



TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SERVICES

DEBORAH ROSE, CHAIR

DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANDRA GUTIERREZ AND

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MIKE BOBBITT

OVERSIGHT HEARING ON

NEIGHBORHOOD ADVISORY BOARDS (NABs)

APRIL 8, 2019

Good morning, Chair Rose and members of the City Council's Youth Services Committee. My name is Sandra Gutierrez, Deputy Commissioner of Community Development at the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD). I am joined by Mike Bobbitt, Assistant Commissioner for Community Action Programs. On behalf of DYCD Commissioner Bill Chong, I thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Neighborhood Advisory Boards.

Background

The federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program originated as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty", and is a tool for states and localities to address issues of poverty. CSBG is a legacy of the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act, which was intended to mobilize the human and financial resources of the United States to combat poverty. In 1981, Congress established the current CSBG program, and authorized the United States Department of Health and Human Service to make grants to States. States are in turn are required to pass along the funds to "eligible entities", specifically the organizations which had been certified as Community Action Agencies under the 1964 Act.

DYCD serves as one of over 1,000 local Community Action Agencies nationwide that receive CSBG funding. DYCD's CSBG funding is administered through the New York State Department of State and DYCD is required to distribute the funding in accordance with the goals of the federal CSBG statute:

"...the reduction of poverty, the revitalization of low-income communities, and the empowerment of low-income families and individuals in rural and urban areas to become fully self-sufficient."

The Opportunity Act of 1964 also called for *maximum feasible participation* in how resources are used. The City accomplishes this through the establishment of a Community Action Board (CAB). This board includes representatives of the low-income communities being targeted, the private sector, and elected public officials, and meets at least every ten weeks. The CAB advises DYCD on the overall implementation of its CSBG program and acts as a policy resource group.

DYCD further demonstrates maximum feasible participation through 42 Neighborhood Advisory Boards (NABs), one in each neighborhood identified by the DYCD to receive targeted anti-poverty funding. NAB members, who are selected to be representatives of the low-income communities targeted by DYCD to receive services, fill 22 of the 45 seats on the Community Action Board, local elected officials fill 15 seats, and the private sector fills the remaining 8 seats.

About half of the City's \$32.6 million CSBG award is allocated to citywide initiatives including Fatherhood, Literacy and SYEP. The other half of the funding is distributed to Neighborhood Development Area (NDA) programs whose program priorities are identified by the local NABs.

NAB Structure

The Neighborhood Development Area Initiative fosters community level engagement to ensure both that residents have opportunities to contribute to change in their neighborhoods and that the services provided address the most pressing needs of each community.

Each NDA is represented by a Neighborhood Advisory Board (NAB) with the authority to help identify community priorities and recommend specific programs. Each NAB has twelve seats. Six members may be selected by DYCD, and six members may be appointed by elected public officials. Each member may serve up to two consecutive three-year terms. NAB members must:

- Be full-time residents of the NDA they represent
- Have lived in the neighborhood for a minimum of six months
- Be at least 16 years of age
- Have no formal associations with any organization that receives DYCD funding under the CSBG program.

Given DYCD's commitment to full community input into involvement in the process, recruitment of Neighborhood Advisory Board members is ongoing. We are constantly seeking out new members to join these boards to replace veteran members who leave for various reasons such as term-limits or personal obligations. Inspired by the recent decision to permit 16-year olds to serve as Community Board members, DYCD updated its rules to similarly permit 16 year olds to join NABs, and we have begun to engage our providers in spreading the word about this opportunity. We have received helpful recruitment assistance from the offices of the Brooklyn Borough President and the Queens Borough President and welcome the City Council's continued assistance in identifying local community members who wish to serve on an NAB.

NDA Services

In FY 2019, DYCD used \$14.8 million in CSBG funding to support approximately 200 organizations that provide services to residents of targeted low-income communities throughout the City. There are seven service areas:

- **Opportunity Youth; Supportive Work Experience** provided about 700 young people ages 16-24 who are not in school or working with work-readiness training, counseling and up to 140 hours of supported paid work experience in jobs that match youths' interests and provides opportunities for career exploration. Providers also assist youth in developing post-program plans for education and unsubsidized employment.
- **Educational Support: High School Youth** helped 1,200 high school students at risk of dropping out develop academic, personal, and workplace skills necessary to obtain high school diplomas. Programs include youth leadership development and help students gain skills to support their success in college, training programs, or jobs.

