



1964-2014

Ohio Association of
Community Action Agencies

50 Years

OACAA News

Legislative Update

OACAA is currently supporting several legislative issues of importance to Community Action. Following is more information on these issues:

Voter Bill of Rights

The Voter Bill of Rights is a proposed constitutional amendment that was conceived in response to a series of bills to restrict early voting and absentee voting. The amendment would make voting a fundamental right in Ohio; make voter registration easy and accessible; provide options to use as identification when it is required for voting; maintain the 35 day early voting period; require early voting stations be open the weekend before the election; prohibit a ballot from being rejected due in any part to poll worker or election official error; and prevent the general assembly from denying or limiting voting rights, but allowing them to expand voting rights. OACAA recognizes that citizens' voting is what makes a democracy and therefore strongly supports this amendment.

Earned Income Tax Credit Expansion

Governor Kasich, as part of his mid-biennial review legislation, has proposed tripling Ohio's Earned Income Tax Credit for low-income Ohioans by raising its benefit from 5 to 15 percent of the federal credit. While that might not seem like much to some people, for low-income people the difference between \$100 and \$300 can mean needed clothes, furniture or medical care. OACAA strongly supports this initiative and has sent out press releases, held a press conference, and distributed sample letters to the editor to member agencies for them to send to their local newspapers. We encourage all OACAA members to show their support for this proposal.

Ohio Legislative Black Caucus Agenda

The Ohio Legislative Black Caucus has set four priority issues for this year, and OACAA supports each of those items and has expressed our support to the OLBC.

One of OLBC's priorities is the Voter Bill of Rights Amendment that, as mentioned above, OACAA strongly supports. Another priority of the OLBC is full funding for Head Start programs to provide quality early childhood education to all low-income children in Ohio. Approximately 70 percent of Head Start children are in Community Action Agency programs; therefore, OACAA realizes the importance of early education, especially for low-income children who often lack resources. We welcome the opportunity to be able to offer this quality program to as many children as possible.

A third priority of the OLBC is ensuring money set aside for minority businesses is dispersed. Often the 15 percent set aside is not enforced. Many Community Action Agencies are also involved in helping small businesses realize their dreams. As such, we support OLBC's efforts to ensure money set aside for minority businesses is dispersed correctly.

The final priority of OLBC is stopping "Stand Your Ground" legislation and urging Governor Kasich to veto any if it passes. OACAA also supports this effort as "Stand Your Ground" is simply not good legislation.

CSBG Reauthorization

After two years of hard work, CSBG reauthorization was introduced in Congress on January 13 by a bipartisan alliance of Community Action supporters. The act, known as the Community Economic Opportunity Act – H.R. 3854, reauthorizes the Community Services Block Grant through 2023 and dramatically improves, simplifies and updates the program.

Important Provisions of the CSBG Reauthorization Act include:

- Federal Performance: The proposed bill ensures federal managers are properly trained and must meet performance goals. While HHS has corrected several of the management deficiencies GAO reported in 2006, federal managers continue to have a lack of training in working with private partners, little expertise in poverty issues and no management performance goals.
- State Performance: With the proposed bill, state managers' performance will be measured. Currently, managers in many states lack knowledge of federal grants, nonprofit management and innovations in poverty reduction.
- Local Agency Performance: The proposed bill strengthens current requirements for performance management and transparent governance in order to maximize results.
- Creeping "Governmentalization" of the Funding: The proposed bill prevents the re-direction of CSBG funds. Currently, states can transfer grants to local governments seeking replacements for other federal or state funds that have been eliminated; some states have required CAAs to assume categorical human services roles, duplicating shrinking county agencies.
- Support for Experimentation and Innovation: The proposed bill creates an already- paid-for innovation fund to encourage efficient, cutting-edge solutions to poverty elimination.

If you are interested in reading the entire bill, or searching specific provisions, you can find it here:

<http://www.ncaf.org/sites/default/files/CSBGDraft.pdf>

To get this legislation passed, we need to support NCAF and the NCAF Political Action Committee, known as CAP-PAC. NCAF has been suffering financial hardships and now they need our support more than ever. Ohio has always been a strong supporter of NCAF; we need to continue that support now. To contribute to CAP-PAC, visit www.ncaf.org. Let's show our support and define our future in Congress by doing all we can to get our reauthorization passed this year.