that they had programs in place to help people who were in need.

It is hard to explain what it is like to all of a sudden be in a place where you need some public assistance, but it could happen to anyone. I am here to testify to that.

Community Action helped me to figure out what I want to do with my future, that I still did have a future, and that I was not

stuck or going downhill. They helped me get training, which I needed to make myself more marketable in the job market. I went to school for pretty close to a year and learned a new career and new skills, and they also helped me to—they worked with employers in the area as a liaison type to find us employment after we were trained.

I am just one of hundreds of people in that little area that has benefited from Community Action programs, and as I experienced what I did, as we were all going through the same experience, I can tell you that some of these programs prevented us from losing hope; it helped get us through; it gave us some direction—because you feel very vulnerable in a place like that.

So I am very thankful for this program. I have seen the good that it can do in my community, and I am just very thankful.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Saucier may be found in additional material.]

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you very much, Mr. Saucier for being here.

This has been a terrific set of comments this afternoon. I think we are coming toward the close of what we want to do. I have one question that I would like to ask, and Senator Dodd may have one or more, and then we will wrap up. You have been very patient with your time.

If you have anything else you would like us to know or that you want to say, if you can get it in right away in writing, we would be glad to have it. Let me ask one question if I may.

Mr. Bradley, I would like to hear you say something about simplifying the eligibility process for low-income families. We have lots of programs. I know that CSBG helps coordinate all these programs, but maybe there is something that we in the Congress could do to look over this wide array of programs—for example, I mentioned the 69 programs that we have counted that help children prenatal to K through 8—and simplify the eligibility programs so that customers of those programs could make more sense out of them and find them easier to use.

Mr. BRADLEY. Yes, I would be happy to comment on that. That is part of our legislative recommendations. Currently, the Community Services Block Grant eligibility requirement is 125 percent, and what makes sense for us is that if you could allow the States at their option to make CSBG-funded services participants in any of the 40 or more categorical programs that the CAPs operate, if you could allow the Governors the discretion of lifting the CSBG eligibility requirements, it would go a long way in what Senator Dodd has talked about for years in terms of a seamless delivery system. You will have some that will be 185 percent, let us say in WIC or something like that; Head Start is—what is Head Start——

Senator DODD. One hundred percent.

Mr. BRADLEY [continuing]. One hundred percent. But if you just allowed for our one program the Governor the option of lifting CSBG, I think it would go a long way in addressing the needs of the families in other programs who come to that community action agency.

So I do not think it would result in other committee jurisdiction and would go a long way in improving lives of low-income families,

and that would actually make the Community Services Block Grant even more effective. So it is something that we strongly agree with.

Senator ALEXANDER. Senator Dodd.

Senator DODD. That is a good point. First of all, David, thank you immensely. This is one of my great heroes, this guy; this program exists because of this man and a variety of others.

Mr. BRADLEY. And this man.

Senator DODD. Well, I know, but you are the genius that came up with this idea, and that is a terrific idea, because we have often talked about it. People talk about the Head Start family, the WIC family—they are usually all the same family in many cases. They are not in pigeonholes. So by allowing Governors the flexibility to set those standard,s you can begin to deal with the whole problem. The family that has a WIC problem has a Head Start problem, and so forth. Instead of jumping them around like that, it makes a lot more sense. So I am very supportive of that notion and I am confident the chairman will take a look at it as well.

I would like to know two quick things, David. One, how could we improve both Federal and State performance monitoring of these funds in providing technical assistance? This is the question that obviously we are going to get, and particularly as we run these large deficits, the ability to fund as much as we might like, and it is going to be very, very important that we get as high a performance level as we can. I wonder if you had any thoughts on that.

And second, just to confirm, because just for the record—and I think I know the answer to this, but I would like you to confirm it for me—the administrative costs under CSBG are really very good. I think it is around 7 to 12 percent is the administrative cost, which is much better than we get out of a lot of agency levels in terms of so much of that money being absorbed in administrative costs. Here, you have been very effective in keeping those costs down, and I wonder if you might address those two points.

Mr. BRADLEY. In terms of the second point first, you are absolutely right. The total administrative cost of an agency is between 7, 8, up to 15, 16 percent. In 1995 and 1996, there was pretty heavy debate in Congress about the role of government, and a lot of programs were on the chopping block, including the Community Services Block Grant.

So we rolled the dice and had a meeting with Speaker Gingrich on March 6, 1996 to talk to him about the Great Society and the centerpiece of the War on Poverty, this thing called community action. A number of Republican Members went in on that meeting. I knew these Members, and I had researched what their administrative cost was for community action agencies, but I wouldn't ask Phil McKain, for instance, for his administrative cost—he might tell me 7 percent—but I would ask the State. I would say you tell me what the State says their administrative cost is.

So I was able to tell Speaker Gingrich: Your State tells me the average administrative cost is such-and-such. And they believed the State. On that experience, I did not find a State anywhere in the country where the average community action agency's administrative cost was over 15 percent.

Senator DODD. That is great.

Mr. BRADLEY. Second, in terms of your first point, I think we need three types of amendments to CSBG. One is amendments to clarify and strengthen the purpose, similar to what Donald Rumsfeld talked about—the local, family, individuals, partnerships, local community. That is very important. Second, I am all for excellence in all levels of this, and there are specific things that we can do to make the State and the Federal partners more responsive to ensure that money goes out on time, to advance money rather than reimbursement, which is just critical to the program; to ensure that State plans and audits are actually read; to ensure that money is being spent the way it should; and then, finally—and Senator Dodd, you have been involved in this program for a long time, and you have really invested a lot of leadership in this program—in 1998, we redid the training and technical assistance category in CSBG. It is about $11 million—$11 million, that is it—and Senator Dodd and others on the committee were very, very helpful in that. I think we have got to fine-tune that, because if a community action agency is in trouble—and some are; it is not a perfect system—but what I am finding out now is that it is easy to avoid dealing with fixing the problems. It may be easier to say that they are not performing, and let us close them down. But if there is any criminality, if it is a fundamental management problem, or something like that, that institution is worth fighting to save. And I think we have to make our Federal and State partners more willing to put in resources to help turn that agency around.

One final quick story. Lee Hamilton called me in 1996, former Congressman Hamilton, and he said, "Bradley, I heard you are the guy I have got to talk to on Community Action. My agency is $1.4 million in debt. I need you to help me save the agency."

So I went out there and spent a couple hours with him. It was not $1.4 million in debt; it was $2.4 million in debt, and it was messed up. It was messed up not because of criminality but because they never cut back when other funding was cut back, and they continued to do in the community.

We spent 14 months putting in resources at our initiation, and it is an absolutely stellar community action agency. We have done this around the country. We need help on refocusing our training and technical assistance dollars to meet the strengthening requirements in this program.

Senator ALEXANDER. Those are good suggestions.

Senator DODD. Finally, let me just say to Mr. McKain, but also to the three of you who have come here, I am so impressed, first of all that you are willing to be here. And let me specifically, if I can, Pastor Best, address my remarks to Ms. Octave and to you, Mr. Saucier. It is not easy to come before a public forum and talk about the difficulties in one's life, and I want you to know how deeply proud I am of both of you that you are willing to come to a public forum to talk about what you went through—because you are certainly not alone in this, as you point out, Mr. Saucier, and you, Ms. Octave. You represent literally thousands and thousands of people who have been, who are, or who will be in similar circumstances, and you become a source of inspiration for them.

I do not know how many will hear what you have had to say today, but to those out there who wonder if there is any hope, who

wonder if it makes any difference at all, is worth trying or reaching out to people, you have probably saved a lot of lives just by being here and just by sharing your stories.

So I thank you immensely for coming and sharing your observations, not just about an agency or a government program, but about what can happen. As you, Mr. Saucier, said so eloquently, this can happen to anybody, and in fact, it usually does. It is not if you get in trouble, but when you do, and everybody does. So the fact that you have been willing to come to a Senate hearing and to share what happened to you in your life through no fault of your own, and how much a well-run program can make a different in your live is really eloquent.

And you, Ms. Octave, are an inspiration. Did I hear you say you are going to become a foster parent?

Ms. OCTAVE. Yes, I am.

Senator DODD. That is one lucky child. I do not know who you are going to have as a child, but they are very lucky.

Ms. OCTAVE. I forgot to tell you one thing. I have a 21-year-old son, and I have to mention him. He served 2 months in Iraq, and now he is in Okinawa, Japan. So I wanted to let you all know.

Senator DODD. Thank him very much for us as well.

Senator ALEXANDER. I am glad you told us.

Senator DODD. Mr. Chairman, thank you; good hearing.

Senator ALEXANDER. Thank you, Senator Dodd.

Thanks to each of you for coming. It is time for us to go vote, I am informed.

Senator DODD. Yes.

Senator ALEXANDER. So the committee hearing is adjourned.

[Additional material follows.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WADE F. HORN

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today on the President's plan to reauthorize the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act programs. Community Services programs help individuals and families attain and retain self-sufficiency. They provide flexibility to meet the unique needs of individual communities and work in concert with other programs and multiple funding streams emphasizing Federal, State, and local public and private partnerships.

The Administration strongly supports the concept of community-based solutions to issues related to individuals in poverty and reauthorization of the CSBG Act. Our reauthorization proposal includes important recommendations the Administration believes will significantly improve the delivery of service under the Community Services authority within the existing community-based framework.

Before I discuss the details of our reauthorization proposal, I would like to briefly describe the programs currently funded under the Community Services Block Grant Act.

BACKGROUND

CSBG is designed to alleviate poverty by funding initiatives that fight its causes, especially unemployment, inadequate housing, and lack of education opportunity. Services are administered in localities across the country primarily by entities called Community Action Agencies or CAAs, in coordination with other neighborhood-based entities. A network of 1,100 Community Action Agencies delivers a broad array of programs and services tailored to low-income Americans in each community.

The CSBG program is uniquely designed to foster integrated problem solving. To focus and concentrate resources on those areas where action is most critical, CAAs conduct community needs assessments. The assessments direct how local agencies mobilize and allocate resources to plan, develop and integrate programs to meet community needs.

Along with the block grant, the CSBG Act provides the Secretary with discretionary authority to use up to nine percent of the Community Services Block Grant funds to support employment or community development activities. We have used this authority to support funding for the Urban and Rural Community Economic Development program (URCED) and the Rural Community Facilities program (RCF).

The URCED funds competitive grants to locally-initiated, private, non-profit community organizations called Community Development Corporations, or CDCs, for projects that create employment, training and business opportunities for low-income residents. This program allows for a multifaceted approach to addressing poverty in communities through projects that support individual and commercial development in economically distressed communities.

The Rural Community Facilities program provides grant assistance to State and local government agencies, and private, non-profit entities to help low-income communities develop affordable, safe water, and waste water treatment facilities. Activities supported by this grant facilitate the development and management of water and utility facilities in rural areas.

The CSBG Act provides additional funding for two other discretionary programs—the Community Food and Nutrition Program (CFN) and the National Youth Sports Program (NYSP). The Community Food and Nutrition Program provides funding to States, tribes and territories, and public and private non-profit agencies to administer community-based, statewide, and national programs that identify, coordinate and disseminate food and nutrition resources. The National Youth Sports Program provides physical and educational development for low-income youth in communities across the nation. Funding under this authority has been awarded to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) since the program's inception in 1968. NCAA operates this grant through its collegiate network to serve approximately 80,000 youth, ages 10 through 16, at 200 colleges in 46 States.

In fiscal year 2003, $704.2 million was appropriated for Community Services Act Programs. The preponderance of these funds ($645.8 million) were provided for the block grant; $27 million for Community Economic Development; $7.2 million for Rural Community Facilities, $16.9 million for National Youth Sports; and, $7.3 million for Community Food and Nutrition.

I would like to turn to our proposal for addressing reauthorization of the programs supported by these funds.

REAUTHORIZATION

The cornerstone of our reauthorization proposal is to strengthen accountability of CSBG to ensure that this significant source of support for low-income families and communities is being administered as effectively as possible.

Community Action Agencies provide services in 96 percent of the counties in the nation and have nearly four decades of experience in addressing the problems of low-income individuals and families. They were designated to provide an array of social services to communities through direct Federal-to-local funding in the original War on Poverty legislation of 1964, the Economic Opportunity Act. More recently, the CSBG redirected Federal funding for these programs through the State human services agencies for administrative oversight and technical assistance. After administrative expenses, the States pass no less than 90 percent of the Federal grant to the local CAAs, many of which remain unchanged since 1964. Annual awards are not open to competition.

In very rare occurrences, States have designated CAAs as deficient and terminated funding to the entity, but such cases have occurred infrequently. The current law does not provide a consistent means to require minimum standards of performance by CAAs in order to receive funding. As a result, the authority for the same local agencies to provide services and continue to receive funding in these impoverished communities has essentially been unchallenged, and subject to very little monitoring and evaluation.

We believe that the lack of competition in given communities has led in some cases to a static environment which could be stimulated by bringing new organizations as a part of this network. To address this concern, the President's 2004 reauthorization proposal calls for the development of, and adherence to national outcome measures for agencies funded under the CSBG, and the design of a means to review, monitor, and remove local organizations that are not providing adequate services to the community.

This builds on the 1998 reauthorization of CSBG which provided requirements aimed at strengthening accountability. The 1998 reauthorization mandated that States be accountable for performance of their CSBG programs through a performance measures system by fiscal year 2001. States could design their own system, or replicate the Secretary's model program, the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) or an alternative system for measuring performance and results.

Under the Act, Community Action Agencies were not required to report on an established set of national measures. It was argued then that because the CAAs are charged with addressing the particular anti-poverty needs of their respective service areas, that requiring and applying the same measures across-the-board would be difficult to achieve. As a result, States allowed their Community Action Agencies participating in performance evaluation to identify, collect and report outcome information related to goals their local programs identified. This lack of consistency in management has not allowed for much insight into the performance by individual CAAs, nor has it provided a means to ensure a minimum standard of performance for all CAAs.

Therefore, the reauthorization initiative for fiscal year 2004 proposes to take the next step toward increased accountability in the Community Services Block Grant by streamlining the performance outcomes tool to require that all Community Action Agencies in the States participate in a uniform, results-focused system.

We are looking to use the ROMA foundation as the basis for establishing the national outcome measures. Specifically, the Administration is collaborating with State CSBG authorities and local entities to identify 10–12 national performance indicators for the CSBG program. Most of the outcome measures being considered are those for which data are now being collected by a majority of the States and eligible entities through ROMA. As I indicated, ROMA has been a bottom-up, mostly voluntary process over the past nine years. By building this system into the statute, more consistent data can be collected and program outcomes evaluated to ensure that CSBG is effectively serving at-risk individuals and communities.

Organizations, including those historically designated as Community Action Agencies, that are not found to be performing at an acceptable level could lose their designation as a service provider for CSBG if acceptable corrections are not made. A State-run competition would be held to designate a new CAA to replace the agency that fails to meet acceptable standards. Faith-based organizations, as well as other non-governmental community organizations, would be eligible to apply for funding under the proposed revised authority.

Our objective is to have consistently applied outcome measures to ensure that all agencies administering CSBG can assess their program effectiveness, and are ac-

countable for the services supported by the program. Once enacted, we will be better equipped to ensure that CSBG funding is made to local community organizations that are effective in achieving the purposes of the Act.

Similar changes are proposed for the Urban and Rural Community Economic Development (URCED) Program. URCED grants are made on a competitive basis to Community Development Corporations (CDCs) for job creation, job training, and economic development projects. CDCs must have private, non-profit status as certified by the Internal Revenue Service. In most years, organizations that receive these funds come from the same group of applicants. While most activities under URCED have been successful, some grantees have had difficulty implementing their projects in their communities, which we have documented in our Annual Reports to Congress. The current statute does not authorize significant monitoring to assist those grantees experiencing difficulty, or a way to consider applicants for grants under this program that have had repeated difficulty in implementing their projects.

In the fiscal year 2004 reauthorization, the Administration proposes to strengthen the capability of this program by increasing accountability and monitoring, and expanding the pool of applicants by re-defining entities eligible to receive funding to embrace other private, faith-based and community-based organizations. The Administration is recommending reauthorization for this program because we believe the premise of providing economic development to under-developed neighborhoods and communities where low-income individuals live is an important element in addressing the issue of poverty. We believe by refocusing this program, and by casting a broader net, we can make this program work better for low-income communities and individuals.

Finally, we are not recommending reauthorization of the remaining CSBG Act discretionary programs. These programs largely duplicate the functions of other programs or provide services that can be addressed as a State or community finds necessary through the flexibility provided under other funding mechanism like CSBG, SSBG or in some cases, TANF.

For example, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Agriculture's Rural Development programs provide services similar to those under the Rural Community Facilities program and USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) provides comprehensive support to communities to increase food security and reduce hunger through various programs, including programs similar to the CFN program.

In summary, the proposals I've outlined for reauthorization of the programs under the Community Services Block Grant Act reflect the lessons learned over the past 40 years. The issues attendant to poverty have changed significantly since the 1960s. There are new interventions such as family strengthening initiatives and asset accumulation strategies. There are developments that the public sector has made in addressing problems facing communities, such as the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency to help our nation's communities more comprehensively address their water, wastewater and facilities issues. There is also a growing understanding of the importance of the private sector and the faith community as invaluable allies with government in the strategy to address the issues of poverty in the 21st Century.

CONCLUSION

The Administration believes the programs authorized by the Community Services Block Grant Act, and the State and local community organizations that administer these funds, are vital to achieving the objective of sustainable communities and individuals. But the objective cannot be achieved if we maintain the status quo. This proposal puts forth the framework for a 21st Century model of addressing poverty that understands today's issues, requires uniform accountability to facilitate quality, supports competition to enable different ways of approaching the problem, and makes certain that the programs supported by funds under the Community Services Block Grant Act provide the highest quality of service.

We look forward to working with the committee as it pursues reauthorization legislation for the CSBG program. I would be happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DAVID A. BRADLEY

Mr. Chairman, Senator Dodd and Members of the Committee and Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to discuss the reauthorization of the Community Services Block Grant.

At the outset, it is important to remind the Subcommittee that although Community Action Agencies have been identifying and meeting low-income community

needs for almost 39 years, the Community Services Block Grant is just now approaching its twenty-second year.

CSBG was created by Congress in 1981. From the beginning, it was seen as a program that combined the desire by a President and some in Congress to shift authority and responsibility for programs to the States while at the same time recognizing an equally strong desire by the Congress to maintain a funding stream to the nation's Community Action Agency network.

