

Social Supports

POSITION STATEMENT

Generations United's mission demands that we are an active voice and advocate before Congress and the Administration on those social programs that best support the intergenerational needs of families and communities. The federal government, in partnership with state and local governments across the country and thousands of non-profit organizations in many local communities, has long directed resources to provide important social programs that improve the lives of countless citizens. While increasing flexibility and responsibility have been given to state governments for the use of federal funds in domestic programs, such flexibility should not compromise the access to or quality of services provided and should be tied to improved outcomes for those intended to benefit from the programs and resources. GU supports comprehensive reform of the child welfare system to ensure that states and child-serving community-based

agencies have the flexibility and new federal financial investments to implement needed improvements and expand services to better protect children and support families.

Generations United is committed to advocating for continued federal involvement in valuable social programs that are proven to enrich lives, from the very youngest and most vulnerable to the oldest and most frail of our nation's citizens. We believe a healthy society can and should meet the basic needs of each generation.

IN ADDITION, GENERATIONS UNITED SUPPORTS

- **Funding the multigenerational and civic engagement activities authorized under the Older Americans Act at a level which reflects the importance of these programs to both the individuals receiving support, and society as a whole**
- **Increased funding for programs with intergenerational components, especially those providing service opportunities for older adults, such as Family Friends and Experience Corps**
- **Reauthorization of the Corporation for National and Community Service**
- **Raising the income threshold and lowering the age requirement for Foster Grandparents to make more senior volunteers eligible for the program**
- **A Silver Scholarship Program to award older adult volunteers with a transferable education award which could be used by their children and grandchildren**
- **Creation of substantial new opportunities for intergenerational community**

Intergenerational Intersection

Many federal programs provide opportunities for intergenerational interaction that helps enrich the lives of all the nation's citizens. Generations United supports federal involvement in programs that recognize younger and older people as resources to the community. These social support programs should provide opportunities for younger and older generations to interact and serve one another in paid, stipend and volunteer positions, including older adult involvement with high-quality early childhood education and before- and after-school programs.

service by older Americans through new initiatives that foster innovation

- **Restoring funding for the Social Services Block Grant to its full level at \$2.8 billion**
- **Conducting a national study to evaluate existing shared sites that encourage intergenerational opportunities**
- **Federal funding to help create nationwide access to the phone service 2-1-1, the national telephone number for access to community services and volunteer opportunities, that makes it easier for people of all ages to get and give help**
- **Initiatives to continue and expand before- and after-school child nutrition programs and senior programs, especially on shared sites where children and seniors are encouraged to interact and share resources**
- **Improving access, especially for low-income working families, to quality child care, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, as well as quality early childhood programs such as voluntary universal birth to school-age early education and care programs. GU supports Head Start's comprehensive, high quality performance standards and Outcome Framework and the expansion of Early Head Start to serve more vulnerable infants and toddlers. GU also supports the guarantee of strong, comprehensive services for children most in need**
- **Reforming the child welfare system to ensure the safety and well-being of all children, especially those who come to the attention of the child welfare providers.**

Background

MULTIGENERATIONAL AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS IN THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT (OAA)

The 2006 reauthorization of the OAA added civic engagement to the existing section for demonstration, support and research projects for multigenerational activities. The Assistant Secretary is directed to develop a comprehensive strategy for utilizing older individuals to address critical local needs of national concern. Grants are authorized for demonstration and support of multigenerational and civic engagement activities designed to meet critical community needs. Two types of projects are specifically cited: support for grandparents and other older individuals who care for children, and support for volunteers helping families of disabled children. In addition, grants are authorized for the coordination and development of multigenerational activities and civic engagement activities, and promotion of volunteerism. Funding levels should reflect the importance of these programs to both the individuals receiving support, and society as a whole.

DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

Demonstration projects, such as those included in the OAA, provide an opportunity for innovative programs that recognize seniors as a resource to the community. Successful programs such as Experience Corps and Family Friends have emerged as demonstration projects. Experience Corps builds on the capacities of older adults and engages them in leadership to strengthen ties between the schools, youth serving organizations, and the community. Family Friends is an intergenerational family support program that involves volunteers 55 years and older in making weekly visits

"I came for one week but stayed for 16 years. I saw that there was a need for you. And it was something actually that we needed. Older people don't want to sit around the house all day. I'm sure I don't."

*Aggie Bennett,
Foster
Grandparent³*

to homes of families who have children with disabilities and chronic illnesses.

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

The Corporation for National and Community Service administers programs that tap the experience and skills of older and younger people to help others. The Corporation was due for reauthorization in 2002. In recent years, new approaches to service by older adults have been proposed, including the Boomer Corps for placement of 1 million stipended volunteers in programs of youth education, elder care and civic engagement by older adults.