- **Adult Literacy: Adult Basic Education (ABE) and General Education Development (GED) Tests Preparation** provided instruction in reading, writing, and mathematics to prepare 1,565 adults who are reading below the 9th grade level, to attain high school equivalency and transitioning into the labor force, vocational training or higher education.
- **Seniors: Social, Cultural, and Supportive Services** assisted 3,500 homebound and non-homebound older adults to maintain the highest degree of self-sufficiency and social engagement, so they can remain in their homes and engaged in the community.
- **Housing: Advocacy and Assistance** helped 3,100 individuals and families facing foreclosure, eviction, rent issues, or substandard housing conditions to maintain safe and affordable housing.
- **Immigrants: Support Services** provided 1,271 immigrants and their children with the tools and resources to become self-sufficient, navigate the system, and obtain permanent residency or citizenship. This allows people to strengthen their families and improve their living conditions.
- **Healthy Families: Support Services** worked with 3,400 families to address issues concerning child care, domestic violence, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, and physical and mental well-being. This includes advocacy and assistance in obtaining government benefits and other social services.

To ensure that these services continue to meet the needs of local communities, each year, the 42 NABs invite CSBG funded organizations and community residents to meetings where they exchange information about their respective roles in the community. They give an overview the scope of their services and testify about the community challenges they experience. They also discuss strategies on how best they can work together. This forum also allows the local community residents and other community stakeholders to understand the allocation decisions.

Additionally, the NABs played a critical role in our 2016 Community Needs Assessment (CNA), which we use to obtain stakeholder input on program design and quality. Through surveys and public hearings, DYCD collected feedback directly from NYC residents and institutional leaders on the service needs and gaps in their communities. The 2016 assessment involved DYCD's Beacon and Cornerstone community centers, allowing us to reach even more community members than in previous years. We also collected feedback from program directors in DYCD-funded programs throughout the City and participants in anti-poverty programs funded by CSBG. The methods for collection included both street canvassing and a public hearing for each NDA conducted by its own NAB members.

As a result of this large-scale effort, over 13,240 surveys were collected, from 9,640 adults, 2,439 youth, 238 employers, 38 faith-based leaders, 372 CSBG program directors, 539 CSBG program participants, and 155 public school principals.

We are pleased to report that for the second straight year, DYCD has received a perfect score—50 out of 50—for meeting the federal organizational standards ensuring that Community Action Agencies such as DYCD can demonstrate having results oriented management and accountability principles in place to reduce poverty or alleviate the conditions of poverty in their respective jurisdictions. Categories range from consumer input and organizational structure to fiscal health. The score reflects DYCD’s practices, including the operations of our Community Action Board and Neighborhood Advisory Boards as well as our 2016 Community Needs Assessment and upcoming 2019 Community Needs Assessment plans.

The data collected through the CNAs has been used throughout DYCD and informed the operation of programs throughout our portfolio. For example, the CNA showed that a high number of youth reported being hungry, and we used that result to establish a greater connection between our programs and those that provide basic needs, such as food pantries. The results of the next CNA will be helpful in setting funding priorities for CSBG-funded programs in the future, particularly for future plans for the next concept paper and request for proposals. We look forward to continuing to brief the Council as those plans begin to move forward.

Conclusion

DYCD’s vision is to improve the quality of life of New Yorkers by collaborating with local organizations and investing in the talents and assets of our communities to help them develop, grow and thrive. We thank you for the opportunity to share DYCD’s efforts to serve New York’s low-income individuals, families, and communities. We welcome any questions you may have.

Jack Chernak
Neighborhood Advisory Board 1 Staten Island
Assistant Secretary

Good morning. My name is Jack Chernak. I'm the assistant secretary for Staten Island Neighborhood Advisory Board 1. Today I will testify on the youth services that are needed in Staten Island district 49

Our councilwoman Debi Rose is a champion for her constituents. Our Councilwoman has advocated and fought for needed resources that have created a safer environment on Staten Island. She has personally fought for funding for violence prevention programs as well as after school programs that have resulted in pro-active solutions for families and residents in her district. As great as she is, our at risk neighborhoods are still in need of funding to keep crime down and to help support the youth in a positive way.

We need extra funding to help provide more summer youth jobs. Summer youth jobs are one way to keep the youth engaged in a positive way to make money. Being a product of summer youth employment I remember how it saved me from the social ills of the 80's crack era. I lost quite a few friends to the streets because they didn't have a job. The same situations still present themselves today. After school and summer school programs are needed for elementary age students. Most are too young to qualify for summer youth but they still need to have an outlet and a safe space to have fun. Parents also need to know while they are at work that their children are in a safe environment. Youth programs are critical in at risk neighborhoods. It's a way to build neighborhood morale and to keep young people on the right path. If we don't have funding ~~for these~~

focused on youth we will bring the incarceration rates back up. High school dropout rates will increase and possibly teen pregnancy. These are all things that can be curbed with proper funding.

Please continue to allocate funds to help support our youth. I believe the children are our future let us do all we can to help ensure their lives will be productive and positive. Thank you for allowing me to speak and to be apart of this process

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jack Chernaik

Address: 220 Osgood Ave

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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Appearance Card

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Date: 4-8-19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sandra Gutierrez

Address: Deputy Commissioner

I represent: NYC Dept of Youth and Community Development

Address: _____

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Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 4-8-19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mike Bubbitt

Address: Assistant Commissioner

I represent: NYC Dept of Youth and Community Development

Address: _____

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