Congress recognized that the purpose and goals of a Community Services Block Grant program are different than the more specific purposes of the services and investments authorized, for example, the Social Services Block Grant or the Community Development Block Grant. The primary goal of the CSBG Act is to maintain the capability of the local Community Action Agencies to plan, mobilize and coordinate locally appropriate approaches to reducing poverty. The States are required to use 90 percent of their grant for this purpose. The Community Action Agencies are charged with addressing several specific causes of poverty and with using certain strategies to do so. These strategies are not required by other Federal programs for their delivery systems: they include the integration of multiple programs and services, prioritizing achievement of self sufficiency, and attacking local, and by extension national, causes of poverty, from community infrastructure and poor services to the mobilization of groups of residents to make social changes.

Community Action Agencies are intended to be stable, accountable, community-directed institutions, not projects, not single-purpose groups, not temporary, ad hoc organizations.

The unique characteristics of CSBG-funded Community Action Agencies are worth repeating:

1. **GOVERNANCE**—Community Action Agencies (CAAs) are required to have a tripartite governing board consisting of equal parts of private sector, public sector, and low-income representatives of the community being served. This structure brings together leaders from each of these sectors to collaborate on responses tailored to local needs.

2. **INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS**—CSBG funds give CAAs the flexibility to design programs that address needs specific to individuals and the local community.

3. **COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTIONS**—CAAs use CSBG dollars to coordinate multiple programs. CAAs provide services that address the full range of family needs—from Head Start and family literacy, to child care and after-school programs, to youth and adult employment and training, to permanent housing and job placement, to asset building and budget counseling, to services for seniors and the frail elderly. Integrated service delivery is tailored to individual circumstances.

By investing in the Community Services Block Grant, Congress has repeatedly confirmed that the unique characteristics of Community Action Agencies warranted continuing Federal support. It now funds more than 1,100 agencies to maintain the leadership and capability for creating, coordinating and delivering comprehensive programs and services to almost a quarter of all people living in poverty.

Attached is a summary of the fiscal year 2001 funding and client data, showing that this is a nearly $9 billion system serving:

- 98 percent of U.S. counties;
- As many as 24 percent of persons in poverty; and
- More than 13 million low-income who were members of about 4 million families.
- Of these, over 1.7 million were "working poor" families who relied on wages or unemployment insurance.

It is worth noting that these data are collected by the voluntary Information System designed by task forces of State and CAA managers using the Federal support mandated first in 1990 and later reinforced by provisions of the 1998 Human Services Reauthorization Act. It is implemented and analyzed by the National Association of State Community Services Programs, our State counterparts, working in close collaboration with our local, State and national CAA associations. (The very detailed state-by-state full report is available at www.nascsp.org.)

In these reports, you will easily discern how poverty has changed since the beginning of Community Action in 1964; children and their families are more likely to endure periods in poverty than the elderly. They make up the majority of CAA clients. Workers' families make up a far larger share of the poor, and, accordingly, CAAs' biggest single group of participants is now the working poor and their families. Just about one quarter of Americans in poverty came to a CAA in 2001. Of these, nearly half relied on, or had lately been relying, on wages.

We surveyed the CAAs in preparation for this hearing. In every part of the country, rural or urban, they told us their biggest need was for more resources and tools to support low-wage workers whose incomes are inadequate, who have few or no

benefits, and whose employment is insecure. They also told us the biggest single problem in their communities is the cost of housing.

But does the Community Action method work in general, and do today's CAAs in particular, make it work? First I have to point out CAAs beat its GPRA targets every year since 1999; these are set by the Administration on Children and Families. A table showing our results is attached. As you look at it, you might take note that the government raises the target by 1 percent each year regardless of the funding level of the programs. Fortunately, Community Action surpassed the expectations even before CSBG was increased to $650 million. Many other programs which are not being singled out for changes or reductions today did not do as well, so we do question the way HHS selectively uses its performance measurement system.

Mr. Chairman, Community Action is truly a work in progress. Since its beginning in 1964 through the creation of the Block Grant in 1981 and up to today, every reauthorization that this Committee has worked on has strengthened, improved, and focused the program. In 1998, we requested, and Congress provided, a mandate to develop better accountability and modern management tools for the local agencies.

CAAs are very proud of that new system—Results Oriented Management Assessment (ROMA) that CAAs are pioneering locally. This system is capturing the outcomes of more than 200 program combinations invested in more than 4 million families and their com to get together and create a voluntary results-oriented management assessment system. We call it ROMA. Not yet 4 years later, it's a work that has been successful beyond all expectations. Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government made ROMA a 2002 nominee for the prestigious innovations in Government Award; in August 2001 the White House office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives pointed out that CSBG stood almost alone as an HHS program with outcomes measured.

Tracking results has had a significant management effect. CAAs are 86 percent private non-profit organizations, and the rest are tribes and local government organizations. All such entities struggle with limited management capital and training to keep management tools and information systems up to date. ROMA has brought new systems and healthy debate about new systems.

I have provided an outline of the steps to getting results measurement in place because we are proud of the process. It brought together in each of 50 States a total of 1,105 agencies, their State mangers, associations, as well as uncounted Federal officials and management experts to agree on ways to measure participation outcomes for participants of about 400 programs coordinated with each other. Some programs, like Head Start, have their own very extensive measures that are reported separately to the Head Start Bureau. Nothing like this has ever been tried; you need only read the material from the many organizations that support the "independent sector" or the "third sector"—meaning private nonprofit organizations—to see how many kinds of organizations are struggling with challenges that are similar but involve far fewer goals and programs.

The reason for ROMA is not really to generate reports to Congress; the reason is to give the program managers at the local level the information they need to be more effective. Soon, good national reporting will emerge; now you have collections of complicated State reports. In this short period, CAAs have picked measures, tracked many participants' results for one or more years, written reports, changed programs, changed measures, and tried again. (We are all cheering each other on by recalling that "ROMA was not built in a day".)

The next step is to agree on a few national measures everyone will report on; a draft is circulating and we're having ongoing debates about what to include. When the measures capture the kinds of programs that will be described by my fellow witnesses today, we'll have a selection that allows Congress to see a small slice of the Community Action performance. It's astonishing to us that the Administration has suddenly proposed to federalize this undertaking, to impose measures on the network, and to turn this potential management tool into a punitive exercise instead of allowing managers to create useful information and feedback loops in the expectation of strengthening their work.

This comes from an agency which has no universal standard for States to use for managing or auditing local funding, which has failed to make timely grants when requested by States themselves for local and State agency management support or technical assistance. Further, no such Federal testing is suggested for any other local network or group of nonprofits. If, in fact, the Congress legislated the proposal before you, and agencies failed the Federal test, whatever it might be, what other kind of private nonprofit would have also been measured and tested in the same way so that a "replacement " would be demonstrably better? (ROMA by the way is not about fiscal systems and performance; the normal independent audit practices

and OMB standards govern those operations. At issue is the quality of program operations.)

In short, we ask your continued confidence in the process you created 4½ years ago. We think the unique ROMA process is working and that it would be a big mistake to hand it to the Federal Agency to dictate measures and reports as proposed.

In fact, our belief in the power of performance measures is so strong that we want Congress to insist that the management by States and Federal Agencies also be measured. Our proposals for the elements to be measured include getting funding out on time, coordinating HHS and State poverty reduction programs internally with CSBG programs, and meeting basic financial standards.

Of course our work can be even better. We have specific recommendations for the Committee to consider during the reauthorization of CSBG. Generally they are:

1. Amendments ensuring that the three fundamental purposes of CSBG are clearly stated and distinguished from public policies of contemporary concern to Congress.

By this we mean that the goals of reducing poverty for individuals, of building community assets that reduce poverty conditions, and of maintaining CAA leadership that represents the communities served are restated for a new generation. Other important initiatives to meet this decade's needs, such as TANF transition and literacy enhancement, should be given prominence in a new category of Programs of Emphasis.

2. Amendments ensuring that the Community Services system has 21st Century management and accountability systems at the Federal and State levels, as well as at the community level.

By this we mean the adoption of common financial monitoring tools by all States so the standards applicable to private nonprofit recipients of Federal grants are universally understood and applied. We also propose that HHS be held to high standard for its' own efficiency, openness and oversight responsibilities regarding State management of the block grant.

3. An amendment providing flexibility in determining CSBG eligibility so that participants in CAA programs that support low-wage workers' efforts to become economically self-sufficient are not disqualified from the programs as soon as they begin working in entry-level jobs.

We have attached a description of changes in each of the three categories. Legislative language and a more detailed explanation will follow.

The deep cut the administration has proposed for fiscal year 2004 would devastate CAAs' ability to marshal resources just as Federal programs contract along with the economy. When Congress provided an increase in CSBG appropriations, the CAAs raised proportionately more non-Federal resources. We have attached a table comparing the leveraging power of CSBG before and after the increase, by showing the size of all types of funding, other than Federal grants, as a multiplier for the CSBG funds in each year. It shows CSBG increases had a disproportionate leveraging effect, in that the rate of growth in non-Federal funds, not just the level, increased as CSBG funded significant resource mobilization activities. Further, it shows that each CSBG dollar leveraged more State, local and private funding in fiscal year 2001 than 5 years earlier.

The elimination of the Community Food and Nutrition and Rural Facilities Programs are also surprising; no other programs perform the same functions nor are funds expected to be increased in the Departments named in the Assistant Secretary's testimony. We will be providing the Committee with additional information on these programs that are critically important to our network.

We are grateful once again that a strong bipartisan majority of this Committee and the Congress appear ready to reauthorize these two critical programs. We look forward to working with you to achieve this result.

HIGHLIGHTS

Community Services Block Grant Information System (CSBG/IS)
Statistical Report, FY 2001

FY 2001 CSBG Network Resources

In the FY 2001 CSBG/IS Survey, 49 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia reported that:

- Their CSBG local networks were made up of **1,110 local eligible entities**, 85% of which were Community Action Agencies (CAAs).
- Community Action Agencies (CAAs) used CSBG funding for their core operations and for developing and coordinating programs to **fight poverty in 96% of the counties** in the U.S.
- The network's **funding from all sources totaled nearly $9.3 billion**.
- **More than $562 million** was expended from the federal Block Grant to support the core activities of the state and local CSBG network in 48 states, DC and Puerto Rico. (Deleted)
- **Over $8.5 billion of other federal, state, local and private resources** was mobilized and coordinated to combat local conditions that kept people in poverty. This level represented real growth in each sector's funding compared to five years earlier.

Data from the Fiscal Years 1996–2001 show how CAAs used the increases that Congress first appropriated to the Block Grant in FY 1997 to:

- Increase leveraged state, local and private funding:
  - **Every CSBG dollar was matched by $14.92** from all other sources;
  - **Over $4 of that total match came from state, local and private donations.** In fact private funding in the network exceeded FY 2001 CSBG resources;
  - **More than 32 million hours of volunteer service** were contributed to local CAA programs, the equivalent of nearly 15,400 full-time employees.
- Invest in activities not supported by other, less flexible funding, including growth in:
  - **Family development programs** that supported state welfare-to-work projects and also integrated multiple services to provide seamless, continuous support to low-wage workers and their families as they sought to become self-sufficient;
  - **Emergency responses** to prevent family crises from creating permanent dependency; and
  - **Other new initiatives,** including heath services projects and programs for youth and the elderly.

HIGHLIGHTS

Community Services Block Grant Information System (CSBG/IS)
Statistical Report, FY 2001

FY 2001 CSBG Network Clients

CSBG/IS data on CAA clients indicated that in 45 states reporting client data the CAAs provided services to:

- As many as **24% of persons in poverty** in 2001; and
- **More than 13 million individuals** who were members of almost 6 million low-income families, most of whom were in great need. More than 3.6 million families provided income data. Of these,
  - **More than 3.2 million** participant **families had incomes at or below their federal poverty threshold**, including at least:
  - **757,000 families who were "severely poor,"** as they had incomes below 50% of their poverty thresholds;
  - Another 1.9 million families with incomes between 50% and 100% of their poverty guideline;
  - **3.3 million children;**
  - **Over 4 million adult clients** with **low education levels** and other groups with typically high poverty rates, such as the elderly living alone.

CAAs Served Vulnerable Populations:

- **1.3 million single parents** headed 62% of CAA participating families with children, but **fewer than half of them had public assistance** to help them support their family.
- CAAs reported there were over **515,000 TANF families** participating in FY 2001 CAA programs, an **18% increase** from the number in FY 2000.
- **1.7 million "working poor" families** who relied on wages or unemployment insurance made up 41% of all participants. Many were experiencing the economic consequences of welfare-to-work provisions that ended some income supports and faced insufficient wages, lack of proper health care, childcare, transportation and stable employment.

FY 2001 CSBG Services

CSBG funds activities that most other funding does not support. The top three service priorities, as measured by CSBG expenditures alone, were:

- **Linkage Programs**
  These programs create and coordinate programs and resources, conduct community organization and advocacy efforts to meet defined needs, and make formal efforts to bring resources together to bear on a single problem. In addition clients must be linked to community resources in order to make continuous progress toward stability.
- **Emergency Services**
  As the population that received TANF funds shrank, CAAs found themselves shifting more resources into responding to the urgent needs and the emergencies of uninsured, low-wage, working families. The hardships of life that all families face endanger the stability and livelihood of those families without assets or adequate income; Community Action Agency emergency services prevent a crisis from becoming a new cause of impoverishment.
- **Self-Sufficiency Programs**
  All activities funded by the CSBG encourage self-sufficiency, but CAAs created specific programs to provide a continuum of services to assist families in self-assessment and in the design and implementation of a strategic plan to become more financially independent. They typically include case management to track and evaluate progress as well as a mix of the services and training needed by low-income workers and their families.

Senate Subcommittee States: Community Action Innovative Programs

Alabama
Bucks for Books: The Bucks for Books program is a summer reading program designed to increase literacy in children in grades two through five by providing small monetary incentives to read, learn, and earn. Through the Bucks for Books summer reading program 511 second – fifth graders read, presented written and oral reports on 11,343 books in a six-week period. Volunteers and decentralized sites were provided by libraries, churches, schools, community centers and organizations. The effort is coordinated by the Human Resource Development Corporation.

Connecticut
Community Action Agencies serve as a "human service portal" for low-income families throughout Connecticut. State Human Resource Development funds enable the agencies to provide comprehensive intake and assessment of client needs in order to tailor the most effective responses. CAAs combine human services, education and training, and employment assistance to help all members of the low-income families gain self-sufficiency. Most Connecticut CAAs now offer Individual Development Accounts, to enable families to build assets that will lead to economic stability. Other financial services include budget counseling and tax preparation assistance, to provide the skills to effectively manage household incomes.

ABCD
ABCD, which serves the Bridgeport, CT area, operates three programs for non-custodial fathers: Welfare to Work for Non-custodial Fathers, the Family Reunification Program, and the Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration Project. The goals of these three programs are similar in scope, with the main emphasis placed on areas such as: increasing the involvement of fathers in the lives of their children; increasing the availability of services appropriate for the needs of fathers; establishing partnerships with community and municipal authorities to improve the system of service delivery to fathers, and improving community awareness on issues related to fatherhood. Recent benchmarks reveal that a total of forty-five fathers are enrolled in the three programs. Sixty-five percent of these fathers have successfully completed job readiness programs in such areas as sheet metal apprenticeship, copier repair training, drivers education and G.E.D. courses. Counseling services are also being carried out within a local day incarceration facility for young fathers in need of case management. ABCD uses CSBG funding to supply administrative services and managerial oversight for its Affordable Housing Program. ABCD has expanded its Housing Purchase Assistance Program by acquiring various properties requiring rehabilitation and subsequent resale to qualified clients. Under a license awarded by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), ABCD was able to purchase vacant residences in Bridgeport and Stratford at special discounted prices available to licensed non-profit agencies. During the reporting period the agency was able to sell to seventeen first time homebuyers.

ACCESS
The Entrepreneurial Center offers a wide range of business resources to community residents, most of whom are long-term unemployed or have limited opportunities for employment or re-employment. The training is designed to give individuals the basic business education they need; both intensive and supplemental training opportunities are available. Various local business professionals volunteer their time to provide small business management training, mentoring, and business services such as tax help, legal advice, and marketing assistance. Students are armed with entrepreneurial knowledge and are helped with developing a high level of self-esteem and motivation.

Fifteen students graduated in 1999; six started their own businesses and nine obtained employment with the help of ACCESS job training services.

CTE, Inc.
Alternative Incarceration Center
Stamford Alternative Incarceration Center (AIC), under the guidance of CTE, provides supervision and services to accused and court sentenced individuals age sixteen and above in most cases and age fourteen and above in others. The three main goals and objectives of the program are:

1) To engage individuals, and their family members when possible, in becoming more self-sufficient and self-reliant through education, vocational training, cognitive skill development, anger management, alcohol and other drug education, life skill development, employment readiness, and guidance in obtaining gainful employment.

2) To assist individuals in confronting maladaptive behaviors that have lead to legal problems and decreased their ability to be productive members of society.

3) To reduce jail/prison overcrowding in a way that reduces the financial burden on the community and the State and still maintains a high level of public safety through intensive supervision of AIC clients. In addition, some clients are expected to give back to the community in the form of community service.

The Program encompasses four main focus areas. Depending on the referral sources' conditions and the initial intake and assessment conducted by AIC staff, clients may participate in one or more focus areas. They are as follows:

Case Management: Clients can be assisted with legal, substance abuse, vocational, educational, mental health, psychological, social, financial, medical, family, and housing needs while enrolled in the program. It is the job of CTE case managers to address these needs directly or indirectly while working with clients. If clients have needs outside the realm of the program, they will be provided referrals to other area service providers for assistance.

Educational/Vocational Training: Clients may be enrolled in one of two education programs. Project Read – Henry Street is a unique program that is a collaborative between Stamford Public Schools, the Superior Court, and CTE/AIC. It is for young offenders between the ages of 16 and 21 and affords them the opportunity to earn their high school diploma, while being supervised between 8:30 am and 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday. Project Read – GED Track allows clients to earn their GED while in the AIC program. CTE now has a Job Developer who works with all AIC clients in assessing their present level of employability, their aptitudes and interests, and assists them in finding paid employment or vocational training that will lead to paid employment.

Alcohol and Other Drug Education: CTE's Licensed Substance Abuse Counselor may assist clients during their enrollment. Individual sessions, educational groups, urinalysis, referrals to inpatient or outpatient chemical dependency treatment are some of the services provided through this resource.