Senior Corps

offers a range of opportunities for inter-generational interaction and service. The program engages more than a half-million older Americans in service to their communities, as volunteers or in exchange for a small stipend through programs such as:

Foster Grandparent Program

Foster Grandparents devote their volunteer services to children with special or exceptional needs, offer emotional support to child victims of abuse and neglect, tutor children who lag behind in reading, mentor troubled teenagers and young mothers, and care for premature infants and children with physical disabilities and severe illnesses. Currently this program restricts eligibility for stipends to volunteers who live at or under 125 percent of poverty. Increasing the level of eligibility and lowering the age requirement from 60 to 55 would allow higher rates of recruitment so more seniors and children could benefit from the positive outcomes of this program.

Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)

RSVP volunteers provide a wide variety of community supports, including helping to build houses, planning community gardens, delivering meals, and helping community organizations operate more efficiently.

AmeriCorps

another major component of the Corporation for National and Community Service, involves 75,000 adults of all ages in tackling community problems. AmeriCorps should be reviewed and revised to provide the maximum encouragement to older adult participation.

Learn and Serve America

the third component, engages nearly two million young people and adults in service in areas of education, public safety, the environment, and other human needs.

SILVER SCHOLARSHIPS

A new Silver Scholarship Program to award older adults who volunteer for at least 500 hours of mentorship or long-term care activities, with a \$1,000 transferable education award which could be used by their children and grandchildren, has been proposed.

SOCIAL SERVICES BLOCK GRANT (SSBG)

The Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), Title XX of the Social Security Act, enacted in 1975, was intended to be the primary source of federal funds for social services. SSBG provides critical, flexible funding for important social services affecting all ages, such as adult and child day care, adult and child protective services, special services for disabled persons, meals programs, employment preparation, and transportation. Administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, SSBG is used

by states, local governments, and non-profit organizations to supplement other social service programs and leverage additional funding and resources. In 2002, SSBG helped approximately 14.3 million children, families, older Americans, and people with disabilities. Of that total, SSBG funds went to assist 7.8 million children and 1.2 million seniors age 60 or older.⁴

Federal funding for SSBG was set at \$2.5 billion annually in 1974. By 1977, annual funding had increased to almost \$2.8 billion. Since 1998, however, Congress has funded SSBG below its authorized level. In FY 2000, Congress funded SSBG at \$1.775 billion, far below the authorized level of \$2.38 billion. In FY 2001, funding for SSBG was reduced further, to \$1.725 billion. For FY 2005, SSBG funding is \$1.7 billion. This represents a cut of over \$1 billion to the program since FY 1996. This action represented a reversal of a commitment made in 1996 when the block grant was originally cut that funding would be restored to \$2.8 billion in 2003. In the 109th Congress, proposed cuts to SSBG were rejected with strong bipartisan backing.

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

The Foster Care and Adoption Assistance Program (Title IV-E of the Social Security Act) is the major source of federal support for child welfare. Other federal funds that also support child welfare include the Social Services Block Grant, Medicaid, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). States also supplement these federal funds with state funds to fund activities such as prevention and supportive services for children who are not eligible for federal assistance.

Title IV-E provides federal reimbursement for some of the federally eligible foster care or adoption expenses that the

state has already paid. Title IV-E is an entitlement linked to the number of eligible children. There is no cap on federal funding available. Federal funding for foster care programs was \$4.6 billion in FY 2006. Reimbursement is provided for the room and board costs associated with foster care and adoption assistance placements, administrative costs which support case-worker planning and providing some services, and training for the child welfare workforce.

To move forward with a new vision and

course of action that ensures the safety and well-being of all children, especially those that come to the attention of the child welfare system, states and community-based agencies need to have the tools and resources in place to ensure that our children are protected. Generations United supports comprehensive reform of the child welfare system to ensure that states and child-serving



Alice Everhart

community-based agencies have the flexibility and new federal financial investments to implement needed improvements and expand services. This comprehensive reform must include a review of all federal funding that support child welfare.

Key elements of reform must preserve and make more children eligible for the basic safety net of federal assistance offered through the Title IV-E Foster Care and Adoption Assistance program. Other key elements of reform are expanding the

“There are kids who are dying young. There are children in school who can’t pay attention, who can’t learn - all because they are hungry. There are seniors needing expensive health care - because they don’t get enough food and nutrition each day.”

Rep. Jim McGovern

guaranteed federal financial support of child welfare services for a broad array of services beyond out-of-home care, including prevention, child protective services, in-home supports, treatment foster care, residential treatment, reunification, post-permanency, and post-adoption services.

NATIONWIDE 2-1-1

2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember and universally recognizable number that makes a critical connection between individuals and families seeking services or volunteer opportunities and the appropriate community-based organizations and government agencies. 2-1-1 makes it possible for people of all ages to navigate the complex and ever-growing maze of human services’ agencies and programs.

