

**Council of the District of Columbia  
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES  
AGENDA AND WITNESS LIST**

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004

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**COUNCILMEMBER BRIANNE K. NADEAU, CHAIRPERSON  
COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

**ANNOUNCES A PUBLIC OVERSIGHT ROUNDTABLE ON**

**“THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA’S COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM”**

**Thursday, September 22, 2022**

**10 a.m.**

**Virtual Public Hearing via Zoom**

**Streamed live at <https://www.brianneknadeau.com>**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

**II. OPENING REMARKS**

**III. WITNESS TESTIMONY**

*Public Witnesses*

1. Maria Teresa McPhail, President & CEO, Vida Senior Centers
2. Latesha Durkins, Senior Manager, Early Childhood Direct Services, Bainum Family Foundation
3. Joe Wilson, Program Manager, Workforce, Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative
4. Nate Shairece McNatt
5. Y'ize Lancaster

*Community Action Organization Witness*

1. Andrea Thomas, President and CEO, United Planning Organization
2. Jeffrey Page, Board President, United Planning Organization

*Government Witnesses*

1. Tunde Eboda, State CSBG Administrator, Department of Human Services
2. Laura Green Zeilinger, Director, Department of Human Services

**IV. ADJOURNMENT**



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September 09, 2021

It is a great honor to be here today representing Vida Senior Centers, an organization that has been serving the DC senior community for more than 52 years. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on behalf of the UPO, a longtime funder and partner.

### Vida Senior Centers' Mission is **Maintaining and Improving the Quality of Life of Seniors.**

Vida is the oldest Non-Profit Organization serving Hispanic and other low-income seniors in the greater DC Area, filling the gap for multiple Social Determinants of Health (SDoH). Vida's clients are predominantly older women who are living at or below the DC poverty line while struggling to age in place. Vida is multicultural and multilingual - English and Spanish, serving around 1,000 seniors across all 8 wards of the city, with physical presence in two wards, 1 and 4. The seniors Vida serves have no way to increase their income as the average age is 75 and UPO has utilized the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) to provide constant support for them as they age in place. With the help of CSBG funds from UPO, Vida provides the right support in healthcare, housing, food security, recreation and socialization and other life affirming services for the elderly. CSBG position UPO to have a salient impact on decreasing health care cost and other age-related expenses for the seniors served.

For more than 22 years UPO's CSBG funding has been a pillar in Vida's services to decrease causes and conditions of poverty for low-income seniors. CSBG funding covers 40% of the Vida Senior Centers programs to deliver services to **469** seniors in the city; services such as: Adult Education Programs, Health and Social Behavioral Development, Nutrition, and Other Services Supporting Multiple domains.

*Enriching the Life of a Multicultural Aging Community*



Part of the Senior Service Network Supported by the DC Office on Aging

All needs of the seniors served find themselves living below 200% of the federal poverty line.

Annually, Vida utilizes the CSBG award to deliver an average of **40,000** service units including the food commodity program which delivers more than **18,531** food packages to 360 plus seniors. It was the pandemic that made the food commodity programs especially relevant and important and UPO used CSBG funds to join efforts with Vida to serve DCs seniors.

The services we provide do not come close to the needs of the seniors we serve, and we believe that continued and additional CSBG support will assist to serve even more seniors as the demand is higher than we are able to meet now.



**CSBG Public Hearing  
September 22, 2022  
Testimony on behalf of UPO  
Given by  
Nate' Shairece McNatt**

My name is Nate' Shairece McNatt.

I would like to start by saying being a part of UPO and the Workforce Development program is a perfect life changing experience. UPO has changed my view on my D.C. community for the better. I have gained more Confidence about my own life, many others around me and in my community. I know now that I can do Anything when I put my mind to it, When I joined the Professional Building Maintenance program, I felt like I would fold under any pressure, and I second guess any thought or action that I pursued. I can now adapt to many situations whether I am comfortable or not. I am motivated and dedicated more than ever to achieve the goals I have set out to accomplish for a long time, I have gained self-discipline. I am committed to always hold myself to high standards and take accountability for my own actions soon.

I believe that more people in our DC. community should be notified about our UPO knowledge, resources, and movement. More people deserve the second chance that UPO provides. UPO has made it possible to become Self-Sufficient and help to reaffirm the purpose of my life and others in my community. Without the UPC) Workforce Development program, I know I would not be on the road to success. The funding that UPO receives is making it possible for me and so many others to complete each training and secure our future,

**THANK YOU!**

Sincerely,

Nate' Shairece McNatt

**CSBG Public Hearing  
September 22, 2022  
Testimony on behalf of UPO  
Given by  
Y'ize Lancaster**

My name is Y'ize Lancaster, and I am a student in the Community Services Block Grant funded UPO Broadband Telecommunications Training program. I truly enjoyed being in this program and learned a lot. It gave me lifelong skills and helped me find a route to a career. Before I graduated I knew I didn't want to go to college but knew I needed to have a plan. I couldn't afford to just stay at home doing nothing and I didn't want a regular job. I learned about UPO through the Saturday program and Mr. Kenny Carrol told me I could do more over the summer. I was immediately interested and decided to sign up. I initially wanted to do electrical but since there wasn't a teacher at the time he told me to think about telecommunications. I came in one day and met Mr. G., the UPO Broadband Telecommunications Training instructor. He showed me what I would be doing, what I would gain, and answered my questions. I liked what he told me and knew it could be a great start for me. I'm glad I made the decision to go through with it and now that I'm done I can't wait to start working. I am very grateful to Mr. G, Case Manager Ola Amodu, and every other instructor who helped me throughout these 12 weeks. I was given a huge opportunity and I definitely won't let it go to waste.