Community Service Program: Under the direction of the Community Service Coordinator, clients perform tasks such as landscaping, grounds keeping, painting and general maintenance. One site of on-going community service is the Atlantic Street approach to the South End where litter is picked up, weeds are pulled, and overgrowth is trimmed. Another site is exit 35 of the Merrit Parkway, which AIC has adopted and maintains on an on-going basis. Community service that can double as a vocational training is highly sought after. CTE wants its clients to always be preparing for that next level of employment that will lead them to increased self-sufficiency and self-esteem and to come to see themselves as active, productive members of the community.

CRT, Inc.
Last year, CRT developed the **Homeownership Assistance Center** with a $300,000 Ford Foundation grant – distributed annually in $100,000 increments over three years. The Center establishes a one-stop housing resource center that provides a comprehensive set of homeowner services to low- and moderate-income households. The program joins homeownership, weatherization, and energy efficiency services to allow low- and moderate-income Hartford families and individuals to become more financially stable as they become homeowners. It emphasizes asset building by encouraging clients to purchase new homes or rehabilitate currently owned ones, thereby helping them gain a valuable asset or increase the value of a currently owned asset. The Center also provides financial literacy counseling, mortgage application assistance, home energy rating system audits, home improvement assistance, assistance with dealing with contractors, post-improvement audits, social service intakes to determine eligibility for other social service programs, energy education, and homeowner-maintenance workshops and seminars. In addition to its relationship with the Ford Foundation, CRT has established partnerships with Fannie Mae, Northeast Utilities, the Housing Education Resource Center, the City of Hartford, and the Connecticut Housing Finance Association. This collaborative approach allows the Center to provide numerous services to its clients that CRT is unable to provide on its own.

CRT strives to meet the needs of youth, which the organization considers to be an underserved population. An innovative program CRT wants to highlight is its **Youth Technology Program.** Last year, 10 teenagers from CRT's Community Life Skills and Community Housing programs learned how to create their own website. The program's goal was to provide low-income youth with new skills in the technology area that will help them succeed in school, add to their confidence and self-esteem, and ensure that they are prepared to work. With the help of computer consultants, they developed and built a website that succeeded their teachers' expectations. The interactive web site includes topics such as money management, social skills, food and nutrition, employment, and health. Developers believe that it's the country's only website created by teens in the foster care system geared toward information they and their peers can use.

Human Resources Agency of New Britain, Inc.
HRA works with local residents' groups to meet the needs of people of New Britain. Through the Free to Grow program, HRA is assisting the residents of the Hoover shed North/Oak neighborhood in learning leadership skills and forming a community group that will improve the conditions of their neighborhood. HRA also provides staff assistance to the Special Education Parents Council (SEPC), an advocacy group of parents, caregivers and friends of children with special needs. Staff has helped the group to organize, strategize and access power in the community. Through this assistance, SEPC has received a grant to fund a community organizer and CDBG funding for summer recreation for their children. HRA staff have also helped residents on the East Side of town to organize into East Side Community Action, a group that is working for change in their neighborhood. Over 160 residents have participated around issues of public safety, quality of life, housing and economic development. In 2002, the group became a Neighborhood Revitalization Zone. With HRA's assistance, the group was recently awarded a grant from the New Britain Foundation for Public Giving to fund staff and resident leadership training.

Iowa
North Iowa Community Action Organization North Iowa has funded for the last 5 years by the local hospital – Mercy Medical Center-North Iowa through their "Strategic Initiatives for the Poor – Community Benefits Ministry" in order to offer this unique self-sufficiency development program modeled after the statewide FaDSS Program.

Funding was originally granted when the hospital decided to invest in local, community-focused efforts to eliminate the root causes of poverty. Traditionally, it had used a trust fund to support emergency financial assistance to individuals through the local medical community or local community organizations. However, they quickly realized that merely providing this assistance was not an effective means of preventing the need for future requests from the same family. The hospital approached North Iowa because of our reputation for a strong advocate for low-income citizens with experience with self-sufficiency development programs supported by two local housing authorities. The (?) program was designed to serve families (regardless of income) experiencing a financial crisis as well as those characterized as "chronic" users of community emergency financial assistance programs. Community Partners (?) adopted the core components of the statewide FaDSS Program including the principle that participation is voluntary. Three family development specialists were originally hired to serve an average total caseload of sixty households. Currently, four family development specialists serve an average caseload of eighty to one hundred households scattered throughout the nine county area served by North Iowa. Referrals are accepted on an on-going basis and each specialist works with 20 to 25 families. KS

Award for Collaborative Excellence
The United Methodist Mexican-American Ministries is Harvest America's 2002 recipient of the Award for Collaborative Excellence. Mexican American Ministries operates community care centers and health clinics in Garden City, Dodge City, Liberal, Ulysses, Johnson, and Santana in southwest Kansas. The Ministries and Harvest America have collaborated in many ways over many years to improve the lives of low-income people. Mexican American Ministries coordinates with Harvest America with their health promotion outreach to provide prevention and early intervention for a variety of health issues. Their health clinics often serve as the only accessible health care for low-income, uninsured, working families in southwest Kansas. Coordination of needed services helps to maximize limited resources at the local level.

Kansas
Fatherhood Project
Community Action, Inc. recently created a Fatherhood Project for Early Head Start and Head Start fathers (or significant males). The project involves EHS/HS and the Latino Family Development programs within the agency. CSBG funding partially supports the Latino Family Development Specialist (also partially funded by the City of Topeka), the Program Director, and funds the Planning Director position (who coordinated the grant-writing process and wrote the grant). The project also involves the Catholic Community Charities. They provide the Fatherhood Specialists to conduct the Father/Child events and staff training on fatherhood involvement. This is the first Fatherhood initiative undertaken in Shawnee County. The community was very supportive of the project and wrote support letters to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Also, this is the only Fatherhood initiative for persons whose primary language is Spanish.

The planning and development for this project involved Community Action and Catholic Charities. Our agency took the lead in scheduling meetings, collecting information from all the programs, and wrote and submitted the application.

Fathers are attending the events and staff members have been trained on how to successfully engage and support fathers in the education of their children and have received training on the special issues of new Latino immigrant fathers.

Little Commanders "Wings" Program
Community Action, Inc.'s Project Attention provide Site Coordinators at elementary schools in four school districts within Shawnee County to mobilize resources to provide direct services to school families as well programs that benefit the general public. Through its collaborative work with school staff and parents/caregivers, there is an understanding that "school readiness" may be a daily goal for many low-income families. School families benefit from such services as vision assistance, shoes/clothing, school supplies, prescription assistance, home visits, absenteeism prevention, emergency assistance, and free parenting training programs provided by the program's Family Institute. Additionally, the program provides application and registration services for Health Wave, Camp DEFY (Drug Education For Youth), and NYSP (National Youth Sports Program).

Project Attention recently initiated and coordinated a new program, which began on January 8, 2003. The Little Commanders "Wings" program was offered to 5th graders at one elementary school. The program provides mentors from the Kansas Air National Guard's Refueling Wing. They teach kids how to be successful leaders. Community Action, Inc. is one of over 15 sponsors. The next step is to locate a corporate sponsor and expand the program to other schools.

Schools themselves benefit directly from the program as well - Site Coordinators work aggressively to increase volunteerism at the schools. A variety of partners, in addition to the schools, engage in this effort, including: First United Methodist, Topeka Community Foundation, Topeka Active 20-30 Club, Lutheran Brotherhood, Otterbein Methodist, Sertoma Club, Capitol Federal Savings, Shawnee County District Court, Shawnee Regional Prevention and Recovery Center, St. Francis and Stormont Vail Hospitals, Oakland Community Nursing Center, Wood Valley Family Fitness Center, LensCrafters Inc., K-State County Extension, Catholic Community Services, Kansas Legal Services, YWCA, Family Service & Guidance Center, American Academy of Hair Design, Barnes & Noble, Children, Youth & Family Resource Center, Secretary of State Ron Thornburg, ERC, Washburn University, Midland Hospice, and Whitson Elementary.

Over 4,000 school families benefited from the program and community partnerships during the 2001-2002 school year and 2002 summer activities. Other results include:

391 elementary school children received eye exams, glasses, shoes, clothing, head lice treatment, and prescription assistance.
4,050 school families received health/social services information.
30 children were recruited for Camp DEFY.
Over 400 children were recruited for NYSP.

Tanglewood Affordable Housing Project
The Shawnee County Homeless Task Force (of which Community Action, Inc. is a member) identified a high priority need for permanent affordable housing for persons with severe and persistent mental illness. Several members of the task force planned a project which involved purchasing a facility and providing support services. Because of Community Action's CHDO status and experience in affordable housing projects, the agency became the lead applicant for the project. The plan called for Community Action to purchase and manage the 14-unit property, while the other two co-applicants would provide mental health services (including an on-site case manager). Community Action was successful in securing McKinney funds, and then was able to leverage additional funding from the State of Kansas, City of Topeka, and the Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program.

Result of the first year of the Tanglewood Affordable Housing Project include:

<u>Residential Stability</u>
94.8% of participants have successfully remained in the permanent housing since entry.

71% of the participants were not psychiatrically hospitalized. Total participant psychiatric hospital days 6 months prior to admittance to Tanglewood was 417 days. Total participant psychiatric hospital days 6 months after Tanglewood entry was 64 days (representing an over 85% decrease in bed days).

Increase in Skills or Income
100% of the participants applied for entitlements.
Only one person did not receive benefits - ineligible due to increase in employment.
41% of participants obtained part-time employment.

Greater Self-Determination
16 of the 17 persons housed achieved social and daily living skills as assessed by the case manager.
10 of the 17 persons housed were involved in vocational/prevocational activities.

Massachusetts

Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD)
Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD), in Massachusetts, has partnered with Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries to administer the Work Pathways Project. As the lead agency, ABCD was awarded a $2.8 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to help the hardest-to-employ TANF recipients find and keep jobs. Services provided by this grant include job training, adult education, job placement, childcare, transportation assistance, and case management. The program also provides ongoing services once participants have secured employment to help them increase their earning potential. Possible witnesses include partners working with ABCD on this project, families assisted, a pleased employer.

Community Teamwork, Inc. (CTI)
The New Entry Farmer Project is a partnership between CTI, Tufts, and several organizations to provide Southeast Asians with agricultural backgrounds or interest to grow fruits and vegetables that appeal to Cambodians and other Asians but are not generally available. The farmers are given access to land in the suburbs and provided with the tools, equipment, training and technical assistance they need to successfully grow food. The food is then made available to the Asian residents of Lowell through CTI's own Farmers' Market on Fridays and a new market established at the Cambodian American League of Lowell and other means.

John Ogonowski of Dracut was one of the suburban landowners who made land available to the new Entry Farmers, but he went much further. He ploughed the land, set up an irrigation system and built a greenhouse. Mr. Ogonowski was better known to the world at large as the pilot of the first plane that was hijacked from Boston and crashed into the first tower one of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. He became involved with the New Entry Sustainable Farming project at its very inception over three years ago, when the local Farm Service Agency in Westford contacted him, looking for land to make available for Southeast Asian families living in nearby Lowell who wanted to farm. Mr. Ogonowski recognized this immediately as an opportunity to help a worthy group of beginning growers to practice another kind of agriculture. He not only made farmland behind his home available to them, but White Gate Farm became the first all-commercial "mentor farm" - a training site for those beginning growers. In practice, Mr. Ogonowski was involved in every activity on the project involving his farm. He ordered and set up a greenhouse so the growers could raise seedlings and do extended season production. He provided advice to them on managing production, pest control, harvesting and other production practices and participated in project steering committee meetings. Mr. Ogonowski did all this while he was a full time pilot for American Airlines, raised his own crops on an additional 200 acres spread around Dracut, and helped raise his children. He was active in other farming committees, and was a founder and active member of the Dracut land trust that has helped to save a substantial amount of local farmland in the town from development. This year, the trust negotiated the purchase of about 50 acres of land about a mile from his house. With much of Mr. Ogonowski's own land out of commission due to a major gas pipeline installation, he made this land available to the project, as a result a dozen Cambodian households got a new start farming this year. CTI dedicated its Local Heroes Award ceremony to him. Mrs. Peggy Ogonowski, family members, and several New Entry Farmers attended the Local Heroes dinner. The New Entry Farmers' Project was funded by a number of sources. The largest was $270,000 from USDA Community Food Project.

Greater Lawrence Community Action Council, Inc.
The Greater Lawrence Community Action Council, Inc., through funding from the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG), has established a technology center at 350 Essex Street, Lawrence, Massachusetts. Roughly 70% of the city's residents are Latino and live in low income households. These factors combined with gang activity, low education levels, and high unemployment rates, create barriers to the accessibility of computer education and skills. The center is equipped with 14 computer stations that will be used for computer training and Internet access for GLCAC employees, clients, and the general public. In a voluntary computer survey that was done with Head Start parents, eighty parents responded as having interest in taking computer classes. Other points of interest were that only about 10% had computers at home and very few had Internet access. This information is supported by many national studies that document the increasing "Digital Divide". This refers to the widening gap of people

who have access to computers and the Internet and those who do not. This population is typically low income and minority.

In response, a pilot project was started to provide 20 Head Start parents with Introduction to computer classes. Parents received 14 hours of computer training in Microsoft Windows 98, Word 97 and Internet Explorer. The opportunity to take computer classes was met with great interest and enthusiasm by the Head Start parents. A waiting list has been started due to the high demand. Most of the parents who signed up for the classes were beginner computer users with little or no experience.

GLCAC has also established a Teen Tech Center to provide teens between the ages of 12 and 18 with access to 14 Internet ready computers, computer literacy classes, assistance with homework, and exploration of computer related professions. Teen Tech Center is centrally located and within walking distance from several area schools including the High School. Many students asked about taking more classes. Students who successfully completed the 14-hour workshop series were eligible to continue a 4-week session of higher level computer training offered during the summer. Six months after this pilot project, early feedback from a follow-up survey of participants indicate positive outcomes. Two parents report that they have been able to use their newly acquired computer skills in the workplace. One parent commented that participation in the course gave her the incentive to acquire a home computer in order to continue to improve her computer skills. Another parent proudly reported that she has been able to assume the responsibility for the Newsletter at her church as a result of her new computer skills. Outreach continues to the other participants to obtain additional feedback on the outcomes of this project.

Plans are underway to expand training opportunities to other GLCAC, program clients such as WIC, Child Care, Family Support, Spanish Program and Community Partnership for Children. The Teen Tech Center has become a community-wide resource. Through this effort, collaborations with several area youth groups have been created. These groups utilize the center as an extension of their current programming to develop special projects which otherwise would not be possible without the center.

Hampshire Community Action Commission, Inc. (HCAC)
The lack of affordable housing in Northampton, Massachusetts is a major issue for the low-income population. Over the last few years, as Northampton has "gentrified" and as Smith College has expanded the amount of affordable housing stock has declined. When it became known Meadowbrook Apartments, with 252 units, 80% reserved for low and moderate income tenants, was for sale, HCAC knew it must play a role in preserving the affordability of those units. In partnership with the City of Northampton and others, HCAC worked at a variety of levels to see that the new owners did not reduce the number of affordable units.

First, HCAC's CSBG-funded Organizing Program helped the Meadowbrook tenants create a tenants organization and learn the skills necessary to advocate for their own interests. After HCAC organizers worked with the Mayor of Northampton and the tenants for six or seven months, tenants became proactive in addressing their concerns with the incoming management company. Through staff support and technical assistance, HCAC helped the tenants elect officers, take positions and conduct community-actions including negotiations with the new owners and the Massachusetts Housing Finance Authority. HCAC expect that these buildings will become 100% affordable housing for thirty years. The tenants have the skills and an organization to help them look out for their own interests and HCAC used CSBG and helped to eliminate a significant condition of poverty in the county.

Hampshire Community Action Commission, Inc. (HCAC)
Kathy is a very-low income single parent with three children. While she was applying for assistance from the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance for benefits and food stamps, she was also trying to find $200 to get her belongings out of storage so she could settle into a new place. She made calls to the local United Way office, HCAC's First Call For Help and DTA to secure these funds. Unknown to each other, each of these organizations dedicated staff resources to finding the necessary resources to assist Kathy and her family. With a single point of entry for referrals, Kathy would receive these funds more quickly and without so much duplication of effort.

BATON—Better Access to Organizations Network—is a three-year pilot project designed to increase access to health and human services for people with multiple needs. The project is intended to serve those who often "fall through the cracks" and "get lost in the system". Finding help can become impossible when illness, trauma and poverty control one's life. Through this innovative project, we hope to develop a model that can be replicated for improving access to needed services, thereby reducing a condition of poverty. The BATON project is part of the state's e-government initiative, funded by the Mass Cares office of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, through a grant from the U.S. Commerce Department's Technology Opportunities Program.

BATON operates through HCAC's First Call For Help program. First Call also operates with CSBG support. Using Internet technology, newly developed software to identify resources and check for eligibility, inter-agency collaboration and case coordination, BATON staff is prototyping new service delivery systems. In a prototype conducted with the Department of Transitional Assistance, HCAC BATON case coordinator has been able to provide customers with a "safe" gateway to DTA services, improve eligibility screening, streamline the appointment scheduling process and overcome barriers to services. The case coordination prototype was determined to be a success by outside evaluators from the Donahue Institute of the University of Massachusetts and the model is being replicated with other providers. If the three-year BATON project continues to be successful, it will be replicated in other western Massachusetts counties and eventually in the entire state. There will be streamlined access to state and other services for some of the most needy families, those with a need to use the services of a variety of agencies.

South Shore Community Action Council, Inc. (SSCAC)
Client responses to SSCAC's 1999 Needs Assessment showed two thirds of client respondents reported having trouble affording food for their families, and anecdotal accounts from staff indicate awareness of existing local food resources. Nutrition during 2001, SSCAC's Board of Directors coordinated the efforts of a consultant hired to work on the issue of hunger and local food resources. The Consultant began by investigating existing food resources in the towns of Plymouth and Carver and helped SSCAC's Ad Hoc Board Committee on Hunger determine that there was a need to develop and produce "Food Resource Information and Referral" cards for the Towns of Plymouth, Carver, and Plympton. These town-specific cards list telephone numbers for food pantries, meals, vouchers and other food programs. The backs of the cards list Emergency 800 numbers as well as other low-income resource telephone numbers. Plymouth South High School volunteered to print 7,000 cards for the Committee for reimbursement of expenses only.

