

## **Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) Plan**

### **Comments by Mary Bethel, Ex. Director of NC Coalition on Aging**

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I am Mary Bethel, Ex. Director of the NC Coalition on Aging. I am pleased to make these brief remarks on behalf of the Coalition. The Coalition is comprised of agencies/organizations that in some way represent North Carolina's aging population as well as individual who support the work of the Coalition. We have over 70 agency/organizational members who represent consumers, providers, and advocates for seniors. Together we all come together as members of the Coalition to help give voice to issue that affect older adults in our state. The Coalition facilitates networking and information exchange among members and provides the structure and leadership for collective advocacy, education, and public policy work.

As you may know, our state's older adult population is growing by leaps and bounds – our baby boomers are aging. Today, 1 in 5 – over 2 million people in the state – are age 60 and over. By 2033, about 1 in 4 will be over 60 and people over 85 will be the fastest growing population group. Effective this year, it is estimated that there are more people in the state over the age of 60 than under the age of 18. In 2017, 78 counties in the state had more people 60 and over than under 18 years. By 2025, this number is expected to increase to 89 counties and by 2037 to 94 counties.

With the increase in the older adult population comes an increased need and demand for services ranging from adult protective and guardianship services to programs to keep people in their homes. For example, in SFY 17-18 there were 30,128 reported cases of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of adults. Of these cases, 15,563 cases were "screened in" by county departments of social services to determine if the adults reported were in need of adult protective services. Also, there are currently approximately 11,000 older adults waiting for services to keep them in their homes and communities through the Home and Community Care Block Grant.

SSBG plays a critical role in helping to address the needs of older North Carolinians. The NC Division of Aging and Adult Services currently receives over \$9.6 million dollars to help support the Home and Community Care Block Grant, Adult Protective Services, Adult Day Services, Adult Home Specialists, and State In-Home Services. Additional divisions in the Department of Health and Human Services also receive SSBG funds for programs such as Independent/Transitional Living Services and Substance Abuse Services to assist persons 60 and older.

SSBG is the largest funding source, and one of only a few sources, to which Adult Protective Service and Guardianship workers can code their time. In reality, SSBG pays for the adult

services workforce at many county departments of social services. There are counties that need additional adult service workers, but the funds are not there to provide support for more staff.

The members of the Coalition on Aging are very appreciative of the SSBG funding that is being directed to our state's older residents. However, because of the growth of the older adult population and the increased demand for services for this population as well as the challenges facing many counties in having an adequate number of adult service workers, we encourage the allocation of additional SSBG funding for services for older adults as well as for staff who work with seniors.

Thanks you for the opportunity to share these comments.

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