Sincerely,  
Y'ize Lancaster

Testimony of Tyresia Branch

UPO Workforce

Phone: 732-430-8689

Email: [Tyresia.Branch12@gmail.com](mailto:Tyresia.Branch12@gmail.com)

Hi, my name is Tyresia Branch. I am 32 years old, and I live in Washington, DC. I currently work as a Sushi Chef for Wegman's located on Wisconsin Avenue, Washington, DC. I am a single mother of four, 2 boys and 2 girls, and was unemployed when I started the Culinary Arts program at UPO.

I was able to secure this job by being involved with the United Planning Organization in the Culinary Arts program. I am a recipient of the Community Service Blocked Grant (CSBG) funding through UPO. Although, with the assistance of the staff at Workforce Training Institute, I interviewed at Wegman's and trained in Alexandria, Virginia as the only African American female training for a Sushi Chef position. Chef Yori hired me soon after and offered me \$ 18.50 per hour and I am currently making \$ 22.00 per hour. I have been employed since April 2022, also the financial raise has been a big help in supporting my family.

Being in the Culinary Arts program has inspired me to play it forward in becoming a Sushi Chef, which promises a better future for me and my family. Although, the journey has not been easy for me, I had to make many sacrifices, it pointed me in the right direction of being self-reliant, accountable, and responsible. Without the help I received through the CSBG funding, I do not know if I would have made this much progressed.

The staff at UPO Workforce Institute has been helpful and I want to acknowledge Chef Jerald Thomas, and the assistance of my classmates who worked with me on this journey.

The experience I have gained through this program will last me a lifetime and has helped me launch my career in the Culinary Arts field as a Sushi Chef. Thank you for funding the program with the Community Service Block Grant, and for keeping it going so that people like me can have an opportunity to achieve self-sufficiency.

**Oversight Roundtable: Committee on Human Services  
Community Services Block Grant**

**Oversight Roundtable: Committee on Human Services  
Community Services Block Grant  
Council of the District of Columbia  
Thursday, September 22, 2022**

**Testimony of Latesha Durkins, Senior Manager, Early Childhood Direct Services Bainum Family Foundation**

Hello, Chairwoman Brianne Nadeau and fellow Human Services Committee members. My name is Latesha Durkins, and I am the Senior Manager of Early Childhood Direct Services at the Bainum Family Foundation. The Bainum Family Foundation is a philanthropic organization that has invested in the well-being of children and families in the D.C. area for more than five decades. The Foundation works with community-based organizations and strives to build an equitable society that supports all children and families, especially those who have been systemically excluded from power, resources, and opportunity because of poverty and systemic racism. On behalf of the Bainum Family Foundation, I am pleased to testify in support of the United Planning Organization (UPO), a Community Action Agency and annual recipient of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG).

As the designated Community Action Agency for the District of Columbia, UPO has served city residents since 1962 and has been a premier model of excellence among the District's Early Head Start programs. UPO has also been a trusted Foundation partner for more than seven years. They have been active in numerous citywide strategies to improve early care and education for infants and toddlers and their families.

On behalf of the Foundation, I can attest that UPO has been a reliable and trustworthy partner. They have continued to steward the resources we provide annually for early learning services to District of Columbia residents. UPO has supported early learning and the well-being of young children and families living in marginalized communities; served as a technical assistance hub

**Oversight Roundtable: Committee on Human Services  
Community Services Block Grant**

for smaller childcare centers and homes; provided subject matter expertise to guide the Foundation's work and investments; advocated for the equitable distribution of resources for young children, early childhood educators, and families; and implemented innovative strategies to better serve young children and families.

The Bainum Family Foundation is highly supportive of the continuation of UPO being a recipient of the Community Services Block Grant.

Sincerely,

Latesha Durkins



**CSBG Public Hearing  
September 22, 2022  
Testimony on behalf of UPO  
Given by  
Shena Moncree**

My name is Shena Moncree and I am here because I received help from the United Planning Organization's CARES Act CSBG Program. Through this program, UPO offered Emergency Rental and Utility Assistance for individuals like myself that were impacted due to COVID.. Fortunately, my rent was paid but I struggled with my utility bills when I was laid off and had to choose what to pay with limited funds. I also received a from UPO's CARES Act CSBG program. Yessssssss.

Receiving that laptop has change my life and has given me the opportunity to create my resume, strengthen my computer skills, enrolling in computer class, seek new jobs and other resources to assist my family needs. I have been truly blessed and never take it for granted what UPO has done for me and my family. I was able to gain employment and being able to store important documents on my own laptop. So I just wanted to send a HUGE Heartfelt Thank You for allowing UPO to use its CARES Act CSBG program to help the District of Columbia Low Income Families during this pandemic.

Thank you,

Shena Moncree



**Sandra Mattavous-Frye, Esq.**  
**People's Counsel**

September 19, 2022

The Honorable Brianne K. Nadeau  
Ward One Councilmember  
Chairperson, Committee on Human Services  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Councilmember Nadeau:

I write to support the services the United Planning Organization (UPO) provides to the residents of the District of Columbia. As the advocate for DC consumers of electric, natural gas, water, and local telephone services, the Office of the People's Counsel (OPC) counts on longtime partners such as UPO to help support our shared constituents, particularly during difficult times like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over its five decades of existence, UPO has fed the hungry and kept the homeless warm. During the pandemic, the organization served as a valued provider for the STAY DC program, which, as you know, assisted families with emergency rental and utility assistance. Most recently, after the moratorium on utility disconnections was lifted, UPO received additional funds to help residents remain in their homes and keep utilities running. OPC was pleased to work with UPO to cut through the utility red tape to ensure UPO clients who were awaiting financial assistance would not be disconnected or would have their utilities restored while their cases were pending, including their telecommunications.