Another component of the program was to find the appropriate partners in distribution of the cards for maximum outreach. Plymouth Food Resources cards were distributed to members of the Greater Plymouth Council of Human Service Providers, SSCAC'S own Fuel Assistance Program, Head Start and Day Care Programs and to Plymouth town departments and its school nurses. Carver cards were printed and distributed in similar channels. Feedback from local legislators and town officials has been very positive. The goal for FY 2002 is to develop, produce, disseminate and then to track these Information and Referral cards for the Towns of Kingston, Duxbury, Halifax, Pembroke, and Marshfield. This initiative was entirely funded by CSBG.

Springfield Partners for Community Action
With the initiation of our Asset Development Program, we focused on the thousands of dollars that low-income working people are losing each year by paying for tax preparation assistance and by rapid refund costs. Not only will this program save thousands of dollars, it will encourage and enable more low-income working residents to obtain federal tax credits to which they are entitled. The Earned Income Tax Credit has provided low-income working families with tax relief and a supplement to wages, as well as an incentive to work. Additionally, it will help to strengthen families, reduce pressure on city services, and bring significant federal dollars into the local economy.

This program has come about because the IRS is seeking to educate taxpayers about services available. The IRS provided free training on tax preparation, they are loaning software and laptops to make this possible. Local banks are currently interested in providing matched savings accounts and help with various financial presentations. A local college has offered space for training, and other agencies have offered office space so that this program can be offered throughout the city. An increase in CSBG funding would allow us to hire a full time coordinator for the multiple aspects of this program; tax preparation, financial literacy and budgeting workshops, and the establishment of Individual Development Accounts.

Tri City Community Action Programs
The Tri-City Work Force Development Task Force had as its precursor the Tri-City Skills Assessment Task Force, a community and public agency partnership that assessed the existing low-income work force preparedness to assume jobs in a planned TeleCommunications Park development. The Tri-City Skills Assessment Task Force, utilizing some CSBG Special Projects funding and $40,000 of private foundation and industry funding, issued a report in September 1999 entitled "Bridging the Gap: Industry Needs and Employment Opportunities for Tri-City Residents in TeleCom City." Some Task Force members engaged in an eight-month planning process to develop a plan to implement some of the recommendations issued by the Report. This group is now known as the Tri-City Work Force Development Task Force. To date, The Work Force Development Task Force has two principal accomplishments – the development and promulgation of a set of principles to expand adult education and training

programs in the tri-city area and, secondly, the initiation of training and educational opportunities for local low-income residents.

CSBG funds have allowed Tri-CAP to continue its coordination and leadership role for the Task Force. A $20,000 private foundation grant allowed for a lengthy and exhaustive planning process for community residents, labor representatives and local non-profits. A $10,000 grant from the City of Medford provided local training opportunities for 20 Medford residents in English as a Second Language and an introduction to electronics. The courses were held at the local high school. Instructors were hired through a contract with the local community college. Later, CSBG Special Projects funds were utilized to send 30 residents from the tri-city area to the local community college with course scholarships. The courses funded focused on increasing the English-communicating skills of many who face a significant language barrier in the labor market. The "barrier" affects both employability and advancement opportunities. Several course scholarships advanced individuals' knowledge of computers and/or electronics. CSBG special projects funds will continue sustaining this effort in FY '03.

With a $10,000 CSBG Special Projects grant, $10,000 of Agency CSBG funds and $20,000 of private funds, a coalition composed of the local access cable TV program (MATV), a technology program of high school students (Youth Tech Entrepreneurs), the area's volunteer group for senior citizens (AARP), a one-stop career center (Career Place), a state representative, a private individual and the local community action agency (Tri-City Community Action Program, Inc., (Tri-CAP) launched the communities' first free cyber café. The Coalition pledged resources to pay for rent and utilities for three years. The community action agency oversaw and paid for the necessary improvements to the rented space. The one stop career center donated computers for the stations and the server. The local access TV station provided the painting and a new computer. The high school youth refurbished the computers, pulled cables to network the computers and developed necessary software for the Café. The private businessperson designed a web site and secured the domain name. The State Representative assisted with funding. The senior volunteers provide morning coverage and assistance.

What is new and different about this café? It is the work of a coalition whose only interest is to make sure that low-income residents affected by the "digital-divide" are afforded access to the information highway via the Internet and e-mail. It is truly "downtown" operation, located between a McDonald's and Dunkin Donuts. Users are allowed to establish e-mail accounts and to store information on diskettes. There are links established to the job bank of Career Place. A small conference room allows for training on e-mail, writing a resume, and preparing for an interview. Uses have included prescription drug ordering by members of Massachusetts Senior Action Council, e-mail to family members living abroad for the area's increasingly immigrant community members; finding the best fishing hole for a retired person; and a place to reduce isolation for many of the area's homeless clients. All the personnel support, to date, has been provided by volunteers! The café features only twelve computer stations. Yet, more than 1,000 unduplicated community residents have availed themselves of this community service since May 16, 2001! The Cyber Café has helped reduce isolation among the homeless, immigrants and the elderly. It has been of assistance to many for their job search. The "low tech" atmosphere has created an environment where the elderly and those "intimidated" by the high-tech, have come to explore the Internet and learn skills preparing them for life in the 21st century.

Worcester Community Action Council, Inc. (WCAC)
WCAC is recognized as a provider for services to "at-risk" and drop-out youth. For 5 years, they operated the Downtown Campus Project, an alternative high school setting for 40 of Worcester's most challenging students. That closed last year, due to budget cuts but has been replaced by Project Success. WCAC is just beginning a new partnership with the Public Schools to case manage the 100 or so high school seniors who will not pass the MCAC test required for graduation. WCAC will "case manage" the students for GEDs, jobs, and life skills.

WCAC also operates the Community Mediation Center, which is funded by the Attorney General's office, private support and CSBG. They have begun working with the local Youth Center to offer peer mediation and conflict resolution skills to "at risk" youth.

Missouri
Missouri Valley Human Resource Community Action Agency (MVHRCAA)
The MVHRCAA Enhancement Classes provide instruction to enhance the life skills of individuals and families in the agency's seven-county area. The classes address self-advocacy skills, parenting skills, home purchasing, basic nutrition, energy conservation techniques, goal planning and setting, home maintenance, renters responsibilities, health management, budgeting and financial management, and other skills to meet identified needs and goals.

Community Services. Housing Partnership, and the Section 8 program partner to deliver Renters Rights and Responsibilities workshops to all people entering MVHRCAA's rental programs. Participants who need utility assistance multiple times a year attend the energy conservation techniques and budgeting workshops.

Missouri Valley Human Resource Community Action Agency (MVHRCAA)
Currently under development is the MVHRCAA Rural Entrepreneurship Institute. Residents in Chariton County lack job opportunities and jobs that pay a living wage. This is a county that lacks may of the services available in more populated counties. The goal for the Institute is to increase access to services and education to start and operate businesses. It is antic pated that community building capacity will also be enhanced through the creation of a coalition to focus on business development in the county.

Economic Security Corporation (ESC)
In an effort to revitalize downtown Joplin, ESC has brought together a number of partners to purchase and rehabilitate an eight-story historic building – the old Frisco Railroad Building. When completed this year, the building will consist of 56 one- and two-bedroom apartments for low-income seniors. The project will cost approximately $8 million and will be debt-free when the first apartment is leased.

Economic Security Corporation (ESC)
The Graduating with a Future Task Force program is designed to target high school age students who are at risk of dropping out before graduating. Students are referred through the school system or other community agency or service, and following an initial intake are assigned a volunteer advocate to work with them one-on-one in a partnership to build on their strengths and obtain their high school diploma or GED.

North East Community Action Corporation (NECAC)
North East Community Action Corporation (NECAC) convened partners from the City of Monroe, the Missouri Department of Economic Development, local community organizations, businesses and residents to create a community strategic plan for the City of Monroe. The plan was created to address problems, create social capital and increase investments in the community. It resulted in the following: three new businesses, funding for a new leadership development program, city hall and library, improvements to the water and sewer system, formation of a youth council, plans to hire an economic developer, and plans for the development of a community center. NECAC used Community Services Block Grant to support their work in gathering stakeholders, gaining community commitment, and developing the community plan. NECAC has helped improve conditions in Monroe City by addressing the root causes of several poverty conditions and beginning implementation of permanent charges.

Nevada
The Economic Opportunity Board (EOB) radio station, KCEP, concentrated on one issue of poverty: a family in poverty depending on the income of a teenager in the household. Teens drop out of high school and secure minimum-wage jobs to contribute to the support of the family, thus perpetuating the destructive cycle of poverty.

Through collaboration with the Clark County School District (CCSD) counselors, KCEP identified students who were at risk of becoming high school dropouts because of financial hardship. Students were enrolled in KCEP's "Boot Camp" program. The goal of the program is motivating students to stay in school by providing practical experience in obtainable careers. The purpose of the program is educating students of careers in the media industry, as well as giving them first-hand experience in some of the positions. Ricki Cheese, a well know television figure in Southern Nevada, worked with KCEP to encourage students to stay in school so that they could pursue jobs in the media. Private businesses (R&R Advertising, KLAS TV, KORK TV, the Las Vegas Business Press, and more) provided tours, lectures, hands-on training and reference materials for the success of the students. CCSD counselors are tracking the students to see how the "Boot Camp" impacted their lives. The program is eliminating one cause of poverty – lack of education.

Nevada
A CSBG program located in a rural area of the state initiated a tutoring program for elementary students who travel 30 miles each way by bus from a low-income outlying area to attend school. Twice a week the tutors travel on the bus and use time to assist the students with their homework right there. The tutoring program has helped improve the homework completion rate and also augments the instruction received in the classroom so that the students are able to perform better in school.

New Mexico

Community Action Agency of Southern New Mexico (CAASNM)

Tres Manos Micro-enterprise Program: CAASNM developed a micro-enterprise program to assist women living in the colonias of southern New Mexico to start their own cottage-based industry. We are providing training in the textile arts (weaving, sewing, spinning, and in the future knitting and beading), business practice, life skills, and conflict management. We are also developing a micro-lending program to assist participants.

Tres Manos success is already evident. In the spring of 2002, CAASNM started a sewing class in Chaparral, NM to teach women to sew and develop their skills into a viable business. After a few weeks into the class, you could begin to see a difference in the program participants. Many began to speak more often in class (most are not fluent in English and had never spoken in front of a group before). There was a visible difference in the women's self-confidence. Ten women have graduated from the program. They have marketed their skills in El Paso, Texas, the Las Cruces area, and in their community. They are sewing for wedding parties and quinceneras. They are displaying their work at craft shows around the local communities.

CAASNM has worked with these women to help address and eliminate a condition of poverty. These women have become self-reliant and have learned that they are in control of their financial future. This program is partly funded with CSBG dollars

In addition, the development of a co-op is underway and the program participants have the option to join the co-op or develop their own individual business. It is an exciting program with infinite possibilities. We have many community supporters. Some of these include NM Arts, Dept. of Labor, Dona Ana Arts Council, Local Media, New Mexico State University, WEST Corporation, and many more.

Sandoval County Economic Opportunity Corp.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS USING MATCHING FUNDS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION: Due to the administrative funds provided by CSBG, the SCEOC has the capacity to administer programs with little to no administrative revenue, such as the one described below, even when CSBG dollars do not directly fund the activities. Through community partnerships, the SCEOC has begun the process of implementing an Individual Development Account ("IDA") program. An SCEOC Board member – also a welding instructor at the Bernalillo High School – has assisted 10 welding students in forming a limited liability corporation ("LLC"). The LLC has received a contract from the City of Rio Rancho to build bike racks. Its members have also designed and are in the process of building coffee and end tables for sale. An SCEOC volunteer is helping the students develop a business plan, and the SCEOC is conducting a training for school personnel on enrolling students in the IDA program. IDA students plan to use their earned IDA income for advanced level education -- either college or technical training -- which will be matched with funds from the IDA program.

New York

Cattaraugus Community Action Agency

Cattaraugus CAA developed an electronic, web-based Universal Referral and Directory System. This system facilitates customer flow between multiple providers and reduces duplication of effort and services. It allows for a single intake and assessment to be conducted by any participating partner organization, as well as electronic referral, tracking, and follow-up with all partners, with customer releases. The system design considered needs an input of low-income families, who wanted better coordination of services and less time repeating demographic and personal information. CSBG assisted with this accomplishment by funding part of the customer focus groups as well as staff time for facilitating the numerous community meetings necessary for this innovation.

Delaware Opportunities

Delaware Opportunities continued to build on a comprehensive employment initiative involving several funding sources and partnerships. People entering the public assistance system are immediately referred to our agency for preliminary assessment of employment potential and completion of a generic job application. CAA then assists in job placement, including an agency-supervised work crew who assists participants with work history, complete community projects, and readies participants for employment. The program also includes an employment readiness classroom component operated in partnership with LDSS, the County Office of Employment and Training, SUNY, Chambers of Commerce, and others. Wage subsidies are provided to employers willing to employ TANF eligible participants. Transportation is provided to seek work and for the first 30 days of employment. Donated vehicles are provided to program participants needing transportation for employment, and funds are available to purchase vehicles for subsidized loans to participants. Family Development services are provided, job coaches assist individuals to retain work, and a support group meets regularly to address issues faced by former public assistance recipients as they pursue self sufficiency. These programs were initiated with CSBG financial assistance, are

supported in part for Family Development services with CSBG funding, and are coordinated and supervised with CSBG-supported staff.

The Department of Youth and Community Development
DYCD, the CSBG grantee for New York City, is located near the World Trade Center site; within 48 hours it established emergency operations, and temporary work space in an outreach office. DYCD coordinated with FEMA staff to provide neighborhood outreach and used CSBG funds to establish 80 outreach offices in the many neighborhoods affected by the disaster so that New Yorkers in need could access the variety of assistance available and find support for longer term adjustments in their lives.

Grants of $25,000 each from FY 2001 CSBG funds were made to two organizations providing help following the crash of American Airlines flight 587 in Queens. Both are located in the Washington Heights section of New York City - an area heavily populated by immigrants from the Dominican Republic, and heavily impacted by the disaster, as an estimated 40% or more of the passengers on the flight were from this neighborhood. Because of its established rapport with the community and the widespread knowledge of existing services for the affected population, these organizations (both CSBG delegate agencies) provided the most efficient use of disaster relief funds to address immediate needs, and especially the longer term grief counseling that was vital to the community and would not have been established without CSBG funds.

Commission on Economic Opportunity
The Commission on Economic Opportunity (CEO), a Community Action Agency in Troy, is operating a Weed and Seed project, a collaborative effort geared toward strengthening community relations, establishing positive strategies to reduce crime and conflict, and cultivating partnerships between local residents. CEO and the local police department lead this effort to build a safer community. Partners include local businesses, elected officials, service providers, and city and county agencies. Projects range from infrastructure changes to promote safer environments to programming that provides youth with safe alternatives and strong role models.

Opportunities for Chenango
In October 2001, Opportunities for Chenango was notified that it was chosen to become a part of the NeighborWorks Network of Organizations [NOW]. This was achieved in large part because we are a CAA, a multi-service agency that can leverage our $200,000+ CSBG allocation into an additional $5 million in funding for comprehensive services to over 8,000 customers each year. Our designation as a CAA, and now as a NWO means even greater ability to transform our community. A newly capitalized revolving loan fund will enable our customers to have access to funds they can use to rehabilitate their homes, or put a down payment on a first home with payments well within their ability. It means they will receive financial literacy assistance through budget and housing counseling that will give access to services that can transform their lives through Family Development Case Management and their living conditions and neighborhoods through community development services. Our Housing Services Program is working on establishing a full service Home Ownership Center that will include not only First Time Home buyers, but also purchase, rehab, resale, and repairs. Without CSBG funding, the glue that holds it all together, we would not be able to leverage additional funding that helps to improve conditions in our towns, villages, and neighborhoods.

Ohio
Dislocated Coal Miner Re-training Program
The HAPCAP and Gallia and Meigs' Dislocated Coal Miner Re-training Program brought coal miners facing lay-offs in December of 2001 into an on-site job re-training program. The program is the cooperative effort of two Community Action Agencies, three educational institutions, the United Mineworkers of America and America Electric Power. The program serves many of the 820 miners and provides three shifts with classes at the mine facilities. The effort is significant in that it represents the first time customers are receiving re-training prior to losing their jobs. The loss of these coal mining jobs would impact the miners and their families as well as the region's economy since the mines that are closing have an annual payroll of $65 million and employ about 800 workers. An early survey of workers at the mines showed that 532 expressed an interest in the re-training effort. As one of the coal miners who had worked at the mine for 20 years said about being able to re-train before the mines close, "This gives us a jump-start."

Rhode Island
The Family Resources Community Action Agency (FRCAA) has a program with a legal services group to serve families. Several families have been reunited with their children (who were taken by the state) with help from this legal service program. The program's advisor is available once each week to give assistance and advice in many areas, bringing a much needed service to low-income clients.

South Carolina

Postal Food Drive: This service is a partnership with many agencies and organizations in order to make it a success. The National Association of Postal Letter Carriers advertises and collects donated non-perishable food items and forward to Wateree CAA for distribution. The food is shared with five (5) local pantries located in each of the five counties served by this agency and four (4) other local charities—Salvation Army, Christian Charities, Emmanuel Soup Kitchen, and Green House Runaway Shelter. For the last four years we have netted over 60,000 pounds of food to distribute to low-income customers in need of emergency food. Our CSBG funds are utilized to provide the manpower to intake and distribute the food and to operate a food pantry in-house.

Tennessee

Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee

Project LIVE, a CSBG program that helps elderly maintain independent living, has an innovative healthcare partnership with the Tennessee Wesleyan College and the University of Tennessee's Nursing Department. As part of their clinical rotation, second year nursing students make weekly home visits to homebound seniors. Goals for this service include education about illnesses and side effects of medication. They also monitor vital signs and act as liaison to the client's physician if requested. Groups of eight students met with their nursing instructor on Tuesday, or Wednesday, and Thursday at 8:30 a.m., made a home visit, returned to document and discuss their findings with their instructor and Project LIVE staff; and ended their day at 2:30 p.m.

Each January, first year University of Tennessee nursing students assist the Project LIVE volunteer coordinator by picking up and delivering medication and grocery shopping for homebound seniors when the request is an emergency and there is not enough time to find a volunteer. They also assist clients with housework, reading and writing letters or reminiscing. The instructor said that her students had such a "great" and "eye-opening" experience that she is going to rotate all 120 students through Project LIVE.

This innovative partnership addresses several problems associated with elderly who are in poverty including reducing isolation, removing the transportation barrier to picking up prescriptions, reducing the cost of healthcare, increasing their sense of well being, making sure they are taking medicines, and increasing the monitoring of their health through routine blood pressure checks and insulin checks.

