



PRESS RELEASE

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Stay Woke: Trump's Budget Proposal Severely Impacts Community Action

An Op-Ed by Gregory C. Scott, President/CEO of Community Action Partnership of Orange County

Garden Grove, CA – March 7, 2018 – I must admit, sometimes I don't pay attention, and that can have its perks. The advantages include not being distracted by the prevalence of misleading noise on social media and news outlets. On the other hand, when we stop paying attention to pressing community issues, the resulting consequences may be severely detrimental to the most vulnerable members of our society. Stay woke. We are at risk of becoming so numb to the challenges our country faces; we miss the opportunities to fight for the legislation put in place to help those in need and ultimately benefit us all.

President Donald Trump recently released his budget proposal for FY 2019, recommending deep cuts, (*on many line items funding has been zeroed out completely*) to vital funding for programs that support some of our most vulnerable community members for the second year in a row. The President's budget proposal eliminates funding for programs that assist low-income families served by Community Action Partnership of Orange County (CAPOC), an anti-poverty and social justice organization. CAPOC is part of a network of 1,000 Community Action Agencies across the country, which currently serves 16 million low-income Americans annually. CAPOC started its journey in the war against poverty during the Civil Rights Movement which grew under the Presidency of John F. Kennedy and continued into the term of President Lyndon B. Johnson; with the support of the US Congress into the mid-1960s.

If passed, President Trump's proposal will cause significant funding reductions to programs that make a difference in the lives of thousands of people. This dramatically impacts CAPOC's programs such as our fight against hunger in the OC Food Bank, weatherization and utility assistance programs, and social service programs at our two Family Resource Centers that serve hundreds of thousands of low-income women, children, and families throughout the Orange County region.

For over 50 years, we have been committed to serving Orange County's low-income communities through strategic community action and partnerships. As the new President and Chief Executive Officer of CAPOC, I am deeply concerned about the impact these proposed cuts would have on our most vulnerable community

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members. Today, an estimated 350,000 people live in poverty in Orange County, and one in five children are at-risk of hunger each day. Many of those affected are the working poor, who struggle to support their families in a county that has one of the highest costs of living rates in the nation. Orange County's high cost of living forces many families and older adults to compromise between paying rent or buying food; resulting in poverty, food insecurity and unhealthy diets. Poverty is a complicated issue. As a starting point, these issues include hunger, livable jobs and wages, affordable housing, mental health and healthcare, and race and gender discrimination. Our essential work serves to right the wrongs suffered by disenfranchised sectors of our community.

CAPOC's programs are made possible through the federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funding that would be eliminated in President Trump's proposal. CSBG is the glue that holds together the critical programs for CAPOC and the other Community Action Agencies across the country. This grant is foundational to the ability to secure additional funding required to affectively assist our community. CSBG funding is critical for us to keep open the doors and provide services at our Anaheim Independencia Family Resource Center and our El Modena Family Resource Center in Orange. Every year, our OC Food Bank distributes more than 21 million pounds of fresh food to almost 200,000 families through an extensive collaborative network of over 350 organizations. CAPOC's energy services assist more than 3,000 households with utility assistance during times of financial crisis, and our social programs serve nearly 200,000 Orange County residents through our 64 programs. Our documented impact is enormous, but not nearly enough to solve our nation's problems.

The President's budget proposal will significantly impact these programs and the communities they serve. Also slated for complete defunding is the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), which provides USDA food boxes to over 700,000 low-income seniors in the country. The senior food box program distributes this USDA food to nearly 24,000 seniors each month at our 70 distribution sites spread across Southern California along with fresh fruits and vegetables. These cuts are further magnified by a complete restructuring of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or commonly known as Food Stamps and better known as Cal Fresh in California). CAPOC works closely with the County of Orange in helping those who qualify for the program to get needed assistance. Nationally, 30% of people currently receiving such benefits would lose them under the Trump budget plan. These cuts would impact virtually every type of SNAP participant, including the unemployed, seniors, disabled individuals, and low-income families with children.

On the chopping block is also the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which assists families with home energy costs, and weatherization services. CAPOC's LIHEAP serves over 8,000 low-income households every year. Energy burdened homes often have to compromise between putting food on the table and keeping their family warm or cold throughout the year. This choice should not be something any family has to decide on. In addition, to assisting with energy costs for low-income residents, applicants of this program receive energy budget counseling and education as a way to promote self-sufficiency.

It is important to remember the citizens affected by these cuts are our neighbors, friends, and family members. We have to keep in mind the human cost to these cuts, as much as the actual monetary figures often highlighted by policymakers. For example, Jose V., a senior living in the city of Anaheim benefited from Community Action. Jose was a client that had received a disconnection notice from the city due to his

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inability to pay his energy bill. As a person on a fixed income, any fluctuations in energy consumption impacted him significantly. Jose contacted CAPOC, and we assisted him in paying his current month's energy bill. In addition to this, Jose received weatherization services to lower his future energy costs: weather stripping, LED replacement bulbs, caulking, and power strips to name a few. Jose is just one of the many low-income residents that we have been to help through LIHEAP. Without this program, we would not be able to assist people like Jose and other low-income residents throughout the County.

The President proposes to eliminate funding for programs supported by members of Congress on both sides of the aisle. Congress understands the needs facing America's poor communities; this is a bi-partisan issue must be resolved. I strongly urge members of the community and members of Congress to stand behind these programs and reject the President's proposal. We each have a role in building better communities and changing lives; our organization will remain true to our mission of advocating for families, seniors, women, veterans, and individuals with disabilities through community action and advocacy for social justice. Stay woke; we must pay attention. Rejecting these budget cuts will significantly support our efforts to continue our work in strengthening our most vulnerable citizens.

ABOUT COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP OF ORANGE COUNTY

With leadership and results dating back to 1965, Community Action Partnership of Orange County (CAPOC) has evolved into one of Orange County's most comprehensive anti-hunger and poverty relief organization. CAPOC's aim is to make a positive impact in people's lives by helping them meet basic needs and strengthen their support system. Our position within Orange County allows us to identify neighborhood concerns and find unique solutions. We have a stake in the health of our community and have the ability to create real change in the lives of low-income children, families, senior, and veterans. By acting as a resource for ending hunger and poverty, our organization improves the health of our community. We mobilize and direct resources to programs that assist, educate and promote self-sufficiency. For more information, please visit www.capoc.org

An Orange County Where All Community Members Attain Self-Sufficiency

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