The United Planning Organization has had a positive impact on the quality of life of DC residents. There is an ongoing need for the nonprofit's services. Moreover, I commend UPO for operating as a provider of the DC Community Services Block Grant Program under the Department of Human Services.

Thank you for the opportunity to put on the record OPC's support for the much-needed services the United Planning Organization performs day in and day out.

Sincerely,

*Sandra Frye*

Sandra Mattavous-Frye  
People's Counsel for the District of Columbia

**UNITED PLANNING ORGANIZATION**  
**BOARD CHAIR TESTIMONY**  
**OVERSIGHT HEARING**  
**COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT**  
**September 22, 2022**

Good morning, Chairwoman Nadeau and members of the Committee on Human Services. I am Jeffrey Page, and I serve as Chair of the United Planning Organization's Board of Directors. I am proud to present to you today on behalf of District residents with low incomes. We have helped families break the cycle of poverty since we began operating in 1962 (Community Action Agency in 1964).

UPO's mission is to **Unite People with Opportunities**. Our staff of over 400 helps over 58,000 DC residents each year on a \$35 million budget, and our impact is felt in education, employment, health, housing, and advocacy.

From my review of testimony of previous Board Chairs, I am going to assume you are very familiar with the services we have provided since our founding. I want to use this time to highlight our efforts during the pandemic. To say the last two years was an unprecedented time is an understatement. When I took over the role as board chair and when Ms. Thomas assumed the presidency, we could have never imagined what was around the corner. UPO is a large organization, yet we proved to be nimble, responsive, and adaptable to our community's needs during the pandemic. The decrease in child poverty rates made headlines recently, due to the Federal Government's aggressive policy response to the pandemic and UPO was vital in the administering those allocated funds to the Washington DC community. The pandemic confirmed that UPO is a trusted steward of funding resources and a place where people come together to serve during a crisis. I want to highlight a few of the critical services we provided during the pandemic:

**Pandemic Response:**

- UPO was called on by the District to provide childcare to first responders. We responded immediately to this urgent need and equipped three new centers to serve the children of these heroes in a safe and high-quality learning environment

- We used additional CSBG funding received through the CARES Act in multiple ways, including providing rent and utility support for 518 households using \$3.9 million dollars to help residents avoid utility disconnections and evictions as the moratorium was lifted. This support was on **top** of the delivery of services through the CHAP and ERAP grants.
- We funded youth serving organizations each summer whose focus was to help quell the learning loss that was an effect of the pandemic and to provide mental and physical health supports to youth.
- As schools re-opened, our “Foster Grandparent” senior volunteers supported over 5,000 children in classrooms, teaching them reading, math, motor skills, and social-and-emotional skills. During the pandemic, we gave laptops to both students and our volunteers, and we continue to provide computer literacy training to our Foster Grandparents and other senior citizens throughout the city.
- The UPO Workforce Institute, which **opens doors** to high-demand careers from IT and education to electrical tech and healthcare, helped 1,000 people find jobs despite the pandemic. We also launched a youth construction training program that we will continue to improve.
- UPO is committed to being a partner in developing 500 units of deeply affordable housing within 5 years. We are on track to do so with strategic partnerships with developers invested in producing deeply affordable housing that is environmentally conscious and aesthetically desirable.
- We continued to operate the District’s largest Early Head Start services. and during the closing of our centers, we reached out to parents weekly to see how they were doing and how we could help. We launched virtual classrooms and socially distanced readings in the park. And we continued to expand. We opened Eagle and Malcolm X early learning centers during the pandemic and are on target to open more centers in partnership with DC public schools.

### **Partnerships with the community, businesses, universities, and other nonprofits.**

A critical component to our success in serving communities is our partnerships. We have formed partnerships with community orgs, nonprofits, businesses, universities, and federal and DC governments.

- Partner banks urged us to use already-granted funds to help those facing housing insecurity.
- We partnered with Martha’s Table, Big Valley Produce, and the Capital Area Food Bank among others to distribute 133,000 meals to families, seniors, and people experiencing homelessness.
- New Partners like Nats4Good, Metropolitan AME Church, BB&T Bank, and Brookfield Development offered additional pandemic-response support.

- The George Washington University medical school students delivered groceries to 400 seniors citizens for several weeks.
- Scores of people in the communities we serve went door to door educating residents about the census, called senior citizens to stave off social isolation and served hot food to those in need.

### **Board Governance**

As board chair, it was important to me that UPO maintain steady governance. We moved to virtual recruitment and question and answer sessions about board participation. and when it was time to recruit new board members who would bring expertise and dynamism to this board. This lead to the **largest community voting** the agency has had for our board elections.

Accountability is another critical component to our success. According to the National Community Action Partnership, which is the membership organization for the 1,000 community action agencies across the country, the Performance Scorecard we developed is a sophisticated management tool that uses an **agency-wide approach** to show accountability for our **results**.

### **Personal impacts on real peoples lives:**

The last thing I want to share is about the micro level impacts we have on people lives through a success story.