The Compassion Coalition: This is a coalition of more than 25 churches who research needs in the community, publish data, and recruit churches. This is an innovative faith-based partnership with Knoxville-Knox County CAC. The Compassion Coalition volunteers provide tutoring to adult GED students, goods for our homeless families, visits to our homebound elderly, and academic incentives to our adult learners and parenting class members. They help change the conditions of poverty for individuals and families through their monetary and in-kind donations as well as with their time spent offering encouragement, practical skill enhancement, and recognition for achievement towards self sufficiency. Members from more than 120 churches in our area meet some of those needs.

Vermont

In central Vermont, as in other places in our state, low-income families have great difficulty finding dentists who will take Medicaid insurance. Because Head Start requires dental screening and prevention work for children, the staff has shared the parent's frustration at not being able to locate dental services. Then, Head Start's Health and Nutrition manager came up with an ingenious solution to address part of the problem. She recruited one of the area's supportive dentists, to train Head Start Home Visitors with additional health and dental information so that they could do the dental screening.

The Home Visitors were fascinated to learn how to quickly assess dental health and development and in three months, performed 40 dental screenings! Of course, we need to continue to advocate getting affordable dental care for our participants, but at least our "barefoot dentists" can make an important contribution!

Virginia

Total Action Against Poverty

A Community Action Agency serving southwestern Virginia, Total Action Against Poverty (TAP), offers the Fatherhood and Families program, which assists families in distress; families disconnected by discord, by unacknowledged fatherhood, and/or by incarceration. The program is also designed to assist unemployed, non-custodial fathers, the majority of whom are fathers of children on welfare. The program seeks to increase the employment and earnings of the non-custodial parents so they are better able to pay child support and to improve their economic condition for both themselves and their children, as well as increase the non-custodial parent's understanding and knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of good parenting. The Fatherhood and Families

curriculum is conducted at TAP's facilities and in a prison located about 20 miles from Roanoke. Recently, the Fatherhood and Families program has formed a partnership with the regional office of the Virginia Division of Child Support Enforcement -- the first partnership of its type in the nation. Potential witnesses include clients assisted by the program, such as an ex-offender who is now financially and emotionally supporting his children, or elected officials working in partnership with the agency.

Washington

Transfer of the technology of our Community Voice Messaging service for low-income "phoneless" persons to New York City using a 1-800 number. This Washington State based technology, was useful in New York following the terrorist attack on the World Trade Buildings. Because of the independent operating capacity of a 1-800 access, this central Washington system was placed in use for over 500 families in the Manhattan New York City area.

Community Voice Mail (CVM) started in Seattle, Washington in1991. CVM was so successful in its first years that it became a national model for VISTA and has been implemented in nearly all major cities nationwide. The CVM presence in Washington State has increased each year and now serves phoneless and low-income people in every county

The Opportunity Council brought Community Voice Mail came to Whatcom County as a result of the need to help people achieve self-sufficiency, avoid long-term unemployment and homelessness and build healthier, more productive lives. A task force of nine Whatcom County social service providers began working collaboratively in June 1996 to bring a Community Voice Mail system to Whatcom County. Since initiation of the program in 1997, the Opportunity Council has provided program oversight and fiscal management. Presently, 40 social service agencies and two major Opportunity Council service areas collaborate to offer Community Voice Mail to their homeless and low-income clients in conjunction with case management services.

Community Voice Mail is a unique program proven to help people avoid long-term unemployment and homelessness, and build healthier, more productive lives. The program provides phoneless and homeless people with free, 24-hour access to telephone messages they might not otherwise receive from potential employers, landlords and service providers. Community Voice Mail (CVM) delivers remarkable results. CVM clients in Whatcom and Island counties set specific self-sufficiency goals when entering the CVM program and their success rate is high:

- 79% connect with social services,
- 87% maintain their personal support networks,
- 75% connect with potential employers,
- 89% achieve at least one of their self-sufficiency goals.

Currently, 43 partner agencies provide over 700 CVM phone lines in Island and Whatcom counties. Partner agencies include, TANF, Island County Housing Authority, Catholic Community Services, Employment Security Department Project Hope, Lydia Place, New Leaf, and many more.

El Centro de la Raza

The **Anti-Racism Training Institute Northwest (ARTINW)**, also known as the **Community Building Institute (CBI)**, is provided at El Centro del la Raza in partnership on a national level with the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, and Claremont's Institute for Democratic Renewal, and on a local level with the Minority Executive Directors' Coalition (MEDC), the City of Seattle's Human Service Department, and the United Way of King County. The program was founded at El Centro in the spring of 2002.

ARTINW is one of four institutes established by Project Change and the Institute of Democratic Renewal in California to respond to institutional racism and inter-group tensions in the United States. The goal of each institute is to be centrally involved in the transformation of its region toward greater racial and social justice. The intention is to bring together the widest spectrum of participants, from "grass roots" people to gatekeepers, the poor and the powerful, with the aim of serving and strengthening those who seek and need it most. The Institute makes its contribution by: building the capacity of community leaders to identify how and in what ways racism is manifest in community structures, processes and outcomes; helping groups of people strengthen their collective organizing, planning, implementation, reflection and action skills in addressing the targets of most interest to them; fostering a peer network of leaders with those who can support each other locally, regionally and nationally; and contributing to the development of standards and best practices of the national anti-racism and community-building fields generally, and to the anti-racism work in those areas in which the Institute has expertise (e.g., access to capital).

The **UW Educational Opportunity Center** has been established in partnership with the University of Washington. The program has received funding from the Department of Education and is still in the launching stage. It is anticipated to provide services to adults 18 and older who are seeking higher education. In addition to El Centro as a strategic site in reaching underserved communities, there are two other sites at the Seattle Indian Health Board and the New Holly Park Community Center.

Proyecto Saber has been operating for 27 years teaching Latino history to high school students. El Centro de la Raza Youth Educators joined Proyecto Saber at the start of the 2001 school year. They teach five classes at Chief Sealth High School every other Friday to classes of about 20 students. The history lessons involve in-depth lectures and discussion of the "untold histories" of communities of color, including the stories of leaders of color, that are not generally taught in standard high school curriculums. In providing these lessons, the self-identity and self-worth of the students are strengthened. An estimated 220 youth have attended these lessons over a school year.

The Opportunity Council
The Opportunity Council is sponsoring several new initiatives and expanding existing initiatives when possible to address the multiple increasing needs in the community. Community Jobs and Driver's Re-Licensing programs both address the changing landscape of Community Action. The agency is also in the pilot phases of an Alternative Energy collaboration and a touch-screen information kiosk project. The computer kiosk project will establish satellite stations throughout the service area that provide remote, instant access to community resources.

Community Jobs Project (CJ) is a component of Washington State's WorkFirst Program. CJ is the first and largest program in the nation to provide comprehensive, paid work experience plus training opportunities for the hard-to-employ, combining subsidized work, training, and a continuum of supports and mentoring. Community Jobs builds participant work and life skills. Participants improve the quality of their communities through their work in community, government, tribal and business organizations. Private community-based contracted partners provide participants with 20 hours of work per week, 12-20 hours per week of employment support activities, a paycheck, and intensive one-on-one support to resolve barriers to employment. Program participants are enrolled for up to nine months - long enough to gain both substantial work experience and an opportunity to deal with life situations beyond crisis management. During their time in CJ, participants develop a platform for genuine job advancement and quality of life improvements. Community Jobs contractors emphasize empowerment for program participants while promoting measurable outcomes using individual assessments and individual Development Plans for achieving career and personal goals. Participants are eligible for the Advanced Earned Income Tax Credit, receive the Washington State minimum wage while on their CJ worksite, and receive a 50% earnings disregard. Together these income supports boost participants' income well above welfare grants.

The **Driver's Re-Licensing program** assists WorkFirst participants and Post-WorkFirst participants gain access to the District, Municipal, and Superior Courts to reduce fines and obtain/retain a valid driver's license. This will enable the participants to actively engage in employment and employment related activities. By receiving education, targeted individual services and budgeting skills, the participant will develop the ability to interact with the judicial system and build the required skills to maintain a fee repayment schedule. These services will only be used for participants who have lost or are at risk of losing their Driver's License due to non-payment of fines, Failure to Respond, or Failure to Appear. The participant must be currently employed, engaged in employment related activities or have demonstrated a desire to actively participate in WorkFirst activities. The participant must agree to a Protective Payee while receiving TANF (until 6 month review and/or full repayment of fines), agree to actively work with the contractor and the courts to obtain a valid license and attend appropriate budgeting training. This collaborative community project will reduce or eliminate barriers common to many low-income people.

Both of those programs will significantly rely on CSBG funding for administrative and community collaboration support. Partnerships with District and Municipal Courts, TANF, WorkFirst and local law enforcement agencies have all been possible through the ongoing Community Action coalition building made possible by CSBG funding.

Wyoming
Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth of Johnson county is a non-profit organization who's primary objective is to build assets in children and adolescents. Assets are 40 key building blocks that are critical for young people's successful growth and development.

The national initiative "Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth" was launched in 1996 by Search Institute, a non-profit research and educational organization headquartered in Minneapolis, MN. They are dedicated to promoting

the well-being of children and adolescents. Using their research they developed the asset-building model which provides a positive vision for children and adolescents in the community.

At Governor Geringer's Summit for Wyoming's Future in September 1997, a state-wide Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth initiative was launched. Governor Geringer challenged each county in Wyoming to implement the asset-building model. Each county will uniquely approach the challenge by assessing the assets, deficits, risk behaviors, and thriving indicators in their area. Johnson County had the largest number of delegates attending this conference and was eager to bring the information home and get started.

Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth of Johnson County was formed in October 1997 immediately following the governor's Summit and request. A nine-member board of directors was soon assembled and officers elected. In November 1998 we succeeded in filing for our non-profit status which was awarded January 1999.

NOWCAP
NOWCAP Services Community Living Program offers several different options to enhance one's level of independence in a home environment.

1. Supervised Living in a group home with housemates.
2. Supported Independent Living in an apartment or house with roommate(s) if desired.
3. In Home Support Services in the family home.
4. Respite Services in the client's home or in a NOWCAP facility.

The Community Living Program provides services to individuals who meet the **NOWCAP Services** general admissions criteria. However, choices of living options depend on the Team's recommendation for appropriate placement to ensure adequate training and support is available to meet the individual's needs. Resident choices may also depend on space availability.

Training provided in Supervised Living and Supported Independent Living sites includes grooming, hygiene, household maintenance, personal/home safety, mealtime skills, social training, communication training, behavior management, community mobility, community inclusion and other areas which would assist a person in becoming more independent in their activities of daily living. Small group and individual training is done in the natural setting. Personal care is also provided as needed.

In Home Support provides services to individuals who reside with their family within the family home. In Home Support Services involves the implementation of a designated program to allow the client to acquire, retain and improve the self help, socialization and adaptive skills necessary to reside successfully in the community. Clients are trained in techniques to address functional deficits in self help, daily living skills, mobility, learning, communications, self-sufficiency, survival skills, reduction of maladaptive behaviors, community access and other skills.

Respite Care includes those services given to individuals unable to care for themselves; provided on a short term basis because of the absence or need for relief of those persons normally providing the care. Respite Care services can be provided in a recipient's home or place of residence, foster home or approved facility. NOWCAP requests no less than two working days advance notification in order to make appropriate arrangements to provide Respite Care. The availability of Respite Care in a **NOWCAP** facility is contingent upon space and staff availability, client need and length of Respite. Clients are responsible for providing their own personal items in such circumstances. It is also expected that the primary caregiver will set aside time prior to Respite beginning in order to provide **NOWCAP** personnel pertinent information needed to enhance the Respite experience. Location of the service is at the discretion of the Community Living Coordinator or Executive Director.

National Community Action Foundation
Community Services Block Grant Reauthorization Proposals

Community Action Agencies (CAAs) believe that the current statute has allowed them to run strong, innovative local programs and that a number of States have managed their CSBG responsibilities in ways that have facilitated CAAs' work. Other States have not. The Federal government has been, at best, indifferent to issues of quality and even of compliance with current law. We propose changes for the block grant that fall into one of the three following categories:

1) amendments ensuring that the three fundamental purposes of CSBG are clearly stated and distinguished from public policies of contemporary concern to Congress; and

2) amendments ensuring that the Community Services system has 21st Century management at the Federal and State levels, as well as at the community level;

3) an amendment providing flexibility in determining CSBG eligibility so that participants in CAA programs that support low-wage workers' efforts to become economically self-sufficient are not disqualified from the programs as soon as they begin working in entry-level jobs.

The three sections below provide descriptions of changes in each of the three categories. Legislative language and a more detailed explanation will follow.

1. Amendments to CLARIFY AND STRENGTHEN PURPOSES

- The amendments restate more explicitly that the mission of CSBG funding is to reduce poverty, and that this block grant is unique because States direct it to support local initiatives of the local "eligible entities." The revised language reinforces the principle that CSBG is to be used for the priorities identified by CAAs' multi-sector, local leadership, and simplifies the language explaining this purpose.

  The amendments, like current law, provide that CAAs must address long-term needs and break down structural conditions that keep families poor and refer to at least three general strategies. These three complementary missions are distinguished for clarity, and laid out as follows:

  1) building the human capital and financial assets of the ***individuals and families*** they serve;
  2) developing the resources and economic, social, and physical assets of the ***communities*** in which they are based; and
  3) bringing the low-income community leadership, the wider community institutions, and local government together into ***partnerships*** to reduce poverty.

- The proposed language also clarifies that the State is to use CSBG for the purpose of supporting and strengthening their local CAAs in the fight to reduce poverty.

- The amendments also move specific programs/initiatives out of the Purposes section to a new section, *Programs of National Significance*. The new section will contain references to contemporary programs and public policy priorities which should be linked to local CSBG-supported projects. These are restructured into a clear and short list of initiatives of importance to the network and the Congress. Included among these programs are:

  - DOL-WIA initiatives to provide a continuum of job and family supports to new and low-wage workers;
  - other programs to help families move from welfare to work;
  - adult education, including literacy training;
  - programs to prevent juvenile crime and to make communities more secure;
  - "wrap-around" after-school enrichment and care programs for low-income youth;
  - programs to strengthen and preserve families, including the prevention of domestic violence against children or adults;
  - HHS comprehensive and preventive health initiatives; and
  - initiatives to prepare CAAs to assist community first-responders in the event of local or national disaster or of security threats.

2. Amendments to PROMOTE EXCELLENCE IN FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL OPERATIONS

Since the 1998 reauthorization, CAAs have made great strides in technology-based management, financial, and program information systems. However, the complexity of their operations and reports, which involve far-flung local community centers and more than $9 billion in funds from dozens of sources, demand more information-age technology and continuing professional development for their local managers.

Local agencies need better and more sustained support for this institutional development, for ongoing technology improvements, and for maintaining and modernizing their management systems, especially fiscal and information systems. The States must be held accountable for providing that support.

In 1998, Congress provided adequate resources to the Secretary to support States and local agencies in this effort. The Coats Human Services Reauthorization Act also clarified the long-standing responsibilities of HHS with regard to support for, and oversight of, States. We believe there have been serious failures at both the State and Federal level. These amendments not only make the expectation of excellence clear, they establish performance standards for the States; they also add measures to the Federal GPRA reports on HHS' own performance and on State performance. The state CSBG is perhaps the only HHS block grant that now is measured only by local grantee performance.

Specifically:

To promote management excellence at the Federal level, the amendments:

1) *Define goals and standards for Federal operations* that address efficiency of HHS operations, oversight of States, and the accessibility and relevance of CSBG training and technical assistance provided.

2) *Focus HHS training and technical assistance* funds on proactive efforts in support of high-priority CAA network needs and initiatives and provide accountability for the funding.

3) *Require that HHS verifies and approves the "assurances"* provided by States in their annual plans.

4) *Minimize duplicative HHS reporting and paperwork* for CAAs' multiple programs, while promoting the national program reports and the results reporting system in which States and CAAs now participate voluntarily.

5) *Require that HHS include CAAs* in planning its other programs that fight poverty and promote self-sufficiency, including : TANF, WIA, Head Start, LIHEAP, Community Health projects, fatherhood, mentoring, and domestic violence prevention and services.

To promote management excellence at the State level, the amendments:

1) *Provide for the promulgation of a standardized management performance measurement tool* to be used by the States to monitor and evaluate local eligible entities. CAAs support adoption of a professional and high quality local management review tool suited to the Federal fiscal requirements and to the purposes of their CSBG mission.

   Several States utilize good tools; Head Start has PRISM. The State and local network leadership, in cooperation with the Department, can readily select an appropriate, common financial/management protocol. It may appear inconsistent for CAAs to be urging Congress to mandate a standardized, professional test or review of their own operations; however, our position demonstrates the urgent need to enhance the management skills of a number of States.

2) *Require GPRA measurement of the States' administration* of the block grant, by addressing:
   - timely and equitable distribution of funds to CAAs;
   - State support and monitoring of CAAs using the appropriate methods and tools;
   - training and technical assistance that supports continuous modernization of local agency management tools, equipment and information systems; and
   - support for innovation in local programs and for dissemination of results and best practices.

3) *Ensure States' plans demonstrate an integrated approach to reducing poverty* by including CAAs and CSBG programs in State initiatives addressing the needs of low-income workers and their families and other low-income individuals.

To promote excellence at the local level, the amendments:

1) *Support and make permanent the Results-Oriented Management Assessment (ROMA) and program data Information System* referred to in the 1998 Human Services Reauthorization and implemented over the past five years. This system, and its reports, have evolved as the local and State agencies identified objectives and learned to measure their investments and activities supported by all types of resources and to assess client and community outcomes. The ROMA system was a semi-finalist contender for the prestigious Kennedy School of Government's "Innovations in Government "award in 2002.

   With the adoption in FY 2004 of two or three national measures for each of the six Community Action goals that track the statute, the voluntary system will have a nationwide report on common results for common purposes. States may continue to measure additional initiatives of local or State interest .

2) *Modernize all Community Action Agency management* to meet the standards of the national state monitoring tool.

3) *Ensure that CAAs and their state professional organizations invest in continuous management and programmatic development* through peer exchanges and training.

4) *Require that all local expenditures of CSBG funds be overseen by Boards of Directors* that reflect the three sectors of the community whose partnership makes Community Action effective and responsive.

