



FTA-PP-07: FLORIDA COMMERCE (DEO) COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMS BUDGET AUTHORITY

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: ADOPT

PROPOSED POLICY: FAC SUPPORTS an increase in the legislative budget authority for Florida Commerce to allow proper funding and implementation of the Low-Income Home Energy Efficiency Program (LIHEAP) and Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), and Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). The budget authority should be increased to allow Community Action Agencies to maximize utilization of federal funding that has been allocated for these programs.

BACKGROUND: In FY22-23, the Legislative Budget Authority of Florida Commerce (formerly Florida Department of Economic Opportunity) was exceeded causing program funding delays, layoffs, and reduction/disruption of service delivery for the Community Action Agencies in the state, including the Orange County Community Action Division.

Officially on April 7, 2023, then-DEO alerted all Community Action Agencies that received LIHEAP, WAP and CSBG funding that services would need to cease as of April 10, 2023, because the Department had exceeded its budget authority. DEO received legislative budget authority increase/adjustment in June 2023; but the amount was less than the funding available and previously awarded to agencies. DEO subsequently reduced the funds available for draw-down by agencies.

The ultimate impact was that our most economically vulnerable citizens were left with a great deal of uncertainty regarding the availability of these “safety net” programs. The FY23-24 Budget Authority of Florida Commerce has been kept at the same level as the previous fiscal year, despite an increase in federal allocation of LIHEAP and CSBG funding to the state of Florida.

ANALYSIS: Community Action Agencies located throughout all counties in the state of Florida offer a variety of services and programs to help individuals and families achieve economic self-sufficiency. The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program helps income-eligible households meet various needs and provides emergency services. The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps income-eligible households with home heating and cooling and associated impacts of disasters. The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) annually provides grant funds to community action agencies, local governments, tribal governments and non-profit agencies to provide specific program services for low-income families of Florida. These entities provide program services throughout the state.

Orange County Impact

- The funding provided through Florida Commerce is very integral to the social services provided to our lowest income households.
- We have 14 full-time grant funded staff impacted by the release of funds; reduced funding and quarterly releases create instability and uncertainty for staff.
- The service demand outweighs the funding allocation for the LIHEAP program; a decrease in funding from the previous year will impact how many services are provided. The

program spent \$11 million last year, and the new allocation is \$5.1 million which is significantly lower.

- The quarterly allocation confines the flow of service delivery and activities to the quarter; quarterly restriction may impact who is served within the quarter time frame and affect partnership activities due to timing.
- The quarterly allocation runs counter to the local fiscal process causing delay of services between quarters while internal processes and approvals are set.

FISCAL IMPACT: At this time, Florida Commerce has not released, despite requests, the amount of funding allocated from the federal government for FY23. According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, Florida was awarded \$202,374,096. However, the legislative budget authority is far less than the amount awarded. Increasing the budget authority of Florida Commerce is needed to serve our most economically vulnerable citizens with funding that has been allocated to Florida for that specific purpose. Florida Commerce has determined that funds will be released on a quarterly basis but has not provided a schedule nor the necessary benefit limits. Below is the funding received last year and this current year for Orange County. On average, Orange County serves over 8,000 qualified households through these programs. Based on our client inquiries, the anticipated households will increase.

- Based on our FY22-23 funding - LIHEAP - \$11,326,856 budgeted; CSBG - \$986,480 budgeted
- Based on our FY23-24 funding - LIHEAP - \$5,187,011 budgeted; CSBG - \$1,131,115 budgeted

Community Action Agencies located throughout all counties in the state of Florida offer a variety of services and programs to help individuals and families achieve economic self-sufficiency. The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program helps income-eligible households meet various needs and provides emergency services. The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps income-eligible households with home heating and cooling and associated impacts of disasters. The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) annually provides grant funds to community action agencies, local governments, Indian tribes and non-profit agencies to provide specific program services for low-income families of Florida. These entities provide program services throughout the state.

FAC STAFF NOTES:

- [FACA Strategic Plan 2021-2024](#)
 - For over 30 years, the Florida Association for Community Action (FACA) has answered the call of the “War on Poverty” by working to support Community Action Agencies throughout Florida.
 - Explore new mission-aligned sources and amounts of revenue for FACA to build staff and organizational capacity.
 - Strategically cultivate relationships to increase resources to reduce poverty.
- FAC Guiding Principles
 - FTA 10:
 - The Florida Association of Counties supports policies that promote access to public records in a manner that is not frivolous; that upholds fiscal



responsibility; that does not prevent the efficient and effective administration of local services; and allows for exemptions to protect the safety and security of individuals providing or receiving critical public services.

- Bill
 - **2023: HB 5 - Economic Programs by Sen. Esposito (PASSED)**
 - The bill authorizes 20 positions and appropriates \$5 million in recurring funds to Commerce, \$5 million in recurring funds to the direct-support organization created in the bill, and further appropriates \$1 million in nonrecurring funds to Commerce to facilitate changes made by the bill. The economic incentive programs repealed by the bill will not impact current state expenditures or revenues.

SUBMITTING COUNTY AND CONTACT: Orange – Mark Jeffries mark.jeffries@ocfl.net
(407) 836-5909

ASSIGNED COMMITTEE: FTA

BOARD SUPPORT: No Position

UNFUNDED MANDATE: No

PROTECTIVE OF HOME RULE: Yes