Janae was living in her car when the pandemic arrived, and she was soon laid off. She turned to UPO staff who helped her sharpen her resume. She said: “This helped improve my writing skills and readied me for an unexpected career change.” When Janae saw an opening for a receptionist, she quickly sent her new resume and was hired immediately. She has since been promoted. Now she is going back to school and is a community leader. As Janae says, “UPO guided me through one of the most vulnerable times a young woman could have, homeless and alone. I am forever grateful.”

These individuals reflect our corporate and policy vision. UPO’s Washington: A city of thriving communities and self-sufficient residents.

Thank you.



**UNITED PLANNING ORGANIZATION**  
**PRESIDENT AND CEO TESTIMONY**  
**OVERSIGHT HEARING**  
**COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT**  
**September 22, 2022**

**Andrea Thomas, President and CEO**  
**United Planning Organization**

Chairwoman Nadeau, Committee Members, Officials and Colleagues, I am Andrea Thomas, the President and CEO of UPO the United Planning Organization. Thank you for the opportunity to present the work and impact of UPO during this legislative hearing. Today, I will share how our Board of Directors and staff implement and leverage the Community Services Block Grant to help residents achieve economic security so their communities can thrive. We look forward to your feedback and questions.

UPO was created in 1962 to coordinate the long-term planning of human service needs and facilities. UPO became the District's Community Action Agency in 1964, and our history shows that our work has and continues to make **broad and deep impact**:

- In 1964, UPO launched one the first pilot Head Start programs in the nation. Currently UPO is the District's **largest Early Head Start provider**, and, as Mr. Page said, our approach is held up as a model for quality early education. We provide training and technical assistance to 15 other early learning providers in the city, ensuring that they deliver quality education and support to families. Our collaborations with DC Public Schools also deepens and expands our educational impacts. UPO operates early learning centers in 5 DCPS high schools and in Ketcham, Malcolm X, and soon in Randle elementary school.
- In 1964, to provide free legal aid to District residents, UPO created the Neighborhood Legal Services Program, with Ford Foundation funding. We brought this service directly into the neighborhoods we served. Today, we work in legal services partnerships with

Tzedek DC and Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless. These two organizations come to our centers and to our events, where they connect with residents who urgently need legal aid on tenant issues.

- In 1976, UPO was an early sponsor of the Foster Grandparents Program. Today, UPO provides 50 DCPS schools with nearly 200 seniors who provide academic support to young people directly within the classroom setting or virtually, enabling teachers to maintain classroom management and keep the pace of the curriculum.
- In 1979, UPO created the Community Food and Nutrition Program, which led to the creation of the Capital Area Food Bank. Today, UPO collaborates with CAFB to provide meals and groceries to over 400 seniors in Ward 8 through the Grocery Plus program.

Over the decades, UPO has continued to develop progressive strategies to create innovative, high-quality programs that move residents into stable futures.

Our work today is guided by 6 Strategic Goals:

#1: Offer pathways to the middle class.

#2: Create and grow social enterprise opportunities, which develop the skills of apprentices so they can launch careers as workers or entrepreneurs.

#3: Expand our portfolio of programs offered regionally.

#4: Develop and implement a coordinated marketing and development approach. The result of this change is better outreach to new audiences.

#5: Leverage government funding by 20% with private sector support. We have attracted new sources of funding, including from Citibank, TD Bank, BlueCross, JP Morgan Chase, the Nationals, and many others who embrace UPO as a trusted steward of their financial resources and significant community partner.

#6: Use the Baldrige Management Practices of Continuous Improvement to cultivate efficient and nimble business practices.

These strategies support a pro-education, pro-career, and pro-community approach that helps address residents' basic needs, foster economic security and actualizes community action's mandate to move people experiencing poverty to self-sufficiency.



Pivotal to securing self-sufficiency is earning a living wage. A critical part of our customers' achieving financial stability is job training and placement through our Workforce Institute. UPO's portfolio of national trainings are certified by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education. Our certifications for EMT, electrical, plumbing, cabling, CDL drivers, IT Help Desk and culinary arts are all high demand fields, which ensures that residents are equipped to pursue long-term career pathways. In addition to UPO training, the agency also provides grant funding to other service providers for career training and placement.

In the past 2 years we have collectively placed **over a thousand people** in jobs.

Let me share two stories:

- Reggie T., Sr. earned a national certification in Broadband Telecommunications at UPO, then persuaded his **son** to join the same program. Now they're **both** certified, working, and hope to open their own company.
- Michael B. came to us after **40 years** in prison. He had grown from a **boy** into a **man while incarcerated**. We placed him in a job at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. He was promoted in **6 months** and plans to complete his career there.

In addition to being pro-career, UPO is pro-education.

As the District's largest Early Head Start provider, UPO leverages CSBG to operate 17 early learning centers. Recognizing that the first thousand days of a child's life are the most critical for forming a solid foundation for the rest of their lives, UPO was tapped in 2015 to serve as the main "hub" for the city's Quality Improvement Network, which is a multi-year effort to boost outcomes for infants and toddlers.

