



*Testimony before the Human Services and Appropriations Committees
Commissioner Andrea Barton Reeves
Department of Social Services
January 16, 2025*

Good afternoon, Chairs Osten, Walker, Gilchrest, and Lesser; Ranking Members Somers, Nuccio, Harding, and Case; and distinguished members of the Appropriations and Human Services Committees. I am Andrea Barton Reeves, Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS).

Today, I am here to request a change to the SSBG allocation plan you voted on in September 2024 to spend \$500,000 of carry forward to provide additional support to Planned Parenthood for family planning services. Planned Parenthood provides vital care to more than 50,000 individuals in our state, many of whom are uninsured and rely on Planned Parenthood as their primary source of healthcare. These are often individuals from low-income households who face significant barriers to accessing critical health and preventive services. Without additional assistance, Planned Parenthood may need to reduce hours, limit appointments, and / or potentially close clinics entirely directly impacting access to lifesaving care and placing the health and well-being of many Connecticut residents at risk.

Recognizing this urgent need, the organization sought state support to help address a critical financial gap in delivering basic healthcare to vulnerable populations. In conjunction with colleagues in the legislature, we identified available Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funding to support this critical service provider. This funding does not diminish resources allocated to any of the other 80+ organizations funded through the SSBG but rather draws from carry forward funding to ensure immediate continuity of essential services for those who need them most. It is a strategic investment in the health and welfare of our communities.

In accordance with SSBG requirements, this contract specifically supports individuals and families with income at or below 150% of the federal poverty level—approximately \$46,800 for a family of four—and eliminates cost as a barrier by not requiring patients to pay in advance for care.

The services covered under this contract include comprehensive and confidential reproductive health care, all within federal funding guidelines. These services include annual reproductive health exams, such as pap smears and STI screenings, as well as infertility management, contraceptive services, blood pressure and diabetes screenings, referrals for other medical conditions, male genitourinary exams, HIV testing and counseling, and body mass index screenings.

It is important to note that these services are already approved under the current SSBG allocation plan, which passed with strong bipartisan support from your committees just a few months ago. This adjustment simply increases support to ensure continuity of critical care for low-income individuals and families through contracts that are already in operation. There will be no changes to the scope of services outlined in the current contract.

DSS also observes that this is hardly a unique circumstance – one-time funding adjustments are routinely made to ensure continuity of services in critical sectors. For example, recent SSBG plan adjustments include an additional \$185,000 for one-time temporary stabilization funding for Meals on Wheels to help ease the transition to the lower level of federal funding when the Older Americans Act was reduced, as well as an additional \$800,000 for a one-time increase for shelters to respond to increased demand for eviction prevention and stabilization services due to the expiration of the eviction moratorium that was in place during the pandemic.

SSBG adjustments are most commonly done through the annual allocation plan process, however, to ensure health care access without reduction or disruption, it is important to address this now rather than wait for next year's allocation plan.

This funding request represents our collective commitment to safeguard access to critical healthcare for Connecticut's most vulnerable residents. I urge your continued support in upholding the health and dignity of all who rely on these essential services.

Thank you.

