

TESTIMONY OF MAYOR HOWARD S. ZWELLING, CITY OF ZANESVILLE

In this climate of deficits and budget cuts, the Community Development Block Grant Program has been criticized for lack of impact. I strongly disagree. I'm prepared to give you many examples about the positive impact these funds have had on our citizens and community, but I also want to note the devastating impact that the reduction or elimination of these funds would have on us as well. To make cuts in this program is to ask the most from those who have the least to give.

Nearly 57% of the population of Zanesville earns low to moderate income. CDBG funds have helped us address the needs of our citizens who don't have the sufficient income to pay local taxes to cover the cost of providing themselves with basic services. Each year, we have a Citizens' Advisory Committee review applications from City departments and local non-profits. After reviewing this information and the City's community and housing assessment plans, they make recommendations to me as to which projects to fund. This is an example of "home rule" functioning at its best: local citizens are prioritizing projects in their own community. Since 2000, we have been able to make the following improvements with these funds:

- 1,439 Linear Feet of Sewer Lines and Repairs
- 5,300 Linear Feet of Water Lines and Repairs
- 7,680 Linear Feet of Curbs & Sidewalks in the City of Zanesville
- 5,291 Linear Feet of Street Repairs
- Home Repairs for 48 Low-Moderate Income Owner-Occupied Households
- Purchase over 2,300 pieces of electronic equipment and supplies for local non-profit organizations dedicated to community outreach

Often, we've utilized matching funds from other sources like HOME and the Ohio Housing Trust Fund to get the maximum benefit from this investment.

It's important to note that CDBG has not and does not provide sufficient funds to address the comprehensive total needs of low and moderate income people. Each year, we have to deny applications for very worthy projects because there is no money. These include new water lines, sewer separation projects, equipment purchase and capital improvement projects for non-profits.

Over the past six years, the City of Zanesville has spent, on average, approximately \$184,000 on projects dedicated to assisting individuals living in Low-Moderate Income homes and communities. However, with the projected reductions in CDBG funding, many more projects may be limited or eliminated entirely. Looking at these reductions, in 2004, the City of Zanesville received full CDBG funding of \$175,000. Since then, CDBG funding has been reduced by 5% in 2005 to \$165,000, 10% in 2006 to \$149,000, and a projected 25% reduction in 2007 to \$112,000.

With this proposed reduction in place, our ability to assist those living in these targeted areas is drastically reduced and instead of performing four or five projects every fiscal year, we would only be able to execute one, possibly two, projects per year while crippling our ability to aid those in the greatest need of assistance.

In conclusion, looking at both President Bush's comments for reducing the funding for CDBGs as well as the stated purpose for these block grants, what the City of Zanesville, as well as many other communities around the nation, is implementing policies mirroring these stated goals by the Administration. CDBG funding is going directly to community outreach programs as well as infrastructure and home repairs in many low-moderate income communities. By restructuring and reducing this funding, the Administration is only perpetuating this dire situation already in place in many communities as well as limiting the accessibility of these funds to individuals who need this assistance the most.