Nationally and locally, there is a dearth of early childhood teachers. UPO wanted to be part of the solution. To develop the local pool of passionate educators, we added a Child Development Associate training component to our OSSE-approved certifications. Many of our Early Head Start parents have taken advantage of this opportunity. They have earned certifications and are completing their internships at UPO early learning centers, and we are hiring these talented graduates for our classrooms.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that in the chaotic early days of the pandemic, the District government called on UPO to quickly open up 3 emergency child care centers for the children of first responders. We prepared classrooms for pandemic safety and opened for business in a matter of days. The Washington Post quoted Nacole Thrower, a mother and first responder who placed her son in one of our centers, who said, "I appreciate the love and support from his teacher, the center director, and the coach. **They cater to him as if he were their own.**"

Parents and their experiences guide the direction for our Office of Early Learning through our Parent Policy Council. These parents — one from each center and one from the home visitor program — decide the budget and program direction. Also, UPO's Board of Directors always includes a member of the Parent Policy Council.

As children continue to grow, we continue to support them in the educational environment. Our Youth Services division has robust afterschool activities for first to 12<sup>th</sup> graders that drive student academic success all the way through college. Our programs use hands-on, project-based learning in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math.

Our CREATE program, for grades 1-6, develops essential skills such as critical thinking and social-emotional learning.

Here's an example of our students' success: Our Robotics Club in Ward 8's Hendley Elementary School learned about engineering, problem-solving, and teamwork. They worked hard to become the State Champions in the DC VEX IQ Robotics League, and advanced to the VEX Robotics World Championships. Our team was the only 100% African-American team among the 400 competitors from 30 countries and all 50 states. Their success sparked the creation of 3 new teams: TinyBots (for younger students), Wakanda (for high school students), and the Sparkle Bots, an all-girl team that won a Judge's Award at the following year's DC robotics championships.

Also, the middle and high school students in our program won the STEM Jeopardy contest for two years in a row at the Patriots Technology Youth Summit.

Our POWER (Providing Opportunities with Educational readiness) program, follows students from 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade and prepares students for college and careers, inspiring them to pursue 21<sup>st</sup> century careers in STEM. UPO is on its 3<sup>rd</sup> POWER cohort and partnerships with local universities, the Smithsonian, the Anacostia Watershed, National Society of Blacks in Engineering - to name a few - exposes our students to the possibilities open to them through science focused enrichments. This is coupled with targeted social emotional supports to ensure that our students are able to live balanced lives both inside and out of the classroom.

I'd like to share one story of a student. **Justina** by her own admission was an argumentative student who wouldn't listen to anyone. Her mother asked UPO to help her. Justina joined our multi-year college readiness program. Justina matured and now it is hard to identify any **weaknesses** because she is constantly turning them into strengths. In our Social Emotional Learning workshops, she learned strategies to manage her emotions while staying focused on her goals. And when the pandemic hit, she had the tools to respond to her mental and

emotional state. As a result, she graduated high school with a 3.5 GPA, earned 9 college scholarships, and is now majoring in social work at Virginia State University, which is her dream come true.

Our pro-career, pro-education efforts are intertwined and bolstered by our pro-community mission. It is no surprise to this body that one of the most pressing community needs is housing. Affordable, dignified housing is the foundation of stable communities and thriving families. Our experience in the pandemic and the work conducted for UPO's latest Community Needs Assessment – which includes a stand-alone chapter on affordable housing – reinforced how dire housing conditions are for many residents. We found that the District's median rent rose 44 percent over the past decade and is now over \$1,500 a month. We know from our work that housing affordability and housing quality challenges deeply affect UPO customers across all of our program areas.

All that UPO does to support economic security and mobility is hindered when our customers live in unstable, unsafe, or unaffordable housing. UPO has contributed to the alleviation of housing insecurity in 3 ways,

- rental assistance
- intensive case management through Permanent Supportive Housing
- and partnering with developers to deliver **new** affordable units

UPO is one of the administrators of DC's Emergency Rental Assistance Program, or ERAP, and we were one of 3 groups to administer the pandemic eviction prevention program known as CHAP (COVID Housing Assistance Program).

Permanent Supportive Housing aids the most financially vulnerable members of the community in securing and maintaining housing stability. We now serve 74 PSH households and are preparing to serve many more through local development partnerships.

In 2019 UPO also became a direct provider of affordable housing. We partnered with developer, TM Associates, a national provider of affordable housing, to build 76 new units at 1550 First Street, SW — the first new affordable housing in SW in nearly two decades. In addition to these units, the partnership with TM is on target to deliver an additional 101 units in southwest DC and another 56 units in northeast DC in Ward 7, at 950 Eastern Avenue NE.

All of these apartments are for residents who earn less than 50 percent of the Median Family Income and many have 3 or 4 bedrooms. A fifth of these homes are for residents who earn less than 30% of the Median Family Income, who qualify for permanent supportive housing. The District's Department of Housing and Community Development said it looks to our building "as a **model**" and called it "**unprecedented**" for its combination of high quality and deep affordability.

We are proud to provide truly affordable housing that comes with contemporary amenities, wraparound services, and **dignity**.

Beyond housing, UPO understands that supporting communities means supporting their articulated community goals and visions. Through our Advocacy Division and Community Leadership Academy, we are helping residents advocate for themselves and their community. Participants in the leadership academy learn about the power of civic engagement, creating effective written and oral testimony, and how to engage local government as a partner in addressing community needs. Our newest **academy graduates** are becoming potent advocates for their neighborhoods, jumpstarting policy changes and economic development.

- They spearheaded the Ward 8 Health and Wellness Survey, presented it to the community, and are now following through with testimony to DC Council members and are in talks with other stakeholders to make real changes.
- They are also deeply involved with UPO's efforts in the Jobs Not Guns project, which was established to support Mayor Bowser's Building Blocks DC initiative to reduce gun violence. Our graduates are helping to reach communities **citywide** about opportunities for more jobs and less violence.

