

Good afternoon, Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Ben Faul, and I serve as the CSBG (Community Services Block Grant) program administrator for the Division of Community Services within the Department of Commerce.

The CSBG program is a federal grant that provides funds to our communities through seven community action agencies. These agencies implement anti-poverty programs that aim to revitalize low-income communities and empower individuals and families to become self-sufficient. We receive funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and distribute it to the agencies through a formula approved by the agencies themselves.

In 2022 and 2023, North Dakota's CSBG program supported 36,579 unduplicated individuals. This included:

- 2,537 people who obtained safe and affordable housing,
 - 13,130 children (ages 0-17),
 - 6,047 people with disabilities,
 - 4,890 uninsured individuals, and
 - 1,218 veterans through our SSVF (Supportive Services for Veteran Families)
- This was made possible by \$3.7 million in funding for 2023, an increase from \$3.6 million in 2022.

In addition, our agencies successfully closed out the CSBG CARES Act funds in 2022-2023, spending the remaining balances of the \$4.2 million granted in 2020. Numerous client testimonials shared how this funding helped families facing job loss, food insecurity, and caregiving challenges during a difficult time. Community action agencies stepped up to meet the needs of our most vulnerable residents, providing stability and relief.

For 2024, CSBG funding increased to \$3.8 million. The total number of individuals served is still being compiled but will be included in our annual report, which will be released by the end of March 2025. I wanted to include a few testimonies from our agencies that detail impact the CSBG program has made:

- Ruby (alias). The Senior Companion and Representative Payee programs helped Ruby (alias), a vulnerable senior, regain financial stability and secure access to food, healthcare, and other basic needs after relocating to North Dakota with no local support.

- Sam (alias). The Helping Hands program assisted Sam, a cancer patient in rural North Dakota, with critical home improvements, including accessible steps and a ramp for safe entry to his home.
- A client facing eviction and financial strain due to a long commute received critical support through CAP. Gas vouchers, groceries, and vehicle repairs helped them maintain their living situation and meet basic needs. The client also applied for housing closer to Grand Forks to reduce commuting costs, demonstrating a commitment to long-term stability. This agencies' assistance played a vital role in stabilizing their situation and empowering them to build a more sustainable future.

As we move into 2025 and beyond, our agencies continue to respond to community needs. Our state association, CAPND, is leading the rollout of a rental assistance program, called HOME ARP, with full support from the state CSBG office. This program directly addresses the findings of our 2023 statewide needs assessment, which identified rental assistance as the top priority across all regions. While the program offers more resources, it targets a smaller, more focused group of individuals, providing goal-oriented, personalized support to help them transition into stable housing. This initiative will strengthen communities and enhance individuals' ability to achieve self-sufficiency.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this update on the CSBG program and its impact on North Dakota and its importance to our residents. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have at this time.

Stats:

From 2023

- Total unduplicated number of individuals served: 18,752
- FNPI 4b: Number of individuals who obtained safe and affordable housing | 1,312 of 1,255 target
- FNPI 4h: Number of individuals who improved energy efficiency and/or energy burden reduction in their homes | 2,106
- Children aged 0-17: 6,815
- Persons with disabilities: 3,109
- Persons without insurance: 2,607
- Veterans: 620

From 2022

- Total unduplicated numbers of individuals served: 17,827
- FNPI 4b: Number of individuals who obtained safe and affordable housing | 1,225
- FNPI 4h: Number of individuals who improved energy efficiency and/or energy burden reduction in their homes | 1,767
- Children aged 0-17: 6,315
- Persons with disabilities: 2,938
- Persons without insurance: 2,283
- Veterans: 598