

*Testimony before the Appropriations and Human Services Committees
September 16, 2019*

Good morning, Senators Osten, Moore, Formica and Logan, and Representatives Walker, Abercrombie, Lavielle and Case and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Human Services Committees. My name is Kathleen Brennan and I am a Deputy Commissioner at the Department of Social Services (DSS). I am here before you to seek your approval of the Governor's Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2020 Allocation Plan for the Social Services Block Grant.

The **Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)** is a flexible funding source that allows states and territories to tailor social service programming to their population's needs. Through the SSBG, Connecticut provides essential social services that help achieve a myriad of goals to reduce dependency and promote self-sufficiency; to protect children and adults from neglect, abuse and exploitation; and to help individuals who are unable to take care of themselves to stay in their homes or to find the best alternative living arrangements. Part I, Section B on pages 3-4, in the proposed allocation plan before you, provides more detail related to the major use of SSBG funds.

Connecticut's final FFY 2019 allocation in regular SSBG funds was \$17,468,267. The SSBG federal funding level for FFY 2020 has not yet been determined. While the President's budget proposes to eliminate SSBG, we have proceeded with the development of this allocation plan assuming a level-funded state allocation of \$17,468,267. If the block grant funding is less than estimated, an equally proportionate share of the reduction shall be applied to each category. Pursuant to section 4-28b of the Connecticut General Statutes, any transfers to or from any specific allocation over \$50,000 or ten percent of a specific allocation, whichever is less, would require resubmission to the joint committees of cognizance.

Pending federal budget action, the total SSBG funding projected to be available for FFY 2020 is estimated at \$22,039,648. This figure reflects projected block grant funding of \$17,468,267 and estimated carry-forward funding of \$4,571,381. The available FFY 2019 carryforward will be

spent for FFY 2020 expenditures before utilizing the anticipated FFY 2020 block grant funding. Table A, on pages 9-10, highlights FFY 2018 expenditures, FFY 2019 estimated expenditures and FFY 2020 proposed expenditures.

The FFY 2020 SSBG allocation plan provides funding for services in 12 of the 29 federally defined service categories. Such services include the following: case management services, counseling services, family planning services, home-based services, independent and transitional living services, employment services, legal services, protective services for adults, substance abuse services, home delivered meals, special services for persons with developmental or physical disabilities, and other services.

The Department also allocates SSBG funds to other state agencies. Contracts for the provision of these services are subject to the competitive procurement provisions of Connecticut General Statutes §§ 4-212 to 4-219, inclusive, and each individual state agency adheres to its procurement plan, submitted to and approved by the Office of Policy and Management. Each state agency establishes its own allocation process for support of SSBG services under its auspices. In addition, the Department also allocates SSBG funds, through direct contracts or sub-contractor agreements to approximately 36 private non-profit providers.

Although 29 categories are allowable, the categories identified in this allocation plan are based upon Connecticut's efforts to address barriers and gaps in services for its most vulnerable populations that meet the criteria identified on page 5 under the heading "The Target Population". Based upon need, categories can change from year to year.

The FFY 2020 allocation plan includes the following proposed allocation changes:

- *Employment Services*: FFY 2019 estimated expenditures of \$154,217 reflect programmatic start up functions, which include but are not limited to activities such as: securing service delivery location, initial staff training and development of program materials, programmatic capacity alignment, data system alignments, and identification of client supports. This service will be fully operational in FFY 2020, and the amount of \$308,433 reflects annualized costs to run the program.

- *Home-Based Services*: A programmatic evaluation of this line item identified the need for two positions to assist with the oversight of this vital program in order to fully expend its annual proposed allocation of \$3,747,221. It is the Department's expectation that additional staff will increase the number of persons being served and decrease the number of persons on the existing waiting list. Also, staff will provide training and technical assistance to providers to ensure that invoices and supporting documentation are submitted in a timely manner.
- *Protective Services for Adults*: Proposed expenditures for this line item are \$759,847, conforming with the enacted state biennial budget.

The proposed FFY 2020 funding levels for all other line items are not anticipated to result in an expansion or reduction of services, and are identical to the funding levels proposed and adopted in the FFY 2019 plan

In closing, we join the Governor and the Office of Policy and Management in recommending the approval of the Social Services Block Grant Allocation Plan for federal fiscal year 2020. Thank you for your review and attention in this matter. My staff and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.