UPO also **partners** with nearly 150 diverse partners to expand our offerings in early childhood education, nationally accredited certifications, workforce development, housing counseling, volunteerism and other programs.

For example, we are collaborating with residents and stakeholders in 3 Community Impact Zones: Brentwood in Ward 5, Buzzard Point in Ward 6, and Benning Terrace in Ward 7. UPO is collaborating with residents who are driving place-based strategies to improve their quality of life. During the pandemic, UPO:

- addressed food insecurity by bringing fresh produce to over 1,400 homes biweekly, and reaching other communities with weekly fresh produce, daily prepared meals, and 800 turkeys for Thanksgiving, in partnership with Capital Area Food Bank, Martha's Table and others. We recruited over 200 community volunteers for these efforts.
- gave seniors a toll-free number so they could call other DC seniors each day
- conducted twice-weekly health calls
- partnered with United Medical Center to provide COVID vaccines and tests throughout the neighborhoods, with weekly distributions of personal protective equipment
- created 200 community partnerships
- delivered \$5,000 worth of school supplies
- referred 55 people who were hired for jobs with benefits as construction workers, administrators, maintenance workers, and dispatchers

This effort was propelled by the place-based strategy in Washington Highlands in Ward 8, which began in 2014 when UPO launched the Washington Highlands Community Advancement Network initiative in close collaboration with community partners. We have helped to build community by addressing issues on a grassroots level such as:

- Parenting skills, health, and nutrition
- Job training and placement
- Domestic violence education
- and building playgrounds

UPO was also instrumental in the success of the high resident participation in the DC census. UPO was a trusted partner to get responses from residents in the hardest-to-reach communities. We worked hand-in-hand with the Bainum Family Foundation, the Greater Washington Urban League, ANC commissioners, and many others to spread the word about the fiscal and cultural importance of the census. UPO hosted information sessions, social media gatherings and supported the DC Counts media campaign to ensure that DC would receive its fair share of federal funds.

UPO's partnerships help **extend** the work that UPO does and builds on the strengths of other organizations. Many of our grantee partners focus on training and employment, including DC Central Kitchen, Edgewood Brookland Family Collaborative, Associated Catholic Charities, Metropolitan AFL/CIO's Community Services Division, and Thrive DC. As you heard today, VIDA Senior Centers also is a UPO partner and relies heavily on CSBG to support their work.

Our community work is widely recognized and appreciated. Mustafa Abdul-Salaam, who is an ANC commissioner and a facilitator for the Ward 8 Community Economic Development Plan, said, "UPO has a very good reputation in the community. UPO's leadership role in advocacy and leadership development is more relevant now than ever before. Their Advocacy team understands that community vision and development come from the bottom up: engaging members of the community, **training them to be leaders** to make a visible, viable difference."

Serving community over the past three years during the pandemic meant addressing deepening needs.

Of course, COVID affected the lives of our own staff and their families. Like the rest of the nation, UPO team members had to balance work and educating children at home, caring for loved ones and dealing with the physical and psycho-social challenges of staying safe during a pandemic and political unrest. It was their resilience, commitment and creativity that enabled us to continue serving District residents. In some ways, we wound up serving them **better**: When we made our parenting workshops **virtual**, attendance **doubled**! From now on, we will offer both in-person *and* virtual activities for parents.

We operate the Shelter Hotline as part of city's continuum of care for the homeless, and we used it to increase food distribution to people experiencing homelessness. We continued to issue EBT cards to customers eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program so that 40,000 families could put food on the table, and we ensured that clients of our methadone clinic received their daily medication so as not to exacerbate their health conditions that could have led to risky behaviors.

UPO also intensified partnerships during the pandemic with 25 organizations in the coalition of DC Emergency Food Providers so we could bring food, cleaning supplies, and emergency aid to thousands of families. This effort was coordinated by the DC Office of Planning. To go even further, we created an Emergency Fund that helped people who were struggling with utilities and other home expenses and supported 200 families who were quarantined.

As a recipient of CARES Act funding, we took a two-pronged approach to addressing pandemic challenges. The first was to provide relief for emergency needs.

These actions included:

- Providing nearly 2,000 computers to students to support distance learning, and distributions to seniors to prevent social isolation and to encourage telehealth visits.
- Personal Protective Equipment was provided to families, schools and youth serving organizations to maintain a high level of personal safety and facility cleanliness.
- Food security, as noted was a top priority and one of the most requested needs during the pandemic.
- COVID and vaccine education.
- Rental and utility assistance were of dire concern for residents during the pandemic and 518 residents were supported with aid in this area.

Families were assisted families with COVID-related medical bills, baby supplies, summer camp tuition, burial support, and mental health support.

Our second focus area for the CARES funding was economic security.

- We expanded our job training **and** added new certifications that we projected to be in high demand post-pandemic. Network security was added with the anticipation that many companies would remain in a hybrid posture and would need a workforce that could support their IT security needs. We launched an environmental cleaning and

sanitation program, again anticipating heightened cleaning needs. We added an entrepreneurship component to this training for those seeking to start a cleaning business.

- For graduating high school students, UPO launched a construction careers series to introduce construction trades as a postsecondary option. This program was highlighted on NBC4.
- Over \$2M in community grants were set aside for other non-profits to provide education, training and other support to families during the pandemic. Recipients like DC Diaper Bank, A Wider Circle, DASH, Spanish Education Center and others helped to extend the reach of CSBG dollars.

