

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

SIGNIFICANT ITEMS IN CONFERENCE AND SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FY 2014 BUDGET

SIGNIFICANT ITEMS IN SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEES REPORT..... 381

This page intentionally left blank.

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Significant Items in Senate Appropriations Committees Report

FY 2013 Senate Appropriations Committee Report Language (S. Rpt.112-176)

Item

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program Contingency Fund – The Committee recommendation includes \$100,000,000 for the contingency fund. This program was not funded in fiscal year 2012; the budget request is \$200,000,000. The contingency fund supports grants to States that are adversely affected by extreme heat or cold, energy prices, or other energy-related emergencies. While average home energy costs for many households decreased this past year, the costs for households dependent on home fuel oil and other home-delivered fuels remain at record levels. Low-income households dependent on home-delivered fuels are also generally not protected by State laws that prohibit utility companies from shutting off service during the winter. Therefore, the Committee encourages HHS to direct these funds to those States hit hardest by increases in home energy costs and facing other energy-related emergencies.

Action taken or to be taken

Pending final Congressional action on the FY 2013 Low Income Home Energy Assistance appropriation, the Administration continues to propose targeting Contingency Fund resources to the needs of vulnerable households reliant on high burden heating sources, as well as those impacted by energy-related emergencies. We are monitoring energy price changes to determine if the expected price increase trends are realized as well as weather incidents that create energy-related emergencies so that we are prepared to provide energy assistance funding if FY 2013 Contingency Fund resources are available. These resources will help struggling families to offset a portion of their home energy related cost.

Item

Transitional and Medical Services -- Within the total, the Committee recommendation includes not less than \$65,000,000 for the voluntary agency matching grant program, which provides grants to resettlement agencies to support comprehensive services for arriving refugees, including case management, job development, job placement, and interim housing and cash assistance, with the goal of refugees becoming self-sufficient within their first 4 months in the United States. Refugees enrolled in this program are not eligible for regular transitional and medical assistance. The Committee continues to support the voluntary agency matching grant program and encourages HHS to explore the continued expansion of this program.

Action taken or to be taken

See the Transitional and Medical Services (TAMS) narrative in the Refugee and Entrant Assistance chapter for this information.

Item

Social Services -- The Committee strongly encourages ORR to explore the use of existing discretionary funds for case management services for particularly vulnerable refugee populations. Refugees enrolled in the matching grant program, which generally include those refugees easiest to place in employment, have access to such services but other refugees generally do not beyond their first 30 to 90 days in the United States. Intensive case management services can help connect refugees to other support services and provide a comprehensive approach to integration for those that need it most.

Action taken or to be taken

See the Social Services narrative in the Refugee and Entrant Assistance chapter for this information.

Item

Unaccompanied Alien Children -- Many of the children placed into HHS' care are victims of abuse, neglect, or trafficking, or otherwise have physical or mental health issues. The Committee is particularly concerned about the impact this increase in children will have on the availability of support services, including access to pro bono legal representation, child advocates, social workers, physicians, and psychologists. The Committee strongly supports placing these children in areas where these vital services are readily available. As HHS pursues additional shelter space, it should provide assurances that children will have adequate access to these services.

Action taken or to be taken

We appreciate the Committee's interest in the support services provided to the children placed in the UAC program. We are committed to placing children in areas that provide the vital support services that meet the needs of the children. As the number of children referred to this program continues to expand significantly, we have opened new facilities and expanded capacity in existing facilities in areas such as New York, Illinois, Florida and Virginia where services are more readily available and where a high percentage of the children have sponsors. In addition, ORR is making every effort to lessen the length of stay for children in care so that they are quickly released to their appropriate sponsor and do not have a prolonged need for services.

