

**Statement of the National Association of State Community Services Programs
Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Network to
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
March 7, 2006**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement on behalf of the National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSPP). My name is Thomas Green, and I am the Director of the Arkansas Office of Community Services.

I am pleased to report to this Committee that according to the data the National Association for State Community Services Programs collected at the request of the US Department of Health and Human Services, the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Network, which is made up of nearly 1,100 local Community Action Agencies (CAAs) nationwide, was able to respond with speed and flexibility to the needs of over 355,000 Hurricane Katrina evacuees. Our network has supported these Katrina evacuees by providing affordable housing, job training, reliable emergency services, and quality health care, among other critical recovery services. Unfortunately, our job is not yet done.

Today, the state administered CSBG Network continues to play a pivotal role in the recovery of all of the states affected by Hurricane Katrina. State CSBG administrators are making a concerted effort to provide critical assistance across state governments, and to closely coordinate state-wide relief efforts by working through the extensive community action agency network.

In my home state of Arkansas, the CSBG network assisted over 65,000 evacuees, and helped over 13,635 of these evacuees with CSBG discretionary grants totaling \$69,000. Under the direction of the state, the sixteen Arkansas community action agencies worked with their local communities to address the gaps in services that were already being provided, including: transportation services to local agencies to apply for assistance, food for food pantries, medicines, clothing, home furnishings, and deposits for housing.

The state administered network of Community Action Agencies have also begun to provide the long-term assistance that evacuees need as they relocate and re-establish themselves through self-sufficiency and family development programs. These programs offer comprehensive approaches to selecting and offering supportive services that promote, empower and nurture individuals and families seeking economic self-sufficiency. At a minimum, these approaches include:

- An assessment of the issues facing the family and the resources they bring to address these issues;
- A written plan for financial independence and self-sufficiency;
- An individualized mix of services to help the participant implement the plan;

- Professional staff who can establish trusting, long-term relationships with program participants; and
- A formal method to track and evaluate progress and adjust the plan as needed.

The CSBG Network has remained true to its fundamental purpose: to organize and provide a range of necessary services related to the needs of low-income individuals, families, and communities. The CSBG network helps to promote these services, which in turn helps to empower families and individuals to become fully self sufficient.

According to the most recent CSBG Statistical Report, in 2004 the CSBG Network served over 15 million people, or approximately 6 million low-income families. Also in 2004, more than 3.7 million children, 1.7 million seniors, and 1.1 million disabled individuals were served by the CSBG network. This Network is deeply committed to helping ensure the stability of all low-income individuals, families, communities, and states.

I am proud of the assistance that the Arkansas Office of Community Services, and the National Association for State Community Services Programs, has provided to the Hurricane Katrina evacuees. The state administrators of the CSBG and the CSBG network have an impressive history of effective and efficient service provision. With Congress' continued support, our network will continue to serve our nation's most vulnerable populations with swift and reliable expertise. Under the direction of the state and in partnership with other community-based and faith-based organizations, the CSBG network will continue its critical assistance to the Hurricane evacuees over the long-term as they relocate, re-establish themselves, and work toward total self-sufficiency.

Thank you for your time.