We are proud of the work that UPO has done to use CSBG funds well, including during the pandemic, and we are planning for the future so that we can do more and continue to make impact. UPO is in the last year of our 5-year strategic plan and we are of course in the planning stages of our next 3 year plan. This is critical to our efforts for continuous quality improvement and ensuring we are meeting the **highest priority needs** in the District.

We believe our plan – in part- will incorporate several areas:

- We will continue to establish our role as a provider of deeply affordable housing. We have learned a great deal in the past 3 years. We know that developing housing that matches the needs of residents with low incomes is possible.
- We will launch our food truck as a training and entrepreneurship training tool as well as a social enterprise. We are hopeful that 3 years from now, social enterprise will be a core part of our work.
- We will refine UPO's programs to align with regional, long-range career opportunities for customers. UPO is eager to ensure that our training programs focus on in-demand fields for today and well into the future.
- We will engage in legislative advocacy by amplifying the voices and needs of people with low incomes. Community Action was founded in the 1960s with the understanding that organizations that fight poverty must engage in policy advocacy to address the systemic factors that **cause** poverty. UPO has created a new Legislative Advocacy department to invite customers and staff to tap into their experiences and use their voices to call for needed policy and budget changes. In addition, we will ask UPO staff to contribute to policy development through service on DC boards and commissions.
- We will develop non-clinical mental health supports for UPO customers. Poverty is stressful, and stress and unrealized trauma affects the daily well-being of people experiencing poverty and their opportunities for advancement. UPO is eager to use our deep community connections to expand services that ease the stresses of poverty.

Finally, we continuously review **our work** and its alignment with **what the community needs** to improve our effectiveness. From greatly expanding our job training for in-demand fields to

developing deeply affordable housing to delving into social enterprise and offering entrepreneurial training for our culinary arts students, we are ever evolving.

UPO prides itself on being a teaching and training organization pursuing excellence that causes us to take public input seriously, to critique and constantly re-assess the effectiveness of our work, creating standards of accountability higher than those of government funders and private supporters.

In closing, I'd like to quote U.S. Senator Cory Booker who was a guest speaker at our Martin Luther King Breakfast. He said, "thank you UPO for making hope blossom in the District and for helping to "make a beloved community where we all have equal dignity and abundant potential but also **belong to each other**." That is our goal as we manifest our mission of uniting people with opportunities.

Thank you for listening.



Testimony of

**Tunde Eboda, PhD**

State CSBG Administrator  
Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)  
Family Services Administration  
Department of Human Services

Before the

Committee on Human Services  
Councilmember Brianne K. Nadeau, Chairperson

Thursday, September 22, 2022

10 a.m.

Virtual Public Hearing via Zoom

Council of the District of Columbia  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Room 120  
Washington, DC 20004

Good afternoon, Councilmember Nadeau and members of the Committee on Human Services, I am Tunde Eboda, Lead Program Officer for the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) at the Family Services Administration within the DC Department of Human Services (DHS). Thank you for this opportunity, I am happy to be here to provide testimony on the "District of Columbia's CSBG FY 2023/2024 State Plan & Application.

DHS is the district agency responsible for the management, administration, and oversight of the CSBG operation in the District of Columbia. The United Planning Organization (UPO) is the designated Community Action Agency (CAA) and the CSBG eligible entity, serving as the primary CSBG partner to DHS and operating a city-wide service and program network.

CSBG is a 100% federally funded grant, devoted to the operations of the state office, direct services administered by UPO, its network of local community and faith-based organizations to design and provide programs and services to alleviate the causes and consequences of poverty affecting individuals, families and communities across the District of Columbia. The network of organizations involved in this operation, under a contractual relationship with UPO, deliver programs and services to residents in all eight (8) wards of the District of Columbia.

The CSBG, for decades (since the Government Performance and Accountability Act of 1998), has operated under a results-based, management and accountability system, a management approach that measures the impact that programs are having on the lives of the people they serve. UPO has adopted a set of program priority areas, developed nationally and used as the to formulate its own economic stability initiatives, with due consideration to local dynamics. These include employment, housing, health, education, income management, nutrition, emergency services, coordination and linkages, and self-sufficiency. The UPO Management and Board designs programs and services with an outcome orientation as a required component; the state CSBG office monitors for performance and compliance in this area.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 22 (to-date), the UPO networks have provided unduplicated services to over 47,000 customers in DC. At the end of FY 2021, the network delivered programs and services to over 58,000 customers under very challenging circumstances of the prevailing public health emergency of COVID-19.

### **Funding:**

The District of Columbia Government receives its CSBG funds through the annual federal appropriations process. The federal agency that oversees the CSBG is the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). There is a statutory ninety percent (90%) minimum pass-thru to the Community Action Agency (UPO) as well as a maximum five percent (5%) administrative cap. The remaining five percent (5%) balance of the grant are used to “support activities that are consistent with the purposes of the grant”. Examples include, providing training and technical assistance to the UPO and its Board, conducting community needs assessments, supporting innovative programs and activities conducted by UPO or other neighborhood-based organizations to eliminate poverty, promote self-sufficiency and promote community revitalization. In FY 2022, the CSBG allotment to the District was \$12,356,542 of which \$11,120,887 or ninety percent (90%) is due UPO.

