



## SUPPORT THE SOCIAL SERVICES BLOCK GRANT (SSBG)

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

**BACKGROUND:** SSBG was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan in 1981 (P.L. 97-35) and combined several social services programs into one block grant, providing states with great flexibility and no matching requirements. The program is an entitlement to states and not subject to the annual appropriations process. Ten states provide SSBG funds directly to counties: Colorado, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin.

SSBG can be used for nearly 30 different types of services, including adult protective services (APS), whose beneficiaries include elderly and disabled adults, and child protective services (CPS). Some of the activities for APS and CPS include preventing and remedying abuse, neglect or exploitation of these vulnerable populations. In FY 2009, the last year for which data is available, SSBG served 22 million people, 47 percent of whom were children. A NACO survey in 2012 revealed that counties most commonly use SSBG for adult protective services and child protective services.

Since 2001, SSBG has been funded at \$1.7 billion. 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 2001, to help pay for the Transportation Equity Act of 1998, which reauthorized surface transportation programs.

SSBG continues to be targeted for further cuts, and complete elimination of the program has been repeatedly proposed in the budget resolutions of the House of Representatives in recent years. The block grant is, and will remain, extremely vulnerable, especially in the context of entitlement 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 – Colo., Minn., N.J., N.Y., N.C., N.D., Ohio, Pa., Va. and Wisc. – pass the funds directly to counties.

### 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

- In 2011, 2012 and 2014 the House of Representatives proposed to completely eliminate SSBG. While counties that receive SSBG funds would be affected the most, even counties that do not receive direct funding could also be affected because state legislatures would have to accommodate the loss of funds, which could lead to cuts in other county programs.
- 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 \$4 million in funding during its 5 years of existence
- 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. 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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