

Written Comments Presented to the Appropriations and Human Services Committees

*Social Services Block Grant Program
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Chairs Osten, Walker, Gilchrest and Lesser; Ranking Members Berthel, Nuccio, Perillo, and Case; and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Human Services Committees, thank you for the opportunity to submit written comments in support of Governor Lamont’s Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2026 allocation plan for the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG).

My name is Andrea Barton Reeves, and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS). In addition to this written testimony, I am pleased to be able to walk through our proposed FFY 2026 allocation plan with you today. I am joined by representatives from the Department who will be available to help respond to questions.

Overview – Purpose

SSBG is administered at the federal level by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through its administrative agency, the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Community Services. DSS is designated as the principal state agency for the allocation and administration of the block grant in the State of Connecticut.

Estimated Federal Funding, Total Available Funding and Proposed Allocations

SSBG is a flexible funding source that allows states and territories to tailor social service programming to their population’s needs. The plan before you projects FFY 2026 block grant funding of \$17,225,500, which is equal to the state’s final FFY 2025 allocation. The allocation plan proposes FFY 2026 expenditures of \$19,223,538, which includes \$1,998,038 in federal SSBG carryforward funding.

Use of Funds

Through SSBG, Connecticut provides essential social services that help achieve several 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 of the proposed allocation plan (see pages 3-5) provides more detail related to the major use of SSBG funds.

The FFY 2026 SSBG allocation plan provides funding for services in 11 federally defined service categories. Such services include the following: case management, counseling, employment, family planning, home-based services, home delivered meals, independent & transitional living services, legal services, protective services for adults, substance abuse services, and other services. Funding amounts for these categories can be found in Table A of the plan (see page 9).

Contingency Plan

If the block grant funding received is less than estimated, an equally proportionate share of any 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 10% of a specific allocation, whichever is less, would require resubmission to the joint committees of cognizance for approval.

Target Population

Although 29 service categories are allowable, the 11 categories identified in this allocation plan are based upon Connecticut's efforts to address barriers and gaps in services for its most vulnerable populations. Part I, Section B of the proposed allocation plan provides more detail related to the target population served (see page 5). Based upon need, categories can change from year to year. Except for the Fatherhood Initiative and home delivered meals, recipients of SSBG-funded services must have annual income no higher than 150% of the federal poverty guidelines, or \$48,225 for a family of four.

Proposed Expenditures

Allocation by Agency and Non-Profit Providers

In addition to funding Case Management Services, Employment Services, Family Planning Services, Home-Based Services, Independent & Transitional Living Services, Legal Services, Protective Services for Adults, and Other Services through DSS, the allocation plan also includes the distribution of SSBG funds to the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS), the Department of Housing (DOH), and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). SSBG service categories for these state agencies is as follows:

- ADS: Home Delivered Meals and Protective Services for Adults
- DOH: Independent & Transitional Living Services
- DMHAS: Case Management, Counseling, Independent & Transitional Living Services, and Substance Abuse Services

Contracts for the provision of SSBG services are subject to the competitive procurement provisions of Connecticut General Statutes §§ 4-212 to 4-219 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 34 private non-profit providers.

Allocation by Service Category – Changes from FFY 2025

The FFY 2026 allocation plan includes the following proposed changes—all increased costs are paid for using federal carryforward funding—as compared to the FFY 2025 plan:

Case Management: The FFY 2026 plan continues to fund the FFY 2022, FFY 2023, FFY 2024 and FFY 2025 COLAs. Carryforward funds will be used to cover these costs. Also, this plan removes the temporary pandemic-related funding for DOH (\$200,000).

Family Planning Services: The plan retains for one additional year the temporary funding increase of \$500,000 that was added in FFY 2025 per the block grant amendment that was approved by the legislature in January 2025.

Home Delivered Meals: The plan removes the one-time temporary stabilization funding for ADS (\$185,000) that was added in last year’s plan to help ease transition to the lower level of federal funding for the Nutrition Services Incentive Program under the Older Americans Act.

Independent & Transitional Living Services: The plan continues to fund the FFY 2022, FFY 2023, FFY 2024 and FFY 2025 COLAs. Carryforward funds will be used to cover these costs.

Other Services: FFY 2026 Plan continues to fund the FFY 2022, FFY 2023, FFY 2024 and FFY 2025 COLAs. Carryforward funds will be used to cover these costs.

The proposed FFY 2026 funding levels for all other line items are not anticipated to result in an expansion or reduction of services.

We join Governor Lamont and the Office of Policy and Management in recommending approval of the Social Services Block Grant allocation plan for FFY 2026. Thank you for your review and attention in this matter.