3. Amendments to CHANGE OBSOLETE INCOME ELIGIBILITY LIMITS

The proposed amendments raise the eligibility for CSBG-funded investments in order to serve the continuing and emerging needs of the working poor and their families who make up most of the participant families. The current 125% of Poverty limitation means that single parents with just one child can lose their eligibility for the CSBG-funded continuum of supportive services if they find employment with no benefits paying $8 an hour. The amendments:

- Allows states, at their option, to make eligible for CSBG-funded services participants in any of the 40 or more federal categorical programs managed by CAAs (e.g., WtW, WIA, Homeownership promotion, LIHEAP, microenterprise development, Meals on wheels,); and

- Leaves intact the authority of the Secretary to publish the annual Poverty guidelines, which will be a benchmark used for many purposes, not an enforceable ceiling on participation.

National
Community
Action Foundation

David A. Bradley
Executive Director

Understanding the Roads that Lead to ROMA: or
Why and How the CSBG Network's Performance Measures Will be Uniquely Effective

Preface: The CSBG funding is used to support professionals in the local community action agencies (CAAs) who design programs and projects to meet the particular needs identified by their community leadership, who set up partnerships to combine the multiple resources and people needed to get the desired result, and who then implement the programs.

Since 1998, CSBG also supports local and state leaders time to implement start up and maintain information systems that provide performance measurement along with the technology and training needed for "Results Oriented Management Assessment" or 'ROMA'.

(Some CSBG funding is also used for direct assistance to program participants or for a single category of non-cash assistance, but its primary purpose is for integrated, 'one-stop' interventions to reduce poverty and make people more self-sufficient.)

Nationwide, it will measure the uses of $9 billion, not $650 million, worth of programs that involve CSBG-funded people and resources. This means measuring the outcome of coordination of many kinds of resources that are focused on a family or community problem. The outcome may be clearly measured, but the independent contribution CSBG made must be inferred.

ROMA is a management information tool for adjusting program operations or budgets, not an evaluation. Evaluation involves tracking long-term results and use of control groups. It is necessary, but expensive, and therefore infrequently undertaken. ROMA is not the only management assessment tool CAAs and states need. Fiscal/financial management must be evaluated using tested audit tools for government programs and additional audit tools for non-profit corporation management.

A major strength of CSBG is that it permits localities to set priorities for their CAA and provides resources to fill 'holes' in the mix of services needed to meet local need. One CAA may have preventive health care and screening as a major goal because of community needs, while another may have creation of community facilities and services for youth and/or neighborhood crime reduction as its major use for CSBG. Both meet one or more national CSBG goals but need very different ROMA measures to gauge success. One road does not lead all to ROMA.

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Possibilities and Results

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2003 Status of ROMA

1. Since the last reauthorization bill, more than 1100 agencies in 50 states, DC, and Puerto Rico have, through their national groups and task forces, agreed on six national goals; voluntarily tested, among them, over two hundred possible measures of such goals, discarded dozens, and voluntarily trained more than 5000 local workers to record information and collect it into computerized reports that benchmark their progress.

2. The information is used to improve local programs. It is primarily a tool for agency management and Boards of Directors who need the assessments to run effective initiative. State managers use the results to oversee their grantees.

Federal uniform reports on limited and identical measures are not a purpose of ROMA nor consistent with the localized nature of CSBG. CAAs already prepare specific reports on federal categorical programs including Head Start's PRISM report, several HUD CDBG measures, and TANF.

3. By 2001, the yet-incomplete effort had progressed so far as to catch the attention of Harvard's JFK School of Government's and won nomination to the semi-final round of the Innovations in Government contest.

4. National reports are a next step for the CSBG network. The task forces and national organizations are negotiating about which measures must be a part of every state's system, so reports from every state reflect all six goals in the same way and so that all the statutory purposes will be reflected; the template is not yet final, but will be for reports on the FY 2005 programs. Of course, local agencies may continue to use many additional performance measures in addition to those reported to Congress.

The outline of the ROMA implementation progress that follows is taken from presentations designed by the National Association for State Community Services Programs which receives support from Office of Community Services to administer reporting on CSBG network information including ROMA. It suggests the work involved in measuring the synergy CSBG provides for local poverty reduction initiatives. More detailed analysis and ROMA documents are available at NASCSP's website: www.roma1.org/room1.html.

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Selected Considerations for CAAs in Implementing ROMA from:
CSBG Monitoring and Assessment Task Force (MATF) National Goals

1. Low-income people become more self-sufficient (Family)
2. The conditions in which low-income people live are improved (Community)
3. Low-income people own a stake in their community (Community)
4. Partnerships among supporters and providers of services to low-income people are achieved (Agency)
5. Agencies increase their capacity to achieve results (Agency)
6. Low-income people, especially vulnerable populations, achieve their potential by strengthening family and other support systems (Family)

CSBG Level of Outcomes

* Family
  - Goal 1 (Self-Sufficiency)
  - Goal 6 (Support systems)
* Agency
  - Goal 4 (Partnerships)
  - Goal 5 (Agency capacity)
* Community
  - Goal 2 (Community Conditions)
  - Goal 3 (Community Stake)

CAA Planning and Outcome Assessment Process

1. Local Agency Needs Assessment
2. Desired Outcomes Identified
3. Service Strategies, Programs and Interventions chosen for measurement
4. Measurement of Results
5. Self-Evaluation Methodology (Did we achieve our desired outcomes?)

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Implementing a ROMA System

1. Integrate ROMA concepts and language into the CAA *planning* process. Gain commitment of all the agency "stakeholders", including line staff. Executive Director and board must provide leadership and support.

2. Strive for realistic time frames for implementation.

   Allow time for:
   - Creating Work Groups
   - Adapting the state system to the local program's elements
   - Training Staff and Supervisors in collecting and recording information from clients
   - Testing and Re-testing (trial and error)
   - Allocating Resources
   - Developing staff and board capacity

Effective Programs Pose Design Challenges

* CAA "Programs" have Multiple Services
* Each Service can have Multiple Outcomes
* Each Outcome may meet multiple CSBG Goals.

Measures Must Not Dictate Programs

If a new measure is not yet designed for an initiative the community needs, do not change the program, create a measure.

Measure the right level of result for the program – is it only about individuals or is it about bringing a new asset to the community? States and CAAs reach joint agreements based on community needs.

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Community Action Agencies' Performance v. their Government Performance and Results Act Targets as Established by HHS: 1999 – 2002

	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002 (est.)
	Volunteer Hours in Millions			
Target	28.6	28.9	27.7	28
Actual	27.5	29.6	31	*32*
% Above/below target	-3.85%	2.42%	11.91%	14.29%

	Local and Private Funds in Billion $$			
Target	$ 1.36	$ 1.38	$ 1.66	$ 1.68
Actual	$ 1.92	$ 2.11	$ 2.50	*$ 2.50*
% Above/below target	41.18%	52.90%	50.60%	48.81%

Sources: Administration for Children and Families FY 2003 Performance Plan *Page M-17*;

National Assoc for State Community services Programs. CSBG Statistical Report, FY 2000, Washington DC, 7/02. CSBG Statistical Report, FY 2001, Washington, DC forthcoming, and estimates from unpublished FY 2002 data

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Barriers: A Federal System Inhospitable to Faith-Based and Community Organizations

The Federal grants system is intended to put taxpayer dollars to the most effective use by enlisting the best nongovernmental groups to provide various social services, either through discretionary grants (also called competitive grants) awarded directly by Federal officials or through formula grants (including block grants) administered by State and local governments. The funds should go to the providers who can provide the most effective assistance and who can boast the best civic outcomes.

The Federal Government, however, has little idea of the actual effect of the billions of social service dollars it spends directly or sends to State and local governments. The policies and practices of Federal grants programs too often make it difficult or impossible for faith-based and grassroots groups to gain support, even though they may have superior results in lifting lives and healing distressed neighborhoods.

Billions of Federal Dollars Spent, Little Evidence of Results

The Federal Government spends billions of dollars annually to assist needy families, individuals, and communities, often using the funds to support services provided by nongovernmental organizations. Although Federal program officials monitor nonprofit organizations, State and local governments, and other groups that receive the funds to ensure that they spend Federal money for designated purposes and without fraud, Federal officials have accumulated little evidence that the grants make a significant difference on the ground.

Routinized Granting Without Performance Monitoring

In some Federal discretionary programs, a small number of organizations perennially win large grants, even though there is little empirical evidence substantiating the success of their services. For example, in the Labor Department's Senior Community Service Employment Program, the same 11 large organizations have ranked among the top-10 grant recipients over the past five years. In addition, since 1984 the Department's Women's Bureau has annually awarded a sole-source grant to the same organization. Similarly, in HHS's Consolidated Health Centers program, the same 12 organizations appear on the lists of the 10 largest grantees over the past five fiscal years; in the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program, only 17 organizations appear on the top-10 lists over the same period.

These apparent Federal Grant monopolists may rank head and shoulders above the rest in terms of quality and performance, but only rarely are Federal programs and grantees [redacted] determine whether taxpayer funds achieve the desired results. Large grantees are audited annually for their use of Government funds (if they receive more than $300,000 annually from all Federal sources); and some programs, such as Head Start and Community Services Block Grants, require some form of impact evaluation. Although the Federal Government can ensure that funds are not spent on unauthorized purposes, it cannot ensure that the expenditures have the intended results. According to the OMB survey, despite the billions of dollars the sample of programs has distributed in discretionary and formula grants over the past 5 years, fewer than one in five of the programs has received a General Accounting Office or Agency Inspector General's review to analyze actual performance and

results. Moreover, virtually none of the programs has ever been subjected to a systematic evaluation of their performance that meets rigorous (or, in most cases, even rudimentary) evaluation research standards.

These Federal programs may be doing significant good; and the grantees that routinely win renewed support may be the best available. However, in the absence of meaningful performance reviews, agencies have no concrete basis for concluding so. Although routinized grant-making is administratively easier than competitive grant-making, such a grant-making process poses a high barrier to potential new entrants who, in fact, may be better at serving needy citizens and their neighborhoods.

Some critics of expanded Federal collaboration with faith-based and community-based organizations complain that there is little proof that these organizations are effective or have the capacity to manage large-scale social service programs. However, as the OMB survey ironically reveals, the Federal Government routinely awards billions in taxpayer support to organizations whose own efficacy and cost-effectiveness have not been validated by careful studies. This record indicates the need for an across-the-board emphasis on demonstrating actual efficiency of the programs that government funds.

The Impotence of GPRA in Determining Whether Programs Fly or Flop
Nearly a decade ago, Congress mandated a reform of Federal Government operations to produce on-the-ground changes. The 1993 Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) requires Federal departments to prepare strategic plans and annual performance reports that look beyond mere gross measures of agency activity (*i.e.*, grants awarded, hours of training given) to measures that examine actual changes in the circumstances of communities and families toward whom the Government activity is directed. The goal of this reform is to identify which Federal programs actually make a meaningful difference.

To date, GPRA has had little positive impact on Government programs, and the reports from the Centers confirm this gloomy evaluation with respect to the measuring of social service grants to faith-based organizations.

- DOJ: The Office of Justice Programs has yet to establish adequate performance goals and measures. Of the discretionary grants programs examined, 12 had no performance measures, 7 had measures but could not or did not say what they were, 4 had only informal measures, and only 4 had specific targets - but these were indicators of mere activity and not results.
- ED: At Education, most program offices were unfamiliar with their programs' GPRA objectives and could not even locate the GPRA reports.
- HHS: The Department's programs use various performance measures, but the HHS report says it is unclear how the results of such analyses are connected to decisions about program design or grantee accountability.
- HUD: The Office of the Inspector General recently completed a thorough review of the department's compliance with GPRA during the previous administration, and determined that, while HUD is making significant progress, the Department has not achieved full compliance with GPRA requirements.
- DOL: The report notes that, while the Department uses outcome-oriented goals and regards GPRA as an important tool, the process is hampered

because officials cannot independently verify information received from grantees.

Despite GPRA and its promise of outcome-based grant-making, the Federal Government has made scant progress in showcasing program performance and managing for results. Too often, GPRA has devolved into a rote paperwork assignment that leverages little real change and influences few officials. GPRA's paramount goal - to herald high-performing programs and spotlight low-performing ones - has barely moved the needle in affecting the real world of making Federal programs work better. Indeed, a recent GAO report examining GPRA compliance showed that, in the 28 Federal agencies surveyed, only in 7 did a majority of managers say they used performance information in setting program priorities, adopting new approaches, allocating resources, coordinating program efforts, or setting job expectations for employees. It gets worse: the GAO survey shows that results-based management under GPRA has actually *decreased* in recent years.[8]

Next: "Barriers to Faith-Based Organizations Seeking Federal Support"

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8 Stephen Barr, "Survey of Supervisors Finds Little Movement Toward 'Managing for Results'," *The Washington Post* (June 10, 2001), p. C-2; GAO, "Managing for Results: Federal Managers' Views on Key Management Issues Vary Widely Across Agencies," May 2001 (GAO-01-592).

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Innovations in American Government
An awards program of the Institute for Government Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.
The awards program is administered in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government

NEWS

For Immediate Release **November 13, 2002**

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FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S BEST AND BRIGHTEST CITED FOR HARVARD AWARD

(**WASHINGTON D.C.**) – Seventeen creative, forward thinking and results-driven federal government programs are among the 99 semifinalists named today for the prestigious **2002 Innovations in American Government Awards.** The awards competition – often referred to as the Oscars of government prizes – is a program of the Institute for Government Innovation at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. The award recognizes outstanding programs that devise imaginative and effective ways to meet urgent social and economic challenges. Each semifinalist is eligible for one of five top grants of $100,000.

The seventeen federal government semifinalists were selected from a pool of nearly 1,000 applicants and represent the best and brightest in government from across the country. All dedicated to making federal government work better, the groundbreaking semifinalist programs include four programs from the **Department of Defense** and two programs each from the **Departments of Justice, Transportation, Health & Human Services,** and **Agriculture.** Individual programs from the **Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Interior, General Services Administration, Library of Congress** and the **Federal Courts** were also cited for their innovation

Four criteria are used to evaluate each application: novelty; effectiveness in addressing important problems; significance; and the potential for replication by other government entities.

Fifteen finalists will be selected from the semifinalists in early winter 2002. The National Selection Committee on Innovations in American Government, chaired by David R. Gergen, editor-at-large, *U.S. News & World Report* and Director of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard University, will choose five winning programs after a full day of presentations in May 2003 in Washington, D.C. Each will receive a $100,000 grant to promote and replicate their innovative efforts.

The Innovations in American Government awards, now in its sixteenth year, promotes excellence, innovation and creativity in the public sector. A program of the Institute for Government Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, the awards program is administered in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government. The Institute is funded through an endowment from the Ford Foundation.

The list of federal semifinalists, including a description of each program and contact information, is attached. A list of all the semifinalists is available on the web at www.excelgov.org

-30-

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Innovations in American Government
An awards program of the Institute for Government Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University
The awards program is administered in partnership with the Council for Excellence in Government

NEWS

Border Wizard (Department of Transportation) is the official platform to test all border security measures. It is a discrete events operations research tool, capable of simulating all trade facilitation, immigration, security and transportation functions carried out within and approaching border ports of entry and their adjacent transportation networks.

Press Contact:
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Bridges to Friendship (Department of Defense) was created by the Navy to revitalize the historic Washington Navy Yard, transforming it from an urban wastesite into a modern military office park. The program served as facilitator, broker and convener, bringing together community groups, business leaders, and local and federal government agencies. Residents of the public and low-income housing that bracket the property were offered job training, business development opportunities, and other improvements that resulted in gains for both the Navy and the community.

Press Contact:
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Bridges to Friendship
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Brooks City-Base Project (Department of Defense) is a partnership between the City of San Antonio and the US Air Force that is converting the Brooks AFB into a technology park, with the Air Force remaining as the anchor tenant. The project reduces costs for both partners, stimulates economic development in the community and enhances Air Force mission activities.

Press Contact:
Lawrence Farlow
Brooks City-Base Project
210-536-3234

Centralized Servicing of Rural Housing Loans (Department of Agriculture) provides single family housing loan and grant service for 500,000 nationwide customers of the Rural Housing Service (RHS). The program supplies subsidized direct loans to low and very low-income families unable to obtain affordable credit elsewhere.

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NEWS

Press Contact:
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Centralized Servicing of Rural Housing
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Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (Department of Defense) is a comprehensive benefits system for military members and their families using state-of-the-art technology to ensure prompt and accurate benefit deliver. The system has proven so flexible and adaptive that it has become the platform for many new benefit systems, Defense Department medical programs and the source for current and accurate demographic information.

Press Contact:
Robert Brandewie
Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting
System
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Emergency Responder Training (Department of Justice) The Center for Domestic Preparedness (CPD) trains emergency responders to deal with terrorist acts involving weapons of mass destruction. Its training programs furnish state and local emergency responders (firefighters, police officers, emergency medical and other public health professionals, bomb squads, and HAZMAT technicians) with maximum information and hands-on training to meet terrorism response capability standards in their respective fields. The Center is the nation's only federally chartered training facility with programs available to state and local emergency responders who must deal with unprecedented terrorist acts at the mass destruction level.

Press Contact:
Johnathan Mangum
Emergency Responder Training
256-847-2121
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FirstGov.gov (General Services Administration) is the federal government's official Internet portal for transactions, services and information. It is the first and only official, single point-of-entry to 35 million federal government web pages and 16 million state web pages.

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NEWS

Geo-Data Explorer (Department of the Interior) created GEODE (Geo-Data Explorer), a free website that provides a gateway to a wide range of geological information, from 3-D satellite images (some in real time) to data spreadsheets. Users can retrieve, display, and collect data and analysis; they can also combine the data to design their own maps. GEODE allows its customers, many of them scientists, access to important geographic data without any specialized hardware, knowledge or training.

Press Contact:
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Geo-Data Explorer
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Inmate Placement Program (Department of Justice) strengthens job search and retention skills of criminal offenders, eases their transition back into society, and lowers recidivism rates. While still in prison, inmates learn how to fill out job applications, write cover letters, and search for employment. Job Fairs give them opportunities for interviews by recruiters from major national companies.

Press Contact:
Linda Wines Smith
Inmate Placement Program
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LWSMITH@BOP.GOV

Interagency Cooperation: Aviation Security (Department Of Transportation) is a multi-agency partnership that provided security in the Salt Lake Winter Olympics area, which was vulnerable to airborne threats. Prior to the Olympics, no system existed in the area to perform this task, so it had to be designed, built and deployed. Each agency brought experience and equipment to the mission, and resources were used flexibly as the agencies worked together.

Press Contact:
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Interagency Cooperation: Aviation Security
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National Community Centers of Excellence in Women's Health (Department of Health and Human Services) is the nation's first community-based program funded to develop models of comprehensive care for underserved women. The Centers are located in hospitals, community health centers, and one Area Health Education Center.

