



March 14, 2016

The Honorable Kevin Brady, Chairman
Ways and Means Committee
United State House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sander Levin, Ranking Member
Ways and Means Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Vern Buchanan, Chairman
Human Resources Subcommittee
United State House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Lloyd Doggett, Ranking Member
Human Resources Subcommittee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Brady and Ranking Member Levin:
Dear Chairman Buchanan and Ranking member Doggett:

The Child Welfare League of America submits the attached letter from last summer regarding the importance of the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG). As outlined in this letter SSBG is an important funding source for a number of human services programs across the fifty states.

SSBG represents a compact between the states and the Reagan Administration and the Congress of 1981. The agreement was that states would relinquish the open-ended entitlement in exchange for a block grant that would be frozen in funding but would allow greater state flexibility. That flexibility also relinquished a great deal of the reporting as a way to add to state flexibility.

Despite the negative impact inflation and transportation funding offsets have had on SSBG, it remains vital to state human services, especially in an era of state and federal cuts to human services.

The criticism of SSBG in recent years is that it lacks data and outcomes. Perhaps the best way to clarify SSBG's significance to child welfare we offer the impact on one state.

In the Saturday, March 5, 2016 edition of the *Washington Post*, the newspaper outlined in detail the budget crisis now confronting the state of Louisiana:

*“Already, the state of Louisiana had gutted university spending and drained rainy-day funds. It had cut 30,000 employees and furloughed others. It had slashed the number of **child-services staffers, including those working in foster family recruitment, and young abuse victims for the first time were spending nights at government offices.**”*

The article goes on to say that the state still needs \$3 billion, almost \$650 per person just to maintain regular services over the next 16 months. The head of the state’s Department of Children and Families, Marketa Garner Walters, says, that if the state cannot raise revenue her agency’s budget will be **“cut by another 60 percent.”** The article details how that department went from 5,000 employees in 2008 to 3,400, now and... *“social workers began carrying caseloads heavier than national standards advise. The state also cut funding for youth services and mental health treatment.”*

If Congress were to eliminate SSBG here is what Louisiana would lose in federal funding based on the 2012 National SSBG annual report and confirmed most recently by the state report filed covering the July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015 reporting period:

- \$10.5 million for **Child Protective Services** covering **47,100 children**
- \$19.2 million for **Foster Care** covering **7,900 children**
- \$3.5 million for **Adoptions** covering **3,500 children**
- \$5.2 million for **prevention and intervention** of child abuse covering **6,300 children and 3,200 adults**
- \$1.2 million for **Independent Living and Transition** for **305 adults under 59**

Louisiana is not alone. CWLA has found over the past decades that SSBG consistently provides the most federal funding from any federal source for child protection (CPS). Usually more than 35 states each year depend on SSBG to provide the basic services of investigating when a child has been abused and provide services in those cases where child maltreatment has been confirmed.

Depending on the fiscal year, there are 30 to 40 states that supplement their foster care systems each year with SSBG dollars and another two dozen states that support adoption services. There are also a range of other services such as Louisiana’s use of funds for transitional services for youth and prevention services both for the child and the parent.

For a majority of states SSBG is a critical part of the child welfare patchwork. For example, the state of Florida has highlighted the use of a waiver of Title IV-E funding in its ability to reduce foster care placements but in fact Florida’s child welfare system draws heavily from SSBG. The amount of funding generated by the Title IV-E waiver is almost equal to the amount of funding that state uses from SSBG: approximately \$157 million in Title IV-E foster care waiver funds to \$147 million in SSBG funding (FY 2010).

In other states such as New York, SSBG is critical to domestic violence services. In the state of Texas SSBG provided \$37 million in domestic violence funding that assisted over 97,000 adults. Many states use it to supplement senior meals and in-home senior services. Again Texas utilized \$15 million from SSBG to supplement home delivered meals to more than 15,000 adults. Still

others states such as Montana have historically used SSBG dollars for services to the disabled of all ages.

CWLA believes it is critical for Congress to protect this funding especially in light of the many and urgent concerns shown by Congress to address the opioids and heroin addiction surge. For federal fiscal year 2014 (last complete data), over 415,000 children were in foster care, that represents the second straight year of increases in foster care placements and the most since 2009 when there were 418,000 in foster care.

The rate of infants entering child welfare systems rose from 10.8 per 1000 to 11.4 per 1000 in 2014 over 2013. Data suggests that at least 30 percent of foster care placements were impacted by parental substance use in 2014.

Congress and this Committee have shown increased concern over the number of foster care placements in a residential setting. Reducing these placements of adolescents is dependent on increased the numbers of family-based foster care especially for adolescents. If Louisiana has reduced foster care recruitment before these proposed SSBG cuts, what is the likelihood that states in similar circumstances will find those additional foster care homes?

We can't tell you exactly what the outcome would be if you eliminate SSBG. We suggest the answer to that question is, in part the same as the answer to this, what is the outcome when a child abuse report is filed and there is no one there to investigate?

Thank you for your consideration of this material. CWLA stands ready to assist Congress in addressing the importance of these services and funding.

Sincerely,

John Sciamanna
Vice President of Public Policy
Child Welfare League of America