

## **JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE ON BLOCK GRANTS**

**(SJR 223 of 1993)**

August 19, 2014, 2:00 p.m.

General Assembly Building

Richmond, Virginia

Members present: Senator Charles J. Colgan (Chairman), Senator L. Louise Lucas, Senator Linda T. Puller, Delegate Les R. Adams, Delegate Betsey B. Carr, Delegate Hyland F. "Buddy" Fowler, Delegate Michael T. Futrell, Delegate L. Scott Lingamfelter, Delegate T. Monty Mason, Delegate Brenda L. Pogge.

Members absent: Senator Richard H. Black, Senator Stephen H. Martin, Delegate Ronald A. Villanueva

The Joint Subcommittee on Block Grants held its biennial public hearing on the Community Services Block Grant federal application on August 19, 2014, at the General Assembly Building in Richmond. The meeting opened with introductions of the members present and remarks from the Chairman, Senator Charles J. Colgan, who thanked the members, as well as the public, for taking the time to attend this important meeting.

Following introductions and opening remarks, staff provided a brief recap of the history of the Joint Subcommittee on Block Grants. Staff reported that over the past several decades, a number of federal block grant programs have required states to hold public hearings to collect public input regarding proposed state plans for the use of block grant funds. Virginia's Joint Subcommittee was established in 1982 as a mechanism for holding these required legislative hearings. The Joint Subcommittee has met in alternating years since that time to carry out its legislative purpose.

At this time, the Community Services Block Grant is the only federal block grant requiring legislative hearings, and as such is the only block grant on which the Joint Subcommittee on Block Grants receives public comment. The Community Services Block Grant is administered by the Department of Social Services. The required state plan State Plan is submitted as a narrative plan in compliance with Title VI, Subtitle B, of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, as amended by various provisions, including the 1998 Community Action Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. § 9901 et seq.).

Funds received through the Community Services Block Grant are used to fund a range of services to assist low-income individuals become self-sufficient. These programs are provided by the Commonwealth's community action agencies (CAAs) and include programs and services for:

- Job training and skills development
- Micro-enterprises
- Child care
- Head Start
- Education; e.g., motivating young people to attend college and adult literacy and GED
- Housing

- Transportation
- Services for the homeless
- Emergency services
- Water and waste water facility development

## **Overview of the State Plan for the Community Services Block Grant**

Margaret Shultze, Commissioner for Social Services, provided an overview of the proposed State Plan for the Community Services Block Grant. She noted that in FY 2014, the Commonwealth received approximately \$10.6 million through the Community Services Block Grant. During the same period, the Commonwealth allocated an additional \$1,000,000 for services funded through the Community Services Block Grant. In addition to these funds, community action agencies leveraged millions of dollars in other federal, state, local, and private funds. These funds allow CAAs to serve most areas of the Commonwealth, assisting more than 170,000 citizens of Virginia. At this time, all but 10 jurisdictions in Virginia are served by a local CAA. Those not served include the Counties of Chesterfield, Henrico, Highland, Loudoun, Rockingham, and York and the Cities of Colonial Heights, Harrisonburg, Poquoson, and Winchester.

Ms. Shultze also described the cooperation that occurs between the state Department of Social Services and the local and state CAAs, as well as the oversight of CAAs by the Department. She reported that the State Plan, which had been provided to members of the Joint Subcommittee, details how the Commonwealth will allocate federal block grant funds and state funds allocated for such purpose among the three statewide and 27 local CAAs. The plan also describes the types of programs and activities that the CAAs will operate over the next two years.

