

EDITOR'S PICK

Karen Tilkin: Cutting SNAP, SoonerCare and Community Service Block Grants is unacceptable

Karen Tilkin

Apr 13, 2025



A child plays at Rosa Parks Early Childhood Center operated by CAP Tulsa. Created during President Johnson's War on Poverty in the 1960s, programs like CAP Tulsa are federally funded local organizations designed to help people become self-sufficient and address the needs of their communities.

Tulsa World Archive



Karen Tilkin

CAP Tulsa is one of 17 community action agencies in Oklahoma. At the start of each board meeting, we recite the Promise of Community Action: “Community action changes people’s lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.”

Created during President Johnson’s War on Poverty in the 1960s, CAAs are federally funded local organizations designed to help people become self-sufficient and address the needs of their communities. Underpinning this purpose is the conviction that we, as Americans, have an obligation to give each other a hand up.

Consider the story of Laura, a hardworking single mother of three who was facing financial and health challenges. Despite dealing with anemia, Laura continued to work as a certified nursing assistant at a clinic, doing her best to provide for her family.

People are also reading...

- 1 Nine measles cases now confirmed in Oklahoma**
- 2 Patrick Fletcher: A joyful Sooner | Berry Tramel’s ScissorTales**

- 3 Epic concert series in Stillwater launches with Cross Canadian Ragweed reunion**
 - 4 Timothy McVeigh's letters to Oklahoma journalist offer window into bomber's mind**
-

When Laura enrolled her two younger children at CAP Tulsa, our team assisted her in applying for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which provided \$620 in monthly food benefits to help feed her family. We also aided her to enroll her children in Medicaid (SoonerCare) so she could select a pediatrician and access routine medical care.

In addition, CAP Tulsa staff coached Laura on how to write her resume and land a higher-paying job.

Laura's story exemplifies CAP Tulsa's anti-poverty focus as a local CAA. That is why it is especially painful to contemplate cuts in vital federal programs, such as SNAP and SoonerCare. Moreover, eliminating CAA funding through Community Service Block Grants (CSBG) is under discussion. Even if the funding disappears, the community need will remain.

Sixty-one percent of families served by CAP Tulsa qualify for services based on their enrollment in public benefits, such as SNAP. Even more striking is the high usage of SoonerCare, which stands at 91% of the young children served by our agency. Cutting these benefits for low-income folks means they won't be able to afford routine medical care for their children. It will also become even more difficult in today's high-cost environment for families to put food on the table.

Helping families reach self-sufficiency requires compassion, patience, determination — and resources. We are losing our way as a civil society by cutting programs that aid families like Laura's to meet their basic needs while navigating their journey to a brighter future.

Join us in urging Congress to protect these vital programs. Contact your representatives today and let them know that cutting SNAP, SoonerCare and CSBG is unacceptable.

Ginnie Graham Show: Making sense of Oklahoma's mental health cuts



With about \$700 million in federal grants to Oklahoma for mental health services at risk coupled with a shortfall of between \$43 million to \$63 million at the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, many residents are anxious about losing care and treatment. Zack Stoycoff, executive director of Healthy Minds Policy Initiative, talks to columnist Ginnie Graham to make sense of it all.

Karen Tilkin, Ph.D., is the executive director of CAP Tulsa.

Popular in the Community

