

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 25, 2001

The Honorable Ralph Regula
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education
Appropriations Committee
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Regula:

We are writing to express our strong support for Title XX, the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), and to urge you to restore its funding to \$2.38 billion as authorized in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA).

As part of the 1996 welfare reform act, Congress agreed to allow the states to transfer ten percent of their TANF dollars into their SSBG accounts in exchange for a reduction in the overall SSBG funding level from \$2.8 billion to \$2.38 billion. When we passed the TEA-21 bill in 1998 to fund our nation's transportation programs, SSBG was used as an offset and the transfer cut to 4.25% and the funding to \$1.7 billion. The fiscal year 2001 Labor/HHS appropriations bill provides only \$1.725 billion and restores the transfer for one year. We are writing to ask that you continue the transfer at 10% and restore this critical funding to its promised level of \$2.38 billion.

Now is the time to make the Social Service Block Grant a funding priority. We urge you to restore Title XX funding to the level agreed to as part of welfare reform - \$2.38 billion in the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill for FY 2002.

Title XX funds support needed services for children and families in crisis. The block grant has also been one of the only funding sources available for community-based services for elderly and disabled persons. It is also an important source of funding for fighting child abuse and neglect. Finally, SSBG is a flexible funding source that allows states and local communities to apply the funds to those most in need in their areas.

If efforts are not made to restore these necessary social service dollars, vulnerable children, families, elderly, and disabled persons will be without the services they need to live independently. Cutting funding for services that keep people in their communities and out of expensive institutions such as hospitals and nursing homes is short sighted and will lead to unnecessary suffering as well as increased spending in other federal programs.

Title XX provides the support necessary for persons to live independently in the community, including families in crisis, the elderly, and many persons with both physical and mental disabilities. These funds also provide support services, such as child care and counseling, necessary for persons with multiple barriers to employment to successfully leave the TANF rolls.

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The FY 2002 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill should recognize the Social Services Block Grant as the critical safety-net program that it is, and restore funding to \$2.38 billion.

Sincerely,

Wally J. Johnson

Bob Linder

Mark Frosch

Ken A. Waxman

Maxine Waters

Jerry Keefe

Jim Langerwin

Mike Doyle

Sam Perri

Barney Frank

Ben Cardin

David E. Bonior

Charles Rangel

Eliot L. Engel

James A. Gibbons

Jim Ramstad

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Ralph P. Hall

cc: Honorable David Obey
Honorable Maurice Hinchey