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NEWS

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National Community Centers of Excellence
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Naturalization Ceremonies (Federal Courts) expands traditional naturalization ceremonies so that new citizens may register to vote and apply for a US passport in one single location. In the past four years, this collaboration of four independent agencies (US District Court, INS, US Passport Agency and LA County Registrar of Voters Office) naturalized 584,000 new citizens, accepted 62,000 passport applications and registered approximately 195,000 new voters.

Press Contact:
Frank Galvan
Naturalization Ceremonies
213-894-6770

Pharmacy Data Transaction Service (Department of Defense) is a central repository for prescription data from all Department of Defense pharmacy services. The PDTS uses a robust, centralized data system to store and analyze information about prescriptions filled across the DoD's vast network of pharmacies, improving efficiency and patient safety by reducing the likelihood of life-threatening drug interactions involving prescription medications. PDTS's interconnection of high-level, disparate pharmacy services is unprecedented in government or civilian healthcare applications.

Press Contact:
Norma Rumbaugh
Pharmacy Data Transaction Service
703-681-1775

Recreation Solutions Enterprise Team (Department of Agriculture) is an internal, interagency business designed to reduce bureaucracy and simplify processes in public recreation services and programs. It helps program leaders from a variety of government agencies manage their recreation-related projects more conveniently and cost-effectively, while unleashing the creativity of Forest Service employees to develop internal entrepreneurial businesses that make government work better and cost less.

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NEWS

Regaining Control of Lost Radioactive Sources (Environmental Protection Agency) locates and secures sources of radioactivity that are reported lost, stolen or abandoned. The program gives assistance to source owners who want to "do the right thing," has created a website and toll free number, and conducts training for states on handling sealed radioactive sources.

Press Contact:
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Regaining Control of Lost Radioactive
Sources
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Results Oriented Management and Accountability (Department of Health and Human Services) uses collaboration and application of management accountability concepts to achieve major program reforms. A voluntary taskforce made up of Federal, state and local officials measures success not by the number or nature of services provided, but by the results they help families and communities achieve.

Press Contact:
Margaret Washnitzer
Results Oriented Management and
Accountability
202-401-2333

River of Words (Library of Congress) sponsors a kindergarten through high school "watershed" poetry and art contests. The contests, the largest of their kind anywhere, are designed to nurture young imaginations. They are supported by a comprehensive teacher-training program. The curriculum for the program integrates outdoor observation and investigation with core subjects like English, math, science, social studies, and the arts, and encourages partnerships with local groups, agencies, institutions, businesses, and individuals.

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National Community Action Foundation

David A. Bradley
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NCAF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DAVID A. BRADLEY TESTIFIES BEFORE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN SUPPORT OF REAUTHORIZATION OF COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT FUNDING

David A. Bradley, Executive Director of the National Community Action Foundation (NCAF), which represents the nation's 1100 Community Action Agencies (CAAs), testified before the Senate Subcommittee on Children and Families of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions on July 10, 2003, calling for the reauthorization of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). The administration proposed a cut in CSBG funding for FY 2004.

"The Community Services Block Grant is the money Community Action Agencies use to do their job," said Mr. Bradley. "To read a quote published in 1970 from then-Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity Donald Rumsfeld, 'While the operation of programs is the CAA's principal activity, it is not the CAA's primary objective. CAA programs must serve the larger purpose of mobilizing resources and bringing about greater institutional sensitivity. This critical link between service delivery and improved community response distinguishes the CAA from other agencies… A Community Action Agency's effectiveness, therefore, is measured not only by the services which it directly provides, but, more importantly, by the improvements and changes it achieves in the community's attitudes and practices toward the poor and in the allocation and focusing of public and private resources for anti-poverty purposes.'"

Community Action Agencies were established in 1964 by the country as local institutions run by Boards comprising of a partnership of local governments, businesses, non-profits, religious institutions and the low-income community to customize unique, innovative solutions to poverty. This network of 1,100 Community Service Block Grant grantees create, coordinate and deliver comprehensive programs and services totaling nearly $9 billion a year, including over $1 billion in private donations, serving more than 13 million low-income people. CAAs use CSBG dollars to coordinate Head Start, LIHEAP, family literacy, child care, after-school programs, youth and adult employment and training, permanent housing and job placement, asset building and budget counseling, and services for seniors and the frail elderly. To illustrate how successful these local partnerships have been, Bradley presented Subcommittee members with examples of innovative programs in their own states.

The National Community Action Foundation called on the subcommittee to include additional support for "excellence" through stronger state and federal performance standards and to provide more support and incentives for programs that coordinate and focus resources to achieve long-term poverty reduction.

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Possibilities and Results

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PHILLIP MCKAIN

Good afternoon, my name is Phillip McKain. I am the President and CEO of CTE, The Community Action Agency for the Communities of Stamford, Greenwich and Darien, Connecticut. I am also the President of the Connecticut Association for Community Action, the State association for the 12 Community Action Agencies of Connecticut. These 12 agencies serve all 169 towns and cities in the State.

For 2002, our agencies reported serving over 254,000 clients. Our clients include young children, the disabled, the elderly and poor and working poor individuals. Of those for whom information was available, the following outcomes were reported:

• 90 percent of families demonstrated an increase in skills and were strengthened through counseling, classes and other support services.

• 88 percent reduced or eliminated an emergency need, such as food, shelter, or home heating utility payments.

• 69 percent eliminated or reduced barriers to employment and self-sufficiency.

• 14,924 children and youth participated in services that supported their growth and development, such as Head Start, school readiness, and at-risk youth programs.

In particular, new asset-development strategies are helping low-income working people stay off of welfare and move toward self-sufficiency:

• 62 percent demonstrated an increased ability to manage income to achieve self-sufficiency through various financial literacy programs.

• 55 percent increased their earned income from the previous year.

• 11 CAAs operate Individual Development Account programs. This long-term program will eventually help 230 clients purchase their first home, attend college or capitalize a small business.

Beyond these examples of the impact CSBG funding has made on the lives of individuals and families, I am also here today to testify on the value of CSBG in Connecticut in bringing about change in State Government and in local communities to address the needs of working low-income families and communities.

On the State level the 12 CSBG funded Community Action Agencies have partnered with the Connecticut Department of Social Services and Infoline, a United Way funded statewide information and referral system, to change the social service delivery system for DSS Human Services Infrastructure. For years Connecticut State Government's social services system was fragmented, creating confusion and duplication for Connecticut low-income families. In an effort to change this system, the CAAs met with the Commissioner of Social Services for the State and the Governor's Office of Policy and Management. We proposed a new service delivery system to create an automated "one stop" approach to human service delivery which will streamline and integrate intake and assessment procedure, State and Federal program eligibility screening, information and referral, and client outcome measurements for Connecticut's low-income residents. "Connecticut CAA Self-Sufficiency Centers" will build upon our existing Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) system and software being implemented through the State association.

In a letter dated June 30, 2003 to Connecticut's Senator Dodd regarding this innovative partnership and the value of CSBG, the Commissioner of Connecticut's Department of Social Services, Patricia Wilson-Coker, stated that, "this management innovation is so impressive that I am using the Connecticut Community Action Network and the ROMA model as a new paradigm to support Connecticut's Human Service Infrastructure." I am submitting the Commissioner's letter for inclusion in the Committee's record. As a prelude to this new system, the DSS recently turned to the Community Action Network to provide assistance to disabled clients who needed help in completing DSS applications and locating needed services. This would not have been possible without the core funding that CSBG provides.

The Self-Sufficiency One Stop is not a program. It is not a "silo." It is a "funnel" that will guide clients through the complex service system and be a more effective approach to providing service. It will ensure the most cost-effective use of taxpayer dollars and provide better customer service. Additionally, Self-Sufficiency Centers will:

• Create a more cost-efficient service delivery system and eliminate duplicative efforts in intake, referrals, and assessment.

• Provide low-income people a "one-stop" system of comprehensive intake and assessment services that will improve client outcomes, and

• Provide better client outcome data reports that cuts across State and federally funded programs and demonstrate the value of integrating diverse funding streams at the local level.

The Connecticut Community Action network has utilized CSBG funding to provide leadership in identifying and solving needs that improve the life chances of low-income working families.

• In Stamford, a high cost-of-living, affluent community with pockets of extreme poverty, the Community Action Agency was asked to form an Affordable Housing Collaborative to help put affordable housing on the policy-making agenda for the city. We mobilized business leaders, labor representatives, faith leaders, non-profit and private housing developers, public officials, and community advocates, to put housing on the agenda of the city government. At our prompting, the Mayor estab-

lished a Task Force which recommended zoning regulation changes to facilitate the production of affordable housing. Stamford now has incentives and regulations that will produce affordable units for low- to moderate-income workers who are the lifeblood of a sustainable community.

• The Community Renewal Team leveraged private and public donors to create a Homeowner Assistance Center in Hartford. This center provides holistic services to help low-income working people purchase and rehabilitate houses, enhance their financial literacy skills, and improve their likelihood of long-term ownership, thereby stabilizing neighborhoods.

• The Human Resources Agency of New Britain's supports the East Side Community Action neighborhood group. This association has organized community residents to form five block watches; petitioned the city to remove blighted buildings; organized ongoing meetings with city officials to improve neighborhoods through crime reduction and the availability of services such as grocery stores; and successfully worked with the New Britain Common Council to pass a resolution establishing the East Side as a Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ).

• The Bristol Community Organization uses CSBG funds to provide comprehensive services for elderly clients, including transportation, that keeps them living independently and out of expensive nursing homes.

These are but a sampling of the many economic development and community improvement efforts going on in Connecticut through the work of Community Action Agencies and CSBG funding.

The State of Connecticut turned to CAAs because we had a system supported by a flexible and non-categorical funding base that can respond to statewide issues. Local communities turn to CAAs because we have the history of trust, commitment to the poor, and community partnership to bring about community change. Individuals and families turn to CAAs because they know that they can get a hand up to improve and change their life chances. The Community Services Block grant is that one unique Federal funding mechanism that has made these changes happen.

I urge your continued support and the reauthorization of the Community Service Block Grant. Thank you for allowing me to speak to you today.

APPENDIX IX TO E. PHILLIP MCKAIN'S TESTIMONY

Innovative Strategies to Support People Moving Toward Self-Sufficiency

• Individual Development Accounts: Eleven CT CAAs operate IDA programs. The Federal IDA program provides no funds for case management, yet because of CSBG, our agencies can integrate IDA services into our existing case management structure. This long-term program will help 230 clients purchase their first home, attend college or capitalize a small business. To date, eight (8) have used their savings towards post-secondary education, eight (8) towards small businesses capitalization, and twelve (12) towards home ownership.

• Support for Low-Income Working People: Our agencies are adding programs and supports to help people manage their income better, to reduce debt, repair credit and save money.

• 1,834 of 2,954 clients or 62 percent Demonstrated Increased Ability to Manage Income to Achieve Self-Sufficiency through various financial literacy programs.

• Four agencies operated Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Centers that helped low-income working families and individuals file their taxes and apply for Earned Income and Child Tax Credits. Over $1 million in refunds were provided through these efforts.

• Non-Custodial Fathers: A number of our agencies provide support to help non-custodial fathers get back on their feet, reintegrate with their families and begin providing child support. A program at Action for Bridgeport Community Development, works with a sheet-metal union to provide job training and better employment opportunities. By increasing income fathers are better able to pay child support and maintain relationships with their children. They also receive assistance on resolving legal issues, parenting skills and establishing relationships with their children.

Strategies That Are Improving Low-Income Communities and Supporting Economic Development

• Community Renewal Team: CRT developed the Homeownership Assistance Center with private and public dollars. The Center establishes a one-stop housing resource center that will provide a comprehensive set of homeowner services to low- and moderate-income households. The program joins homeownership, weatherization, and energy efficiency services to Hartford families and individuals. It emphasizes asset building by encouraging low- and moderate-income households to pur-

chase new homes or rehabilitate currently owned ones, and also provides financial literacy counseling, mortgage application assistance, home improvement assistance, assistance with dealing with contractors, post-improvement audits, social service intakes to determine eligibility for other social service programs. In addition to funding from the Ford Foundation, CRT has established partnerships with Fannie Mae, Northeast Utilities, the Housing Education Resource Center, the City of Hartford, and the Connecticut Housing Finance Association. This collaborative approach allows the Center to provide numerous services to its clients that CRT is unable to provide on its own.

• New Opportunities in Waterbury uses CSBG funds to support five neighborhood centers, a transitional housing program, and three youth centers. The Neighborhood Youth Center in the Brooklyn Neighborhood of Waterbury provides activities (educational and recreational) and family support (case management) to at-risk youth. By engaging youth in after-school hours and during school breaks, the program hopes to minimize their exposure to crime and drug related influences.

• Human Resources Agency of New Britain uses CSBG funds to provide coordinated, comprehensive services, maintain over 35 community partnerships, and leverage funding for community improvement efforts. One such partnership is with East Side Community Action, a neighborhood group of East Side residents of New Britain. Over 3000 East Side families were contacted and they identified a range of problems to address: Housing, Public Safety and Economic Development. The committees are working on reducing or eliminating many problems including blighted housing, crime, and the absence of a grocery store on the East Side. Some of East Side Community Action's accomplishments are:

• Public Safety Committee members have formed five Block Watches and a task force investigating the proposed Power Plant.

• The Housing Committee has sent letters to the owners of blighted housing and is following up with phone calls.

• City employees from various departments have attended committee meetings to talk with residents and answer their questions on a number of topics. As a result, East Side residents readily call the city to address problems in their neighborhoods such as drug dealing, speeding cars, the need for stop signs, problems with trash removal, and blighted housing.

• In April 2002, the New Britain Common Council passed a resolution establishing the East Side as a Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ).

• The Bristol Community Organization uses CSBG funds to provide comprehensive services for elderly clients, including transportation, that keeps them living independently and out of expensive nursing homes.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL SAUCIER

I was employed by the local paper mill for 28 years, and for 23 of those years, operated a sheet metal shop.

When it became apparent that the rumors were true, and the mill was going to close, I was in a dilemma, not knowing where I could turn to. I had never been unemployed in my life!

I then went to the NH Works Office for employment counseling and sat down with Paul Lozier; who works for Tri-County Community Action's Workforce Investment Program. Paul conducted a general testing of my abilities and advised me that there were programs in the works, i.e., training programs with instructors and employment programs with local businesses. He said that if I were interested, he would sign me up at no cost to myself.

In the meantime, I started looking for employment had several interviews in northern Massachusetts, etc. During this time, my wife and I discussed the situation and decided that we were not prepared to make ;such a drastic move as we had two children attending New Hampshire colleges and we both had extended family in Berlin.

I worked with Tri-County CAP to determine the training that would provide skills that matched my aptitude, interests and local employment opportunities. I responded positively and been training at a local college and enrolled in a computer-aided drafting course, which led to my current, full-time employment as a professional with Isaacson's Structural Steel, Inc.

Isaacson's Structural Steel: worked with Tri-County CAP from the beginning of the crisis to develop positions and training that would benefit laid-off workers, their local businesses and the community as a whole. Tri-County CAP and Isaacson's are remarkable partners and I was happy to work with both of them.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WINIFRED OCTAVE

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today.

My name is Winifred Octave. I was born in St. Lucia, West Indies and immigrated to the United States permanently in 1979. I've been a U.S. citizen for more than 10 years. I worked for Merrill Lynch in New York for 15 years as a Settlement Specialist before moving to Worcester Massachusetts in 1994. I worked as a legal secretary for a Worcester law firm until they went out of business in 2000, and I was laid off.

I am a single parent with three children. My 21-year-old son served for two months in Iraq and is now in Japan, on his way to the Philippines. I have a 13-year-old daughter and an 8-year-old son.

When the law firm laid me off in 2000 I went to the unemployment office to apply for benefits and to find out what was available. Since I didn't have good computer skills, I knew I needed more training. One of the places that was suggested to me was the Worcester Community Action Council. Since I didn't have a car, and WCAC was easy to get to, I picked WCAC. I honestly believe God helped me make that choice.

I went to "school" at WCAC for 12 weeks. I learned new computer skills. I got to practice interviewing for a job with people who came from companies in Worcester. I learned to write a resume. I also learned about credit and budgeting and other useful information from the teachers and other WCAC staff. Everyone was very helpful. After I finished the course, I received help in getting a job. I've been with this employer since I left the class in 2000.

WCAC helped me in many other ways. I qualified for fuel assistance. I joined Worcester Community Connections, a parent empowerment program that is housed at WCAC. Because I got involved in Community Connections, I learned about home ownership opportunities for families like mine. I applied to a community development corporation (with help from WCAC staff) and I was selected to buy a two family home where I now live with my children. The house has been weatherized by WCAC. Also, I learned about the need for foster parents in our community. So I signed up with the Department of Social Services to become a foster parent. I attended 8 weeks of classes and learned First Aid and other important skills. I'm now waiting for my first foster child.

When I was still in the training program, I heard about the WCAC board of directors and how to become a member. I wanted to do that. Since 2001, I have been a representative of the low-income sector and I report to the board on what is happening in my neighborhood and with Community Connections. I've learned a lot about Worcester since joining the board and also the towns where WCAC provides services. I learn about programs and funding and we talk about issues that affect the agency and low income working families like mine. Many of the board members are business people and elected officials (or their representatives). Those board members want to help people but they don't know what it's like to go through problems in the community. I do and so do the other low-income representatives on the board. We live in the neighborhoods and know what kinds of problems people like us are having. At board meetings I can talk about what the needs are. For example, I've talked about the kids in my neighborhood who have nothing to do. So some of the neighbors and agencies are meeting to try and start a youth center in our neighborhood. Talking about this at board meetings is a way to keep other people informed about what is going on.

I tell everybody about WCAC. I have sent so many people to the WCAC office for services. I want to help "give people a better life." I think by volunteering and by being a WCAC Board member, I can help others like I was helped. Because of the services I received at WCAC, I am self-sufficient. That makes me feel very proud. And my daughter is so proud that I am able to be here today with all of you.

Speaking for the WCAC Board of Directors and staff, I want to thank you for your support of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) and for making it possible for millions of families like mine to have a better life.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PATSY C. LEWIS

It is an honor to offer testimony on behalf of the re-authorization of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). We appreciate this opportunity to provide information on how CSBG assists thousands of families in our community and by sharing our experience, represent the importance of CSBG funding to community action agencies across the country.

