

New York State (NYS)  
 Department of State (DOS)  
 Division of Community Services (DCS)  
 Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)

**CSBG Advisory Council  
 Meeting Minutes**

Meeting date: **Friday, February 20, 2026**, at 10:00 am

\*Note: Due to Executive Order 57, (effective January 23, 2026, through February 22, 2026) issued by Governor Hochul, members are allowed to attend virtually for quorum (see end note)

This meeting was conducted in person between sites in Albany, Buffalo, New York City, and via Webex Video Conference.

Attendance was taken by verbal roll call.

<i>Members Present:</i>	<u><b>Albany</b></u>	<u><b>New York City</b></u>	<u><b>Buffalo</b></u>
	<p><b>Charles Quinn</b>            Chief Executive Officer,            Regional Economic Comm.            Action Program, Inc.</p>		
	<p><u><b>Virtual</b></u></p> <p><b>Alan Jones, Vice-Chair</b>            Chief Executive Officer,            Adirondack Community Action            Programs, Inc</p> <p><b>Greg Richards</b>            Executive Director,            Cortland Community Action            Program, Inc</p> <p><b>Denis E. Wilson</b>            Executive Director/CEO,            Fulmont Community Action Agency,            Inc.</p>	<p><u><b>Virtual</b></u></p> <p><b>Mike Bobbitt, Chair</b>            Deputy Commissioner,            NYC Department of Youth and            Community Development</p> <p><b>Yves Villus</b>            Executive Director,            Erasmus Neighborhood            Federation, Inc</p>	<p><u><b>Virtual</b></u></p> <p><b>Michael Martin</b>            Executive Director,            Native Americana Community            Service of Erie and Niagara            Counties, Inc</p> <p><b>Dr. Andrea Ogunwumi</b>            Executive Director,            EOP for Chemung &amp; Schuyler            Counties</p> <p><b>Laura Rossman,            2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-Chair</b>            Chief Executive Officer,            Pro Action of Steuben and Yates,            Inc.</p>
<i>Members Absent:</i>	<p><b>Tina Zerbian, 1st Vice-Chair</b>            Retired - Chief Executive            Officer, Cattaraugus            Community Action, Inc</p>	<p><b>Miguel Santos</b>            Advocate</p>	<p><b>Maurice Reid</b>            President,            KenJam Consultants, LLC</p>
<i>Guest Presenters:</i>	<p><b>Tim Nichols</b>            Executive Director/CEO,            New York State Community Action            Association</p>		

<p><i>NYS Dept of State Staff Present:</i></p>	<p><b>Jackie Orr</b> Director of DCS <b>Nikoletta Battistoni</b> Deputy Director of DCS <b>Aimee Kollar</b> Assoc. Dir, Contract Processing <b>Nancy Pfohl</b> Assoc. Dir, Monitoring, Training, &amp; Technical Assistance <b>Sayla Eisner-Mix</b> Project Supervisor, CSPA 2 <b>Katy-Rose Hanson</b> Community Services Program Analyst 2</p>	<p><b>Jessica Garneau</b> Community Services Program Analyst 1 <b>Colleen Bryar</b> Community Services Program Analyst 1 <b>Angelo Calbone</b> Community Services Program Analyst 1 <b>Artemis Artoun</b> Administrative Assistant 1 <b>Kerry Shermer</b> Administrative Assistant 1 <b>Kathy Furman</b> Administrative Assistant 2 <b>Sean Tulumello</b> Community Services Program Analyst 1 <b>Victor Carrera</b> Community Services Program Analyst 1</p>	<p><b>Rachel Eisenberg</b> Associate Attorney, Office of General Counsel <b>Jennifer Gallo</b> Dir of Financial Admin <b>Mindy VanAlstyne</b> Fiscal Supervisor <b>Craig Howard</b> Fiscal Representative <b>Paul Kinter</b> Fiscal Representative <b>Kathleen Richardson- Cross</b> Fiscal Representative</p>
<p><i>Executive Directors or Agency Representatives</i></p>	<p><b>Holly Green</b> Schenectady Community Action Program, Inc  <b>Andrew LaPoint</b> Chief Fiscal Officer, St Lawrence County Community Development Program, Inc.  <b>Brian Lawrence</b> Senior Account Clerk, Livingston County Board of Supervisors</p>	<p><b>Nicole Laurin</b> Chief Executive Officer Joint Council for Economic Opportunity of Clinton and Franklin Counties, Inc.  <b>Jerome Underwood</b> President and CEO, Action for a Better Community, Inc.  <b>Kenneth Pierre –</b> NYC Department of Youth and Community Development</p>	<p><b>Jean Sexton</b> Immediate Past Board President, Regional Econ. Comm. Action Program, Inc.  <b>Brenda Soto</b> Sr. Vice President of direct Services, PathStone</p>
<p><i>Other attendees</i></p>	<p><b>Abdullah Khalid</b> eScribers, LLC - Transcriber</p>	<p><b>Camille Mason</b>  <b>Jodi Zieseimer</b> New York Legal Assistance Group</p>	<p><b>Judit Criado Fiuza –</b> Mercy Center, Bronx</p>

The meeting was called into session at 10:02 am

\*Note: Due to technical difficulties, interfered with Council members appearing on camera.

Recording began at 10:03 am. Transcription services provided by eScribers, LLC. The recording is made available on the website after the meeting has been concluded.

## I. ROLL CALL

### **Nikoletta Battistoni, Deputy Director of the Division of Community Services**

Deputy Director Battistoni welcomed the council members and made announcements. Battistoni reminded members that the meeting is recorded, council members cameras need to remain on for the duration of the meeting, and to state their name and agency when speaking for the transcriber to record accurately.

