

## SUPPORT THE SOCIAL SERVICES BLOCK GRANT (SSBG)

### QUICK FACTS

- Counties in Colo., Minn., N.J., N.Y., N.C., N.D., Ohio, Pa., Va., and Wisc. receive SSBG funding directly from the state
- SSBG is the main source of federal funds for adult protective services, which are often a county responsibility
- SSBG is extremely vulnerable, especially in the context of entitlement reform and deficit reduction
- Counties report investing \$763 million in SSBG funds in FY 2014



### ACTION NEEDED:

Urge your members of Congress, particularly those who serve on the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee, to protect the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) and support full funding.

### BACKGROUND:

SSBG was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan in 1981 (P.L. 97-35) and is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families. The program is an entitlement to states and falls into the category of "non-defense mandatory spending." Congress must therefore appropriate SSBG funds each year, but alterations to funding levels would require legislative changes to Title XX of the Social Security Act of 2002. Ten states provide SSBG funds directly to counties: Colorado, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin, though counties access SSBG funds in other states as well. According to a NACo analysis of Federal Audit Clearinghouse data, counties used over \$763 million in SSBG funds in FY 2015.

SSBG can be used for nearly 30 different types of services; a survey conducted by NACo in 2012 revealed that counties most commonly use SSBG for adult protective services, which benefit elderly and disabled adults, and child protective services. Services provided to these vulnerable populations aim to prevent and remedy abuse, neglect and exploitation. In FY 2014, the last year for which data is available, 30 million individuals received services supported in whole or in part by SSBG, 44 percent of whom were children. Given that counties are responsible for providing a wide variety of human services, the flexibility of SSBG funding is critical.

Since 2001, SSBG has been authorized at \$1.7 billion, though sequestration has limited spending in recent years to \$1.64 billion (including appropriations for FY 2016). This is far below the level of funding the block grant received between 1991 and 1995, when it peaked at \$2.8 billion. In 1996, funding was reduced to help pay for welfare reform legislation, with the expectation that it would be restored to \$2.8 billion in FY 2003. However, SSBG was instead permanently reduced to \$1.7 billion in FY 2001 to help pay for the Transportation Equity Act of 1998, which reauthorized surface transportation programs.

SSBG continues to be targeted for further cuts. The House Ways and Means Committee approved legislation in 2016 that would completely eliminate the block grant, which mirrored proposals from previous House budget resolutions, including those of incoming U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price. The block grant is and will remain extremely vulnerable, especially in the context of entitlement reform, tax reform and deficit reduction proposals.

## KEY TALKING POINTS

- The Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) provides funds to states for activities that serve vulnerable populations, including adults and children at risk of abuse and neglect. Ten states – Colorado, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin – pass these funds directly to counties, though counties across the country reported utilizing over \$763 million in SSBG funds in FY 2014.
- SSBG is the main source of federal funds for adult protective services, which are often a county responsibility. The Elder Justice Act (EJA), which was created under the Affordable Care Act, has only received \$12 million in funding during its five years of existence, despite being authorized at a much higher level. SSBG funding is crucial for filling that gap: according to the National Institutes of Justice, 11 percent of individuals over the age of 60 suffer from some form of abuse, including financial abuse. Additionally, MetLife and the National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse estimate that the victims of elder financial abuse lose \$2.9 billion a year.
- Federal law mandates that child protective services and foster care be provided to neglected and abused children. SSBG funds can be used to support foster care placements for children who are otherwise ineligible for the federal foster care program.

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