



March 14, 2015

The Honorable Kevin Brady
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
Fax: (202) 225-2610

The Honorable Sander Levin
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
Fax: (202) 225-5680

Dear Chairman Brady and Ranking Member Levin:

I write today to share the position of the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) as the House Ways and Means Committee considers H.R. 4724, a proposal that would eliminate the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG). APHSA, with and through our state and local members, strongly urge the House Ways and Means Committee to reject H.R. 4724 and support SSBG's current funding and flexibility, unless more far-reaching reforms can be approved.

As you know, SSBG was enacted to strengthen individual and family capacity, enhance self-sufficiency, prevent abuse and neglect of children and adults, prevent or reduce inappropriate institutional care, and support greater use of community-based care. APHSA's members have used SSBG extensively over the years in support of these goals and have seen the real-life results that these investments have produced.

The Social Services Block Grant has become an increasingly important means of "gluing" programs together and helping community-based providers cover operating expenses necessary to conduct larger programmatic functions. Examples include the staff that allow low-income elderly clients to "age in place" – an option that is dramatically less expensive than institutional care. SSBG also supports preventive child protective activities, meals on wheels, and a variety of other initiatives that offer up-front, "light-touch" services that avoid expensive and damaging conditions that would otherwise occur.

Many programs rely on SSBG funding almost exclusively, such as adult protective services and meal delivery services, while others use it as a means by which to braid funds such as child welfare and child care services. States' ability to transfer Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding into the SSBG pool is also valuable as a means of funding more collaborative work at the community level.

The Social Services Block Grant is used to serve approximately 30 million people, nearly half of them children; the largest uses of SSBG funds are in child welfare, child care, and disability services. States use only about three percent of SSBG funds for administrative costs.

Without SSBG, states and local agencies would be unable to step in and fund critical supports for aging and elderly populations that have no alternative sources of financing. If Congress ends SSBG but provides no other funding to take its place, the consequences to these populations are likely to be serious and widespread. We, therefore, strongly urge that absent more far-reaching reforms, SSBG's current funding and flexibility should continue.

We stand ready to examine broader and more permanent solutions with you including reform of child welfare financing and the ability to blend and braid funding across a wide spectrum of human services programs. Until such solutions are in place, however, SSBG must remain in its role as a unique and essential tool in strengthening individuals, families, and communities.

We appreciate your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact Neil Bomberg, Director of Government Affairs at 202-682-0100 (ext. 299) or at nbomberg@aphsa.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracy Wareing Evans". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tracy Wareing Evans
Executive Director, APHSA

[The American Public Human Services Association \(APHSA\)](http://www.aphsa.org) is a bipartisan, nonprofit national organization representing state and local human service agency chief executives, Child Welfare, TANF, SNAP and Child Care Administrators, and associated business and technology leaders, including those directly involved in SSBG-funded activities. With and through our members, we support outcome-focused policies and practices, advanced innovation and knowledge development, and work with public and private networks to improve the lives of all Americans. In addition, we are actively working to create a transformed human services system that can lift individuals toward greater independence and health, add value to communities, strengthen families, and achieve more at less cost. www.aphsa.org.