

TESTIMONY OF LORNA VITE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
INDIANA COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM INC.
BEFORE
THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
November 5, 2009

Good morning, my name is Lorna Vite. I am the Executive Director of Indiana County Community Action Program, Inc. (ICCAP). ICCAP is a private non-profit human service agency which provides a variety of services to low-income citizens of Indiana County such as food distribution, energy assistance, housing needs, home weatherization, payee services for mental health consumers and asset building programs.

ICCAP has been approved to receive ARRA funds in the following different areas:

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)- This additional food is delivered directly to our food bank warehouse and from there is distributed to approximately 1700 households in Indiana County through ICCAP's network of 22 food pantries.

The Community Services Block Grant ARRA-Regular CSBG has been the "glue money" for community action agencies since 1965 and is critical in the continuum of care for low-income individuals and families. The ARRA funds are administered by the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) we will use the additional ARRA funds to fill the gaps in supportive services experienced by newly unemployed and under-employed individuals. These services and programs address employment, transportation, better use of available income through financial skills and asset building training and outreach for people at or below 200% of the federal poverty level.

Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP)- DCED is administering these funds which will flow through the county and will be used to make a permanent reduction in homelessness by moving newly homeless directly into permanent housing and by keeping working clients in subsidized housing who are affected by loss of hours or layoffs due to the economy.

Weatherization Assistance Program ARRA- Regular Weatherization is also administered by DCED and for many years has provided free installation of energy

conservation measures to income-eligible households, such as weather-stripping, installing insulation, furnace tune-ups, updating or replacing. This service is available to low-income homeowners and renters, regardless of heating source. Goals of the program include decreased utility bills for cash-strapped families, to provide jobs for workers, and to make the nation more energy efficient.

Over the past few months, we have increased staffing, training for crew members, equipment, sub-contractors, and clients/weatherization jobs in anticipation of the increased production.

As a result of the ARRA funding, there have been 16 jobs created at ICCAP but with the delays we are just now beginning to hire in those positions.

Providing these services to the neediest of our county residents has been delayed due to many factors which include the state budget impasse, lack of training opportunities and changes in program requirements. To date, we have not received any of the approved ARRA funds. When we are permitted to start the program, I believe we will have a significant impact on the community.

As an agency we are striving to meet the rigorous timeline required to spend these funds even though we have faced unforeseen circumstances with the state budget impasse. Also, at this time we do not know when the contracts start. I would ask that the strict timeline for the expenditure of the ARRA funds be reviewed and consideration be made for an extension.

The ARRA funds will afford us the opportunity to better serve the homeless, unemployed and low-income population of Indiana County. Thank you having me here today and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.