

**Health and Human Services Committee
Community Services Block Grant Program
April 5, 2016**

**Nathan Busch, Administrator
Division of Children and Family Services
Department of Health and Human Services**

Good afternoon, Senator Campbell, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Nathan Busch (N-A-T-H-A-N B-U-S-C-H). I am the Administrator of Legislative Coordination and Project Development in the Division of Children and Family Services in the Department of Health and Human Services.

I am here today concerning Nebraska's State Plan for Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) funds for federal fiscal years 2017 and 2018. Nebraska submits a plan every two years to the Office of Community Services in the United States Department of Health and Human Services establishing what the State of Nebraska and Community Action Agencies will do with the funding during the specified period. The CSBG Act requires a legislative hearing once every two years.

CSBG funds are federal funds distributed to the states and earmarked by federal law for distribution to eligible entities which, in Nebraska, are Community Action Agencies. A formula based on each state's poverty population determines each state's grant amount. Nebraska receives approximately \$4.7 million dollars annually.

CSBG funding provides a range of services and activities to assist the needs of low-income individuals. Community Action Agencies are required to provide the funded services and activities addressing these needs in Nebraska. The services and activities are determined locally through needs assessments and other community-based assessment tools. Agencies report outcomes and activities twice a year and send an annual report to the Office of Community Services with Administration for Children and Families every February.

Nebraska recognizes nine (9) Community Action Agencies serving all 93 counties. The board of each Agency is comprised of 1/3 low-income representatives, 1/3 elected officials or their representative, and 1/3 private sector representatives all who live in the Agency service area. Community Action Agency board members are responsible for planning, overall direction and management of the agency; and the state is responsible for monitoring and oversight of the agencies to assure compliance with federal and state laws and regulations.

Nebraska's Community Action Agencies conduct an in depth community needs assessment at least once every three years. The community needs assessment provides a picture of the services and programs needed; strengths and opportunities in the community to address low-income issues, poverty and helping individuals achieve self-sufficiency.

Agencies continue to focus on holistic approaches to alleviating poverty. Much of their efforts are around in-depth case management for their clients. While each agency is diverse and offers a variety of services based on their communities, several programs are similar, including: Head Start, Early Head Start, and adult education programs; job training and direct employment of

low-income individuals; AmeriCorps; housing services; child care; homeless shelter and other homeless assistance; and migrant services.

Emergency assistance is also a key program area for Community Action Agencies. These services provide rental assistance, utility deposits and payment of past due bills with a shut-off notice, food and transportation; alcohol and drug counseling; mental health services; and food pantries, food banks and the commodity foods program. Agencies also collaborate with other state entities, such as the Division of Public Health's W.I.C., Maternal/Child Health, and immunizations programs, and well as Nebraska Energy Office's low-income weatherization program. They work with local organizations to operate programs such as senior centers and other senior programs including home-delivered meals and transportation; and youth mentoring projects.

In federal fiscal year 2014, Community Action Agencies in Nebraska provided services to more than 81,000 individuals, from more than 31,000 families, facing a variety of barriers to self-sufficiency. More than 25,000 of these were children and more than 13,000 were senior citizens. The Agencies continue to serve mostly families, at or below 125 percent of poverty.

Guidance on the federal fiscal year 2017 and 2018 State Plan will come out in July 2016. We will submit our State Plan to the Federal Office of Community Services by September 1, 2016 via their online system. Copies of the plan will be available for public comment prior to submission, as required by the CSBG Act.

Per federal law, 90% of the funds go to Nebraska's nine Community Action Agencies. The state may use up to 5% of the funds for state administration of the grant and the remaining 5% of funds are discretionary funds used to provide training and technical assistance to the Agencies.

The CSBG is only one funding source for Community Action activities. It is the base funding to allow agencies to leverage additional private and public dollars for their programs. Last year, agencies leveraged more than 70 million dollars, or \$174.56 per CSBG dollar, in other federal, state and local dollars.

Thank you for allowing me to present Nebraska's intention to submit the CSBG State Plan and to provide you a small sampling of what Community Action does in our state. If you are not familiar with the Community Action Agency in your district, I invite you to visit those agencies.

I have included a list of the nine Community Action Agencies in Nebraska.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have.

NEBRASKA'S COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES

Blue Valley Community Action
PO Box 273
Fairbury, NE 68352

Central Nebraska Community Services
PO Box 509
Loup City, NE 68853

Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders Counties
(Formerly Lincoln Action Program)
210 "O" Street
Lincoln, NE 68508

Community Action Partnership of Mid Nebraska
PO Box 2288
Kearney, NE 68848

Community Action Partnership of Western Nebraska (formerly Panhandle Community Services)
3350 Tenth Street
Gering, NE 69341

Eastern Nebraska Community Action Partnership
2406 Fowler Street
Omaha, NE 68111

Northeast Nebraska Community Action Partnership
PO Box 667
603 Earl Street
Pender, NE 68047

Northwest Community Action Partnership
270 Pine Street
Chadron, NE 69337

Southeast Nebraska Community Action
PO Box 646
Humboldt, NE 68376