### **State Oversight**

A unique governance structure, mandated by the CSBG statute requires that the CAA have a tri-partite board comprised of one-third elected public officials or their representatives; that no fewer than one-third of the members of the board be democratically elected low-income residents or representatives of low-income individuals and families in the communities being served; and that the remainder of the members are officials or members of businesses, professional organizations or industry in the community being served. The state CSBG office monitors for compliance in this regard and provides training and technical assistance to the UPO Management & Board, as needed.

The CSBG statute also requires that the state convene at least one legislative hearing every three (3) years in order to be eligible to receive a grant. The purpose of this hearing is to provide the public with an opportunity to comment on the use and distribution of CSBG funds within the state. The schedule of a comprehensive on-site monitoring exercise, a responsibility of the state CSBG office, is also set at a statutory minimum of once every three (3) years. DHS exceeds this minimum standard and conducts annual on-site visits and a monthly monitoring review of programmatic and financial activities of UPO in order to ensure the practice of proper management and accounting standards and practices. Annual Single Audits of DHS programs are conducted by independent Accounting Firms, under the purview of the DC Office of the Chief Financial Officer; external annual independent audits are also conducted of UPO. The reports of audits are reviewed promptly by the state CSBG office and referred to appropriate entities with both expertise and authority for follow-up action, as needed. The last comprehensive monitoring exercise of UPO was conducted by the state CSBG office in June 2020. The most recent Single Audit of CSBG was conducted in March – May of FY 2020. Both exercises showed no material deficiencies in program operations, systems and controls.

### **Service Delivery – CSBG & CSBG Supplemental (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act or the CARES Act of 2020)**

The period FY 2020 through FY 2022 represents an additional magnitude in CSBG obligation and expenditures due to the still prevailing public health emergency of COVID-19. Specifically, the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provided \$16,427,550 in CARES Act funding to the District of Columbia as CSBG supplemental (assuming the characteristics of the regular CSBG in distribution and administration of funds) with special emphasis on addressing the consequences of increasing unemployment and economic disruption due to the exigencies of COVID-19. UPO will devote a significant part of their testimony to the robust and comprehensive response to COVID-19 using CSBG/CARES funds. The portion of the CARES funds that DHS controlled, \$821,377 or five percent of the grant, was

used to supplement DHS' homeless program, specifically, increased demand for emergency rental assistance by DC individuals and families at-risk of homelessness during the intense COVID-19 emergency period.

In the context of coordinating and delivering regular CSBG services, there are always ongoing efforts to strengthen both the efficiency, effectiveness and reporting throughout the CSBG delivery network. The state CSBG office has responsibility to provide training and technical assistance to UPO. They, in turn, have the responsibility to ensure that the partners in their program and services network have the capacity to manage federal funds and deliver on stated outcomes.

The state CSBG office and UPO have adopted organizational standards, developed nationally under the auspices of HHS, which created 58 organizational data points. Through these standards, the CSBG operates within the statutory mandate and relevant federal regulations, as well as build accountability and continuous improvement into its process. As a performance-based grant, these standards also increase the ability to measure the impact of program delivery on the lives of low-income individuals, families and communities. This data driven process allows the CAA (i.e. UPO) to confirm which strategies are working in reducing the conditions of poverty and increasing self-sufficiency. UPO is also able to objectively evaluate strategies that need improvement. In summary and annotated below are three (3) components of the organizational standards:

1. Maximum Feasible Participation
  - Consumer Input and Involvement
  - Community Engagement
  - Community Assessment
2. Vision and Direction
  - Organizational Leadership
  - Board Governance
  - Strategic Planning

### 3. Operations and Accountability

- Human Resource Management
- Financial Operations and Oversight
- Data and Analysis

#### **Review and Comments on the CSBG State Plan:**

When possible, this Public Oversight Roundtable is designed to coincide with the development of the CSBG state plan. Notwithstanding, availability of a draft copy of the CSBG state plan is published in the DC Register and made available for public inspection and comment for a period of approximately 30 days. This year, June 1 - July 5, 2022 represented the period during which hard copies of the current state plan could be requested and made available for public inspection and comment at citywide locations, including DHS headquarters (64 New York Avenue, NE); the MLK, Jr. Memorial Library (901 G Street, NW); and at UPO offices (301 Rhode Island Avenue, NW). An electronic copy was also made available on both the DHS website and UPO website.

The annual CSBG state plan was due for submission on September 1, 2022. DHS' plan and application were submitted, electronically on Tuesday, August 30, 2022. DHS, at its option, elected to develop and submit a two-year plan & application (FY 2023 – FY 2024). The state plan is deemed a working document and may be revised, as needed, during the two-year term of the plan. The state plan reflects human services priorities, developed in conjunction with UPO and having a bearing on the purposes of the CSBG. The required certifications and statutory assurances have been attested to/signed by the Director; recommendations contained in UPO's community needs assessment survey were considered and adopted; public comments were reviewed also considered; available secondary economic and poverty data on DC neighborhoods and population were consulted; data and analysis on other available qualitative and quantitative sources were used as references in the development of the state plan.

**Closing Remarks:**

In closing, DHS will continue to strive to meet the needs of the District's low-income individuals, families and communities through the use of CSBG funds. The agency will continue to work with and strengthen the partnership with its CSBG eligible entity, UPO in this effort. The essential programs and services they and their competitively selected program and services network of independent partner organizations provide are comprehensive in reach and scope and afford opportunities for low-income individuals, families and communities to access and receive needed services.

We thank the Committee for the opportunity to provide a few highlights on the management and administration of CSBG in the District. Both UPO and the state CSBG office are happy to answer any questions you may have here today or in written submissions to your offices later.