Worcester, the second largest city in Massachusetts, has changed over the past fifty years from an industrial city to one known more for educational institutions,

services and health care. Worcester has strong neighborhoods, with active resident groups in all parts of the city. The economy was strong in the 1990's, but problems continued for low-income neighborhoods and residents. This has been particularly true for those with limited education, limited English language skills, and limited work histories. Now, unemployment is rising, affordable housing is difficult to locate and there are fewer opportunities for upward mobility. The Worcester Community Action Council, in partnership with the public and private sector, continues to find those opportunities.

GOVERNANCE

Incorporated in 1965, the mission of the Worcester Community Action Council, Inc. is "to stimulate change in the fundamental causes of poverty and to create and provide opportunities for economic self-sufficiency through services, partnerships and advocacy."

WCAC has a 21 member Board of Directors with seven members from each of sectors: public, private and low-income. The board currently includes representatives of utility companies, professional services (finance and legal), elected officials (or their designees) and representatives of low-income neighborhoods and organizations. The board meets bi-monthly and reviews the program and financial reports, hears neighborhood concerns and news and discusses important issues. In 2002, the board developed a three year Strategic Plan that emphasizes economic self-sufficiency and set measurable goals in the areas of: affordable housing; increasing youth and adult education services; encouraging the development of healthy children and families; and finally, increasing our own capacity as an organization to deliver these high quality services and programs.

The Worcester Community Action Council offers 20 programs and services around three themes: Education, Family Support and Energy. Community Services Block Grant is the "franchise," the funds that make all of our work possible. Every dollar from CSBG leverages approximately $20 in other grants and contributions that are used to serve more than 11,000 households in Central and Southern Worcester County.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The main office of the Worcester Community Action Council is located in downtown Worcester, MA, across from the Worcester City Hall. The office area is a central location for several of our major programs including Fuel Assistance, Weatherization, Youth Education (GED, high school student support, Americorps/Cityworks, the Computer Technology Center/ComputeRise, ESOL, The Community Mediation Center, The Consumer Council of Worcester County and Worcester Community Connections. Other programs, including Head Start/Early Head Start and Healthy Families are located at various sites throughout Southern Worcester County. We have more than 130 full time employees who work for these and other services. Several of our employees are "graduates" of our own education and training programs.

FUNDING

WCAC has a diversified funding base, with approximately 90% of the 2002-03 revenue of $12 million originating with federal sources. Another 5% comes from state funds and the remaining 5% reflects United Way, corporate and foundation support.

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) is the "core" funding for WCAC and our most important source of support. CSBG is used to leverage other public and private funds ($20 for each $1 from CSBG), "pilot" new programs, support important services that are not funded (or are under-funded) and support community services beyond the Worcester Community Action Council. Here are some examples:

Three years ago WCAC piloted a 12 week Energy Auditors' Training program to prepare low-income and unemployed residents for positions in utility companies and/or energy conservation programs. CSBG was the funding source for developing the curriculum and supporting staff. Of our first class of four, three graduates immediately found employment in energy related fields. Two months ago one of the graduates of our second class responded to our ad for an auditor. She just started to work for WCAC as an Energy Auditor and she will be an excellent addition to the staff and the Energy field. CSBG made her employment possible.

In collaboration with four other Massachusetts Community Action agencies, WCAC received a grant from the Office of Community Services to start an Individual Development Account (IDA) project to assist 25 low-income families save toward home ownership. The coordinator for the project is paid from CSBG and the money raised from federal and private sources goes toward the matched savings accounts.

United Way of Central Massachusetts provides limited support for a very successful, open entry, open exit GED preparation program, Project Excel. Thirty-five to 40 young adults participate every year in academic classes, workshops and computer training. The United Way support has gradually decreased in recent years, but because of the importance of this program (and the outcomes), CSBG is used to keep the support at an adequate level.

WCAC does not use the entire CSBG allocation for "in-house" programs. We provide CSBG funds to the Main South Community Development Corporation and the South Worcester Neighborhood Center to provide housing opportunities for low-income families, We provide CSBG funds to the Worcester County Food Bank to support food distribution to families in need.

For several years WCAC operated Customer Service/Computer Training program for low income and unemployed residents. The program, funded initially by JTPA and then WIA combined classroom instruction with internships in local companies, life skills workshops and job search activities. The program received national attention. One of the private sector companies we worked with, National Grid/Massachusetts Electric, was selected as one of the country's 100 best employers for their Welfare to Work employment record. Public funding gradually decreased and WCAC kept the program going until 2001 with CSBG support. There are hundreds of former welfare recipients now working in Central Massachusetts because of this particular program. And because of CSBG.

Other federal funding for WCAC originates with LIHEAP, the Dept. of Energy/Weatherization Assistance Program, Head Start/Early Head Start, Americorps, and the Dept. of Education. State funding includes: The Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General, Children's Trust Fund, Local funders include: the City of Worcester, the Worcester Public Schools, United Way of Central Massachusetts and corporate and local foundations.

This summary is a sample of our work and of our collaborations in the community. We reach into neighborhoods, into churches, into schools and into homes. We do not see ourselves as providing "safety nets" so much as providing "ladders" out of poverty and "doors" to self-sufficiency. We recognize our responsibility for accountability and efficiency, and our board of directors understands their special responsibility as "stewards of the public trust." WCAC, along with the other community action agencies across the country, contribute to the quality of life in the community and ensure a brighter future for low-income families. That contribution is made possible by The Community Services Block Grant.

Again, thank you for allowing us to represent community action and to testify on behalf of the Community Services Block Grant.

STATEMENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR STATE COMMUNITY SERVICES PROGRAMS

The National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSP) thanks this committee for its continued support of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) and seeks a successful reauthorization of the CSBG this year. NASCSP is the national association that represents state administrators of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) and state directors of the Department of Energy's Low-Income Weatherization Assistance Program. The members of our organization see firsthand the results of CSBG funding in promoting self-sufficiency in communities across the nation. The following testimony is the result of discussion and debate among our members and leadership and reflects the extensive experience of this group.

One new feature within the proposed reauthorization is the addition of state performance measures. Local accountability has given the CSBG network the ability to provide clear data such as the service statistics listed below. NASCSP supports the expansion of this local accountability to states. Our membership agrees that states should be held accountable for the monitoring and evaluation of grantees and for uniform high standards of grant administration at the state level. However, our members and leadership feel strongly that these measures should be defined by the stakeholders and should use existing structures rather than duplicating efforts already underway. Specifically, NASCSP makes two recommends:

Due to the block grant nature of the CSBG, each state does currently conduct its own programmatic and fiscal monitoring of its eligible entities. The systems that are in place are in accordance with the statutory requirements of the 1995 reauthorization and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circulars. For instance, New York, Ohio, Tennessee, and Minnesota, require annual audits of eligible entities, monthly financial status reports, require annual outcome reports, and conduct grantee reviews and assessments for contract compliance. In addition to the statute

required monitoring, the state of Tennessee and many other states, conduct annual, risk assessments of eligible entities and may do more monitoring or provide technical assistance based on findings. States take the monitoring, on going technical assistance and capacity building of their grantee network seriously, as it serves as an effective means of program management. When states do have negative findings, they designate a grantee as "at risk" and provide ample technical assistance as the grantee attempts to become compliant. In many instances due to the rigor of the technical assistance provided grantees are then able to become compliant and stable for the time being and eventually flourish.

As noted above, currently a variety of approaches are utilized by states when monitoring. A greater uniformity of approach could be achieved by guidance from the federal Office of Community Services based on recommendations by a task force of the stakeholders representing the best practices. NASCSP would recommend that the legislation require the Secretary of HHS provide monitoring guidance specifically addressing the fiscal and organizational structure of eligible entities. In addition, there would need to be T&TA funds made available to help train state staff on how to use such guidance.

The OCS Monitoring and Assessment Task Force (MATF) initially had the mission of creating accountability for all three partners-Community Action Agencies, state CSBG offices and the federal Office of Community Services. To date, the MATF has led a successful and well-acknowledged effort of creating performance standards, Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA), for Community Action Agencies (CAAs). Our discussions regarding state performance measures have revealed that the MATF has not yet completed its work regarding performance measures for the other partners. In an effort to respect this process and finish the MATF's work, we recommend requiring the Secretary of HHS to utilize a task force of the stakeholders, including adequate representation from the state CSBG offices, CAAs and the other national partners (possibly the OCS MATF) to create performance outcomes or standards for states. This task force would create performance outcomes or standards for states that would fall in line with current ROMA practices. The task force would address issues regarding die timely distribution of funds, the monitoring of eligible entities, provision of training and technical. assistance, coordination of programs, building the capacity of the network, and so on. We would recommend that the task force be given 12 months to create performance outcomes or standards for states.

BACKGROUND

The states believe the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) is a unique block grant that has successfully devolved decision making to the local level. Federally funded with oversight at the state level, the CSBG has maintained a local network of over 1,110 agencies that coordinate over $8.5 billion in federal, state, local and private resources each year. Operating in more than 96 percent of counties in the nation and serving more than 13 million low-income persons, local agencies, known as Community Action Agencies (CAAs), provide services based on the characteristics of poverty in their communities. For one town, this might mean providing job placement and retention services; for another, developing affordable housing; in rural areas, it might mean providing access to health services or developing a rural transportation system.

Since its inception, the CSBG has shown how partnerships between states and local agencies benefit citizens in each state. We believe it should be viewed as a model of how the federal government can best promote self-sufficiency for low-income persons in a flexible, decentralized, non-bureaucratic and highly accountable way.

Long before the creation of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant, the CSBG set the standard for private-public partnerships that could work to the betterment of local communities and low-income residents. The approach is family oriented, while promoting economic development and individual self-sufficiency. The CSBG relies on an existing and experienced community-based service delivery system of CAAs and other non-profit organizations to produce results for its clients.

MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES NETWORK

LEVERAGING CAPACITY: For every CSBG dollar they receive, CAAs leverage over $4.00 in nonfederal resources (state, local, and private) to coordinate efforts that improve the self-sufficiency of low-income persons and lead to the development of thriving communities.

VOLUNTEER MOBILIZATION: CAAs mobilize volunteers in large numbers—In FY 2001, the most recent year for which data are available, the CAAs elicited more than 32 million hours of volunteer efforts, the equivalent of nearly 15,400 full-time employees. Using just the minimum wage, these volunteer hours are valued at nearly $165 million.

LOCALLY DIRECTED: Tri-partite boards of directors guide CAAs. These boards consist of one-third elected officials, one-third low-income persons and one-third representatives from the private sector. The boards are responsible for establishing policy and approving business plans of the local agencies. Since these boards represent a cross-section of the local community, they guarantee that CAAs will be responsive to the needs of their community.

ADAPTABILITY: CAAs provide a flexible local presence that governors have mobilized to deal with emerging poverty issues.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE: Federal and state emergency personnel utilize CAAs as a frontline resource to deal with emergency situations such as floods, hurricanes and economic downturns. Individual citizens turn to the CAA to help deal with individual family hardships, such as house fires or other emergencies.

ACCOUNTABLE: The federal Office of Community Services, state CSBG offices and CAAs have worked closely to develop a results-oriented management and accountability (ROMA) system. Through this system, individual agencies determine local priorities within six common national goals for CSBG and report on the outcomes that they achieved in their communities. As of FY 2001, all states and all CAAs are reporting on their outcomes.

The statutory goal of the CSBG is to ameliorate the effects of poverty while at the same time working within the community to eliminate the causes of poverty. The primary goal of every CAA is self-sufficiency for its clients. Helping families become self-sufficient is a long-term process that requires multiple resources. This is why the partnership of federal, state, local and private enterprise has been so vital to the successes of the CAAs.

WHO DOES THE CSBG SERVE?

National data compiled by NASCSP shove that the CSBG serves a broad segment of low-income persons, particularly those who are not being reached by other programs and are not being served by welfare programs. Based on the most recently reported data, from fiscal year 2001:

70 percent have incomes at or below the poverty level; 50 percent have incomes below 75 percent of the poverty guidelines. In 2001, the poverty level for a family of three was $14,630.

Only 49 percent of adults have a high school diploma or equivalency certificate.

41 percent of all client families are "working poor" and have wages or unemployment benefits as income.

24 percent depend on pensions and Social Security and are therefore poor, former workers.

Only 12 percent receive cash assistance from TANF.

Nearly 60 percent of families assisted have children under 18 years of age.

WHAT DO LOCAL CSBG AGENCIES DO?

Since Community Action Agencies operate in rural areas as well as in urban areas, it is difficult to describe a typical Community Action Agency. However, one thing that is common to all is the goal of self-sufficiency for all of their clients. Reaching this goal may mean providing daycare for a struggling single mother as she completes her General Equivalency Diploma (GED) certificate, moves through a community college course and finally is on her own supporting her family without federal assistance. It may mean assisting a recovering substance abuser as he seeks employment. Many of the Community Action Agencies' clients are persons who are experiencing a one-time emergency. Others have lives of chaos brought about by many overlapping forces a divorce, sudden death of a wage earner, illness, lack of a high school education, closing of a local factory or the loss of family farms.

CAAS provide access to a variety of opportunities for their clients. Although they are not identical, most will provide some if not all of the services listed: employment and training programs; individual development accounts; transportation and child care for low-income workers; senior services; micro-business development help for low-income entrepreneurs; a variety of crisis and emergency safety net services; family development programs; nutrition programs; energy assistance programs; local community and economic development projects; housing and weatherization services; and Head Start.

CSBG funds many of these services directly. Even more importantly, CSBG is the core funding which holds together a local delivery system able to respond effectively and efficiently, without a lot of red tape, to the needs of individual low-income housebolds as well as to broader community needs. Without the CSBG, local agencies would not have the capacity to work in their communities developing local funding, private donations and volunteer services and running programs of far greater size and value than the actual CSBG dollars they receive.

CAAs manage a host of other federal, suite and local programs which make it possible to provide a one-stop location for persons whose problems are usually muftifaceted. Sixty (60) percent of the CAAs manage the Head Start program in their community. Using their unique position in the community, CAAs recruit additional volunteers, bring in local school department personnel, tap into religious groups for additional help, coordinate child care and bring needed health care services to Head Start centers. In many states they also manage the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), raising additional funds from utilities for this vital program. CAAs may also administer the Weatherization Assistance Program and are able to mobilize funds for additional work on residences, not directly related to energy savings, that may keep a low-income elderly couple in their home. CAAs also coordinate the Weatherization Assistance Program with the Community Development Block Grant program to stretch federal dollars and provide a greater return for tax dollars invested. They administer the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program as well as job training programs, substance abuse programs, transportation programs, domestic violence and homeless shelters and food pantries.

EXAMPLES OF CSBG AT WORK

Since 1994, CSBG has implemented Results-Oriented Management and Accountability practices whereby the effectiveness of programs is captured through the use of goals and outcomes measures. Below you will find some of the network's first nationally aggregated outcomes achieved by individuals, families and communities as a result of their participation in innovative CSBG programs during FY 2001:

42 states reported 70,360 participants gained employment with the help of community action.

24 states reported 17,426 participants retained employment for 90 days or more.

28 states reported 32,603 households experienced an increase in income from employment, tax benefits or child support secured with the assistance of community action.

23 states reported 12,662 families continued to move from homelessness to transitional housing.

26 states reported 33,795 families moved from substandard to safe, stable housing.

16 states reported 1,861 families achieved home ownership as a result of community action assistance.

32 states reported 22,903 participants achieved literacy or a GED.

22 states reported 12,846 participants achieved post secondary degree or vocational education certificate.

28 states reported 506,545 new service "opportunities" were created for low-income families as a result of community action work or advocacy, including affordable and expanded public and private transportation, medical care, child care and development, new community centers, youth programs, increased business opportunity, food, and retail shopping in low-income neighborhoods.

All the above considered, NASCSP urges this committee to reauthorize the Community Services Block Grant. The program touches nearly a quarter of all those living in poverty and another million of the near-poor. The CSBG is an anti-poverty program that is uniquely accountable for results and one that leverages substantial financial resources and volunteer commitment. The program flexibility, the locally selected and representative boards of directors, and the unique ability of CSBG agencies to provide linkages as a core function of service make the Community Services Block Grant a model public-private partnership.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT,
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER,
June 30, 2003.

Hon. CHRISTOPHER J. DODD,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC 20510.

DEAR SENATOR DODD: I understand the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions is considering the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) re-authorization and may be reviewing not only the performance of community action agencies, but also the effectiveness of local efforts to measure performance and document success.

I wanted to take this opportunity to share some information on the success of our community action efforts here in Connecticut with regard to the implementation of the national Results Oriented Management Assessment (ROMA) system. In short, this management innovation is so impressive that I am using the Connecticut Community Action Network and the ROMA model as a new paradigm to support Connecticut's Human Services Infrastructure (HSI).

I plan to explore expanding ROMA applications in my own Department and related human service contracts. At present, we have initiated a planning process for the development of the HSI system with CSBG agencies introducing ROMA concepts to other key partners across the state.

I hope the CSBG re-authorization will ensure at least two things: the continuation of ROMA and protection of core funding for community action networks. The continuation of the ROMA system, which the states and community action agencies nationwide painstakingly developed, tested, revised and implemented with CSBG support from HHS, is critical to measuring our success in serving Connecticut's low-income families. It is sufficiently adaptable to meet our needs in Connecticut and sufficiently rigorous to lead to documentable program improvement.

Second, the Community Services Block Grant should be reaffirmed and protected as the core funding for local community action networks. Our community action partners use CSBG funds in remarkable ways to leverage additional resources and develop innovative approaches to building the assets of low-income people and their communities.

In Connecticut, our measured results for 2002 show: more than 254,000 low-income residents served; eighty-eight percent (88%) reduced or eliminated an emergency need (such as for food, shelter, heating assistance); sixty nine percent (69%) demonstrated an increased ability to manage income and purchase assets to achieve self-sufficiency; ninety percent (90%) of families demonstrated an increase in skills through counseling, classes and other support services; and approximately 15,000 children and youth received services to support their healthy growth and development through programs like Head Start and School Readiness.

I share these results with you to demonstrate the dramatic impact ROMA implementation has had in Connecticut. We can now clearly describe and document the impact the investment of Community Services Block Grant funding has in our state and the progress we are making toward the six national CSBG goals.

Through the allocation of CSBG Discretionary funding, my agency has supported full ROMA implementation and the installation of a Management Information System that will connect all twelve of Connecticut's Community Action Agencies together in a single database and automate the collection of data.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to document the impact and importance of continued CSBG funding to the state of Connecticut. Should you have any additional questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Best regards,

PATRICIA A. WILSON-COKER,
Commissioner.

[Whereupon, at 4:46 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

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