

SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT (CSBG)

ACTION NEEDED:

Urge your members of Congress to reauthorize and fully fund the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) to ensure the program is effectively meeting the current needs of local communities.

BACKGROUND:

The U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF) administers the CSBG, which supports local agencies in activities that mitigate the root causes of poverty. CSBG-eligible activities vary depending on local needs, but often include services related to educational attainment, accessing and maintaining employment and self-sufficiency, household budget management, obtaining adequate housing and promoting greater community participation. Most CSBG funding is distributed to states, which must pass at least 90 percent of the funds to eligible local entities.

Counties play an integral role in administering CSBG. The program operates in 99 percent of the nation's counties through a network of over 1,000 eligible public or private entities. Eligible entities are primarily Community Action Agencies (CAAs) designated under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (P.L. 88-482). Local elected officials or their representatives must (by law) make up one-third of each CAA board of directors. These boards are responsible for ensuring that agencies continue to assess and respond to the causes and conditions of poverty in their communities, achieve anticipated family and community outcomes and operate in an administratively and fiscally sound manner. Along with CSBG, CAAs also operate a variety of grants that come from federal, state and local sources, such as Head Start and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

According to the latest annual report from the National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCS), in FY 2019 the CSBG network served 10.2 million individuals living in poverty, including 3.2 million children. The network reported more than 250,000 employment outcomes (such as obtaining and

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CSBG SERVED 10.2 MILLION
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FY 2019, INCLUDING 3.2 MILLION
CHILDREN

BY LAW, CSBG AGENCIES MUST
ENGAGE WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT
OFFICIALS AND COMMUNITY
MEMBERS

CSBG HAS NOT BEEN
REAUTHORIZED SINCE 1998

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THE BRIEF**



maintaining a job, increasing income and obtaining benefits), nearly 1.5 million education outcomes (such as improved literacy skills, school readiness and obtaining additional education and diplomas), more than 1.5 million housing outcomes (such as obtaining and maintaining housing, avoiding eviction or foreclosure and reducing energy burden), more than 2.8 million health outcomes (such as increasing nutrition skills, improving physical or mental health and living independently), 205,000 civic engagement outcomes (such as increasing leadership skills and improving social networks) and nearly 400,000 income outcomes (maintaining a budget, opening a savings account, increasing assets and net worth and improving financial wellbeing).

As a discretionary program, CSBG funding is subject to the annual appropriations process. Congress provided \$804.4 million in funding for CSBG in FY 2023, the highest level of funding the program has received in its 40-year history. However, CSBG has not been reauthorized since 1998, making it overdue for substantive changes that could increase its ability to effectively serve vulnerable county residents. On May 13, 2022, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the bipartisan *CSBG Modernization Act (H.R. 5129)*. This bill would enhance funding for CSBG, reauthorize the program for ten years and make other programmatic changes to ensure it is effectively meeting the current needs of local communities. NACo is continuing to monitor Senate progress on this reauthorizing legislation.

KEY TALKING POINTS:

- The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) distributes funds to local agencies to support activities that have a measurable and potentially major impact on the causes of poverty.
- States must by law pass 90 percent of CSBG funds to eligible local entities. The program operates in 99 percent of the nation's counties through a network of over 1,000 eligible public or private entities.
- Through its boards involving the public sector, the private sector, and the community, the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) represents a unique and effective partnership with counties, states, federal government and community organizations.
- CSBG allows Community Action Agencies (CAAs) to design and implement anti-poverty programs tailored to an individual community's needs, with a focus on housing, health, employment, income and civic engagement outcomes.
- In FY 2019, the CSBG network served 10.2 million individuals living in poverty, including 3.2 million children.
- While CSBG continues to receive funding through the annual appropriations process, it has not been reauthorized since 1998. Counties support reauthorization of CSBG to ensure the program is meeting the current needs of local communities.

For further information, contact Rachel Mackey at 202.661.8843 or rmackey@naco.org.

