



Joint Subcommittee on Block Grants

July 9, 2026, at 10:30 a.m.

General Assembly Building, Senate Room 305/A

<https://studies.viriniageneralassembly.gov/studies/291>

The Joint Subcommittee on Block Grants (the Joint Subcommittee) met in Richmond with Senator David R. Suetterlein, chair, presiding.¹ The meeting began with introductions and opening remarks and adoption of the Joint Subcommittee's Policy on Electronic Meetings Participation and All-Virtual Meetings, followed by presentations and discussion. Materials presented at the meeting are accessible through the [*Commission's meeting webpage*](#).

Presentation: Overview of the Commonwealth's Community Services Block Grant State Plan

Kristin Zagar, Deputy Commissioner, Virginia Department of Social Services

Commissioner Zagar provided an overview of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funding program, which provides funds for 28 local and three statewide community action agencies. The CSBG State Plan (the State Plan) details how the Commonwealth allocates federal CSBG funds to such agencies and the types of programs and activities that such allocations will fund. During preparation of the State Plan, the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) held three public comment periods for community action agencies and the Virginia Community Action Partnership (VACAP), the statewide membership association for such agencies, to provide input. Commissioner Zagar explained that programs supported by the CSBG serve approximately 90,000 individuals and 46,000 families. She reported that the proposed State Plan identifies the following three primary goals for the Community Action Network in Virginia: (i) reduce poverty through policy improvements, innovative strategies, and whole-family approaches; (ii) build community capacity by strengthening access to coordinated services and supportive infrastructure; and (iii) promote community-level problem solving and collective impact strategies that address the root causes of poverty.

Commissioner Zagar stated that the proposed State Plan continues to focus on Whole Family / Two Generation programs at the community action agency level. She explained that currently six agencies are part of a Whole Family Project funded by the General Assembly and have implemented national model best practices in wrap around services and coaching to work directly with families and focus on self-sufficiency. She further explained that the State Plan's emphasis on services that support workforce participation and economic mobility continue to be a focus of community action agencies. The Community Action Network is heavily involved in supporting VDSS implementation efforts to maintain Medicaid and SNAP eligibility through workforce supports.

Commissioner Zagar urged approval of the State Plan.

¹ **Members Present:** Senator David R. Suetterlein (chair), Senator Bill DeSteph, Senator Michael J. Jones, Senator L. Louise Lucas, Senator Angelia Williams Graves, Delegate Stacey Annie Carroll, Delegate Nicole Cole, Delegate Lindsey Dougherty, Delegate Joseph P. McNamara, Delegate Wendell S. Walker; Delegate Katrina Callsen and Delegate Nadarius E. Clark participated virtually

Members Absent: Delegate Paul E. Krizek

Stakeholder Comments

- *Erik Johnston, President and CEO of Virginia Community Action Partnership (VACAP):* Mr. Johnston recommended adoption of the State Plan, noting that it was developed with significant input from agencies that are governed by locally controlled boards representing a variety of Virginians, including low-income citizens, local governments, the private sector, philanthropic organizations, religious leaders, and nonprofit leaders. Mr. Johnston expressed the VACAP's gratitude for the support of the Joint Subcommittee and the General Assembly for investing in community action through complementary TANF resources and for the collaborative relationship with the innovative team at VDSS who share the common priority of bolstering the economic mobility of Virginians through strategic investments.
- *Bryan Phipps, President and CEO, People Incorporated of Virginia:* Mr. Phipps emphasized how receipt of CSBG funds is critical to People, Inc., achieving its mission to improve economic mobility and alleviate poverty in the Commonwealth. Mr. Phipps explained how that the CSBG has allowed People, Inc., to consistently expand its geographic reach and the services it is able to provide. He noted that CSBG funds have been utilized to pilot workforce credential programs, support financial coaching and matched savings programs like their RISE initiative in partnership with VDSS, develop pre-development capacity for affordable housing, and fund outreach to families in communities where other programs simply do not reach.
- *Kevin Otey, CEO, Hampton Roads Community Action Partnership (HRCAP), Immediate Past President, VACAP:* Mr. Otey began his testimony by expressing support for the State Plan. He explained that the CSBG is the foundational investment that enables HRCAP to operate a coordinated system of services designed to move families toward long-term stability and self-sufficiency. Mr. Otey shared that, in 2025 alone, HRCAP served 8,060 households and 10,698 individuals, prepared 2,449 tax returns that resulted in savings of \$612,500 in fees and over \$2.1 million returned to the Hampton Roads region through refunds, distributed 2.5 million pounds of food and 24,487 meals to residents living in food deserts, and provided 32,549 diapers to support working families.
- *Angela Penn, President and CEO, Total Action for Progress (TAP):* Ms. Penn testified that the CSBG is the foundation that allows TAP to respond to local needs with flexibility, innovation, and compassion, connecting individuals and families to the services, resources, and opportunities that help them move toward economic independence. She continued that it allows TAP to help meet urgent and important needs in Roanoke and surrounding areas. She urged continued support of the CSBG.
- *Allyson Davoll-Cort, a 2001 Project Discovery participant and current business owner:* Ms. Davoll-Cort noted the impact of participating in Project Discovery, detailing the supports they provided, including workshops, tutoring services, and guidance in filling out college applications and financial aid forms. She further explained that Project Discovery's support enabled her to go into cosmetology and become a business owner, currently owning three hair salons that employ 30 people and have served more than 400 clients. Ms. Davoll-Cort stated that she has mentored others to go into cosmetology throughout the Commonwealth, highlighting the impact Project Discovery has beyond her immediate area.
- *Hope Cupit, President and CEO, Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project (SERCAP):* Ms. Cupit explained that the CSBG assists SERCAP's mission 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. She further noted that the CSBG provides flexibility for local agencies to assist in a variety of ways, including helping with employment and providing access to health care and child care, which are particularly hard to access in rural areas because of the long travel time typically required in such areas.

CSBG State Plan Approval

After a discussion, the Joint Subcommittee voted unanimously to approve the CSBG State Plan.

For more information, see the [*Commission's website*](#) or contact the Division of Legislative Services staff:

Britt Olwine, Legal Section Chief, DLS
bolwine@dls.virginia.gov
804-698-1815