Item

Head Start Designation Renewal System -- Within the total, the Committee recommendation includes up to \$25,000,000 for transition-related costs associated with the Head Start Designation Renewal System [DRS]. The Committee recommendation does not include bill language, requested by the administration, making these funds available through fiscal year 2014. In November 2011, carrying out provisions in the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, ACF published a final rule which requires grantees that do not meet certain standards to re-compete for funding through the DRS. In fiscal year 2012, over \$1,200,000,000 in grants will be re-competed, with new awards expected to be made in fiscal year 2013. These additional funds will support implementation of the DRS and provide start-up related costs to new grantees to minimize any disruption in services. In addition, the Committee encourages HHS to consider the unique challenges faced by Head Start grantees in remote and frontier areas when reviewing such grantees' compliance with health and dental screening requirements as part of the DRS.

Action taken or to be taken

The Office of Head Start appreciates the Committee's concern about the unique challenges Head Start grantees in remote and frontier areas encounter. Based on our most recent Head Start monitoring data to date, grantees in remote or frontier areas are no more likely than other grantees to have a deficiency or an area of noncompliance in health and dental screenings, and therefore no more likely to be designated for competition on the basis of these areas as part of the DRS. Our most recent monitoring data indicates that no programs have deficiencies in health and dental screening, and of those programs that received an area of noncompliance, grantees in remote or frontier areas are not disproportionately represented. That said, the Office of Head Start will be mindful of the challenges of these particular grantees and will periodically review our monitoring data to ensure grantees in remote and frontier locations are not disproportionately affected by these compliance standards due to their geographic locations.

Item

Child Welfare Research, Training, and Demonstration -- The Committee has previously encouraged ACF to work with ACL and other HHS agencies to evaluate intergenerational approaches for improving outcomes for at-risk youth and families. The Committee is particularly interested in initiatives that are place-based and leverage the service of older volunteers with supportive housing. Such initiatives have demonstrated potential to reduce demand for social services while improving the health and well-being of

participating seniors by increasing their civic and societal engagement. The Committee strongly encourages HHS to use existing discretionary resources for such initiatives to support intermediary and community-based organizations developing projects that demonstrate this approach.

Action taken or to be taken

ACF has continued to work with the Administration for Community Living, other HHS agencies, and other Departments to identify exemplary intergenerational approaches to improving outcomes for vulnerable populations across the lifespan. An interagency group meets regularly to exchange information and learn together about promising approaches. We have funded projects of an intergenerational nature, such as kinship navigator, under the Family Connections program in the Promoting Safe and Stable Families account. Funds under Child Welfare Research, Training, and Demonstration are currently committed to a demonstration project addressing permanency for children in foster care and in projects that enhance the child welfare workforce.

Item

Adoption Opportunities -- Consistent with the reauthorization of this program, the Committee continues to expect that these funds will focus on facilitating the adoption of older children, minority children, and children with special needs. Specifically, the Committee expects HHS to focus new grants on strengthening post-adoption services and the recruitment of adoptive parents for these populations of children.

Action taken or to be taken

All the projects funded under Adoption Opportunities are specifically targeted to remove barriers to adoption including facilitating the adoption of older children, minority children and children with special needs and to support adoptive families and we agree that future projects should continue in that vein.

Item

Native American Programs -- Within the total, the Committee recommendation includes \$12,000,000 for Native American language preservation activities, including no less than \$4,000,000 for language immersion programs authorized by section 803C(b)(7)(A)-(C) of the Native American Programs Act, as amended by the Esther Martinez Native American Language Preservation Act of 2006. The Committee continues to strongly encourage ACF to give priority to grantees with rigorous immersion programs.

Action taken or to be taken

All of the projects funded under the Native American Language program including the Esther Martinez program are targeted towards increasing the number of native language speakers within a native community ensuring the continuation of this precious cultural resource. We are spending no less than \$4 million per year on immersion activities that include language nests, survival schools, and restoration programs under the Esther Martinez Initiative. The impact of learning a native community's native language extends beyond the number of language speakers; it also raises the level of self esteem within a community knowing that their members can speak the language and reinforces a native community's confidence knowing their culture is going to survive.

This page intentionally left blank.