Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 7, 2011

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to express our deep concern about funding cuts in Community Services Block Grants (CSBG) that will be included in the administration's budget request for Fiscal Year 2012. While we understand that the improvement of our nation's budgetary outlook will require difficult choices, we believe that cutting CSBGs, which are the source of funding for community action programs, will hinder, rather than help, our nation's economic recovery.

Community action programs are the federal government's only comprehensive approach to addressing the needs of vulnerable citizens and helping struggling Americans get the services they need to achieve economic security. Covering 1,065 agencies in 99 percent of U.S. counties, community action programs last year provided critical supports such as employment, education and housing to 20.7 million Americans facing an array of enormous challenges ranging from extreme poverty, disability, and lack of employment. Community action programs created and retained 18,432 jobs over the past two years, ranking 8th out of approximately 200 Recovery Act federal programs.

In Massachusetts, we have seen firsthand the incredible positive impact of community action programs such as the Tri-City Community Action Program (Tri-CAP) in Malden, South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC) in Framingham, the Worcester Community Action Council (WCAC), and Action for Community Development (ABCD) in Boston, a widely respected community services program founded in 1962. ABCD, for example, makes a difference every day for 80,000 individuals and their families in the Commonwealth every year. ABCD has a network of hundreds of neighborhood offices, Head Start centers, family planning sites, and fuel assistance sites throughout Boston, helping residents get back on their feet, find jobs and pay taxes. Moreover, every CSBG dollar is multiplied 20 times over in private and public funds raised to support community programs and meet needs. As winter storms continue to bear down on our state and the New England region, ABCD is helping more than 26,000 low-income families survive a bitter winter with its fuel assistance program, it is launching a Earned Income Tax Credit campaign that will help close to 10,000 working poor families get access to up to $6,500 each in tax credits, it is providing Head Start and child care services for 2,400

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children and their families, and it is beginning recruitment for 5,000 inner-city youth for the agency's summer jobs and education program.

As you noted in your State of the Union Address, "I recognize that some in this chamber have already proposed deeper cuts, and I'm willing to eliminate whatever we can honestly afford to do without. But let's make sure that we're not doing it on the backs of our most vulnerable citizens." We respectfully submit, Mr. President, that cuts to CSBG funding would sever the indispensable lifelines that are relied upon each day by our country's most vulnerable. While we must oppose any cuts to CSBG funding, we stand ready to work with you as we confront the challenges facing our nation in the future.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Markey

John F. Kerry

Barney Frank

Richard E. Neal

John W. Olver

James P. McGovern

John Tierney

Michael E. Capuano

Stephen F. Lynch

Niki Tsongas

William Keating