## **Public Comment**

### Jim Schuyler, Executive Director, Virginia Community Action Partnership

Mr. Schuyler provided information about the Commonwealth's three statewide and 27 local public and private community action agencies. He described the range of programs provided by the CAAs and the extent to which these agencies are able to tailor their services to local needs. Mr. Schuyler recognized the Commonwealth's commitment to providing state funds to support CAAs and highlighted the ability of these organizations to leverage a combination of federal, state, local, and private dollars to support the services provided. He also noted that in recent years, local agencies have dealt with increased need for services, particularly emergency services, homeownership counseling and foreclosure prevention, job training and placement, and small business and economic development. In closing, Mr. Schuyler reiterated the important role CAAs play in protecting families in the Commonwealth and supporting families' economic success.

### James Mundy, President and CEO of the Lynchburg Community Action Group (Lyn-CAG)

Mr. Mundy described the purpose of Lyn-CAG and its activities. Lyn-CAG exists to provide programs and services that will enable low-income individuals and their families to

realize a better quality of life by serving as the resource to enhance the economic stability of Lyn-CAG's service area through partnerships and collaborations that remove barrier, promote well-being and create opportunities for people in need. Mr. Mundy described the importance of the Galleria, a facility housing retail stores that provide income for the program while also providing space for a range of Lyn-CAG program including the services for ex-offenders, and the Certified Nursing Assistants; Employment & Training; Office Automation Skills; Weatherization; Indoor Plumbing Repairs; Mortgage Foreclosure/Financial Literature; Housing and Community Development, and Transitional Living Center programs. He also described a range of programs offered in through the Lyn-CAG central office including the Nurse Aid student training program, the Gateway Program for recovering addicts, Project Discovery, Hosing Opportunities for People with AIDS program, the Hand-Up Lodge, and the Responsible Rides program. Mr. Mundy noted that Lyn-CAG continues to make a significant contribution to the community that it serves, and provides opportunities for low-income people to become more self-sustaining, while strengthening the local economy. In closing, he urged the subcommittee to approve the Community Services Block Grant plan.

#### Joseph Cameron

Mr. Cameron, an ex-offender and citizen of the Commonwealth, provided testimony about how the Virginia Cares program has assisted him in re-entering society and establishing employment. He noted the importance of the Virginia Cares program and similar programs to the Commonwealth and asked the subcommittee to approve the Community Services Block Grant plan.

#### Russell Rice, Director of Planning and Development, Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, Inc.

Mr. Russell Rice described the mission and work of the Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, Inc. (SERPAC). SERPAC is a 501(c)(3) organization established to improve the quality of life for low-income individuals by promoting affordable water and wastewater facilities, community development, environmental health, and economic self-sufficiency. SERPAC uses Community Services Block Grant funds to provide direct assistance to low income citizens and to leverage additional program dollars to provide technical assistance to solve problems related to water and wastewater systems that are unique to low income rural residents and their communities. SERPAC also administers the indoor plumbing and rehabilitation program in 14 counties in the central region of the state. Mr. Rice urged the subcommittee to approve the Community Services Block Grant plan.

#### Adrienne Lee

Ms. Lee, an ex-offender and citizen of the Commonwealth, provided testimony about how the Virginia Cares program has assisted her in re-entering society and establishing employment. Ms. Lee particularly noted that the program helped her find housing for herself and her children and with applying and interviewing for jobs. She noted the importance of the Virginia Cares program and similar programs to the Commonwealth and asked the subcommittee to approve the Community Services Block Grant plan.

Bryan Phipps, Vice President for Development, People Incorporated

Mr. Phipps described People, Inc., a community action agency that seeks to provide opportunities for economically disadvantaged people to reach their goals in order to enhance their lives, their families, and their communities. He reported that People, Inc., provides a range of child and family development, community economic development, workforce development, housing and other services to communities in the Commonwealth, with the goal of alleviating poverty. He noted that the Community Services Block Grant is the most effective tool available to the organization for funding and sustaining programs, and asked the subcommittee to approve the Community Services Block Grant plan.

**Joint Subcommittee's Recommendation on the Application.**

The members of the Joint Subcommittee unanimously voted to approve the Community Services Block Grant State Plan as submitted.