Every hour of every day, someone needs essential services – from finding an after-school program to securing adequate care for a child or an aging parent. Faced with a dramatic increase in the number of agencies and help-lines, people often do not know where to turn. In many cases, people end up going without these necessary services because they do not know where to start. 2-1-1 helps people get and give help.

As of October 2006, 2-1-1 reaches about 60 percent of the country. Current funding where 2-1-1 is operational comes from diverse sources, including non-profits, state and local governments, foundations, and businesses. A nationwide 2-1-1 system will not happen without the support of the federal government, in partnership with states. Generations United supports the bipartisan Calling for 2-1-1 Act and will continue to advocate for it when it is reintroduced in the 110th Congress.

NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Many working parents and grandparent caregivers must rely on community

resources to help care for their children before-and after-school hours when they are at work. Federally funded nutrition programs are a critical support for children and youth in such programs. Many of these programs can be operated in a shared site, encouraging children and seniors to interact and share resources. Two important federally-funded nutrition programs are the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Summer Food Service Program. These programs provide reimbursement for the food, meal preparation, and paperwork costs of providing meals and snacks.

CACFP can be used to feed participants in before- and after-school programs, summer programs, child care centers, Head Start programs, and family child care homes and adult day care programs. The Summer Food Service Program can be used when school is out of session. Both programs require sites to be “geographically or enrollment eligible” to qualify. This means schools or programs must either be located in an area in which 50 percent of the children qualify for a free or reduced price school meal or 50 percent of the children enrolled in the program must be documented to qualify for a free or reduced price school meal. Anyone attending a school program for people with disabilities, regardless of age, may also participate. Both public agencies and non-profit organizations can participate if their programs meet certain eligibility requirements.

Since eligibility requirements require 50 percent of participants or local residents to have a family income of no more than 185 percent of poverty, many poor children and adults are left behind. Lowering the threshold to 40 percent would help reach many of the low-income younger and older individuals who currently do not qualify because of the area in which they are

located. Additionally, while adult day care centers can qualify for CACFP, they often underutilize the program because complex regulations limit access. Adjusting regulations could increase access to these programs and increase participation.

HEAD START, EARLY HEAD START AND CHILD CARE

Head Start is a child development and education program that has served low-income children and their families since 1965. Head Start approaches the needs of the whole child and the family by providing health, education, social services, and parent-community involvement in one program. The program's clear emphasis on family and community involvement has intergenerational implications. Parents and caregivers are active in the planning and implementation of activities. They serve on policy councils and committees that make administrative decisions, participate in classes and workshops on child development, and volunteer in the program. In addition, Head Start provides outreach to families to determine what services they need. This comprehensive family and community support approach can be especially critical for grandparent and other relative caregivers who need extra support. Despite its growth, current funding for Head Start can assist only half of the eligible young children and should be increased. The program is up for reauthorization.

Early Head Start began with 68 new programs in 1995. Disparities in children's cognitive and social abilities become evident well before they enter Head Start or Pre-Kindergarten programs at age four. Early Head Start was created to help minimize these disparities and ensure that children enter school ready to learn. Now more than 700 programs serve over 62,000 low-income families with infants and

toddlers. Currently, 10 percent of the overall Head Start budget is used to serve these families through Early Head Start,



Cindi Daniel

but less than three percent of all eligible children receive help.

Research shows that high-quality early childhood programs help children—especially those from families with low incomes—develop the skills they need to succeed in school. Despite the need, most programs in the United States are rated mediocre, and fewer than 10 percent meet national accreditation standards. Across the nation child care fees average \$4,000 to \$10,000 per year, more than tuition at a state college.⁵ Yet, nationally, only one of every eight families who are financially eligible for child care subsidies receive them.⁶

Funds for child care have not increased at the federal level since FY 2002. Demand still far outstrips availability of programs that meet high quality standards and that provide services for the different work schedules of families. States have growing waiting lists in the tens of thousands of

*"We don't have a
single person
to waste"*

*Gray Panthers'
founder,
Maggie Kuhn*

families eligible for child care subsidies. The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) is helping to promote access to child care for low-income working families and includes a small set-aside of funds for quality improvements. Much of the funding for increased access to child care in the states over the last several years is due to the transfer of funds from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to CCDBG, as

allowed under the 1996 welfare law. As states face tight fiscal times, they are reducing their TANF transfers and resources are shrinking.

Head Start, Early Head Start and child care programs offer unique opportunities for older adult volunteers to assist program directors and provide additional one-on-one attention to children. However, the involvement of volunteers should be recognized as added support, not a replacement for credentialed, paid staff for which there is an increasing need.