Battistoni read roll call: 7 members present at the beginning of the meeting; quorum was not established.

Battistoni noted that the Department of Community Services (DCS) was asked to facilitate the video-conferencing format for the CSBG Advisory Council meeting in a different way, allowing the council members to co-facilitate the meeting as needed, to align with other New York State public body meetings. Battistoni noted that public participants interested in speaking now have access to use the 'raised hand' feature or the chat function to ask questions or leave comments. DCS administrative staff will monitor and unmute when necessary for discussion.

**Laura Rossman, CSBG Advisory Council Board Member**

Rossman noted that council members were having technical difficulties with joining the Webex webinar. DCS staff worked with council members to resolve the issues.

**II. Mike Bobbitt, CSBG Advisory Council Board Chairperson**

Bobbitt opened the meeting, thanked DCS for hosting, and welcomed everyone. He noted the lack of quorum, but thanked DOS for their efforts towards attaining quorum. Bobbitt turned the meeting back to DCS.

**Nikoletta Battistoni, Deputy Director of the Division of Community Services**

➤ Introduction of CSBG Advisory Council Members

Battistoni invited the council members to introduce themselves and the agency/region they represent. All members present did so.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Battistoni announced as quorum has not established, the pending minutes from 9/12/2024 would not be approved.

Minutes from 6/12/2025 and 10/12/25, also in council members packet, did not need to be approved as quorum was not established during those meetings.

**IV. New York State Community Action Association (NYSCAA)**

**Tim Nicols, Executive Director/CEO, New York State Community Action Association (NYSCAA)**

Nichols presented his report on updates at NYSCAA including conference attendances, upcoming NYSCAA conference planning, new Emerging Leadership Institute for 2026, ROMA trainings, and new staff member Ryan Flynn.

**Nikoletta Battistoni, Deputy Director of the Division of Community Services**

Battistoni thanked Nichols for his presentation. There were no questions

Battistoni noted that council member Greg Richards had joined the meeting bringing council member attendance to 8, (quorum not established). Battistoni invited Richards to introduce himself.

**V. DIVISION OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

➤ Updates

**Jackie Orr, Director of the Division of Community Services**

*Staffing:*

Leah Bartlo (Community Services Program Analyst 1, Buffalo) resigned at end of January. The Community Action agencies she worked with have been reassigned to other Program Analysts.

Kerry Shermer (Administrative Assistant 1, Albany office) resigned at end of February. Replacement timeline for both Leah and Kerry is undefined.

**Aimee Kollar, Associate Director, Contract Processing**

*CSBG Funding:*

Kollar presented on CSBG funding status. The first quarter grant award had been released in December covered the period of 10/1/2025 to 1/30/2026. There was no timeframe for when additional funding would be received. Kollar noted that the funding has been approved for the fiscal year and remains at 200% of the poverty level.

Charles Quinn raised a question on notice of award being held up in HHS. Kollar answered, 'we just don't have a timeframe, we know it was approved through appropriation, and we get the money before due date.' Discussion was held on how and when funds get released.

*CSBG Annual Report:*

Kollar presented updates on the CSBG Annual Report, including release and review of SmartForms and the next steps in the process of compiling the report. Kollar reiterated the email to use for submittal, questions, and extension requests. Kollar noted the training from the Office of Community Services (OCS), recordings to be available soon.

There were no questions.

**Nikoletta Battistoni, Deputy Director of the Division of Community Services**

*State Triennial Assessment and Review (STAR):*

DCS and fiscal continue to review monitoring requirements and updating the draft. Next steps are internal reviews with legal and executive teams. DCS plans to follow up with NYSCAA monitoring workgroup, to have a comment period and conduct pilots with a few CAAs. Training for staff and CAAs expected in summer 2026.

There were no questions for STAR updates.

**Jackie Orr, Director of the Division of Community Services**

*Needs Survey*

Short survey recently sent to the community action network to identify community service needs – 25 responses returned: top 5 needs(listed in detail on PowerPoint ): 1. Transportation 2. Housing & Utilities 3. Food Security 4. Education and Employment Support 5. Childcare 6. Overall Support Services: Mental Health and Substance Abuse; Youth Support; Case Management Services

There were no questions.

**Aimee Kollar, Associate Director, Contract Processing**

*CSBG Work Plan*

Kollar gave updates on the CSBG Community Action Plan Workgroup redesigning Attachment C (the part of the contract that subrecipients complete). The goal is to mimic the Annual Report and conduct a pilot program among community action agencies in upcoming months. Jackie Orr acknowledged the help of all the staff who have been working towards these improvements and outlined next steps.

Battistoni noted that Council Member Alan Jones joined the meeting (late due to working with a CSBG client) bringing the member attendance to 9 (quorum not established).

**VI. Old Business**

**Jackie Orr, Director of the Division of Community Services**

➤ Filling vacant Advisory Council members

- New Member: Greg Richards, Assembly appointed
- Candidate withdrawal from gubernatorial process, no longer available: Maureen Abbott, retired CAA Executive Director
- Assembly Candidate: Brenda Soto Colon – PathStone, waiting for Assembly Speaker's letter
- Gubernatorial Candidate: Jean Sexton, Retired banking official and former Board President

The DOS government relations staff relayed to the Governor's office that the Advisory Council is having difficult time reaching quorum. The Governor's office has been accommodating.

A couple of other potential candidates are being contacted. Director Orr invited all to reach out DCS with any candidate suggestions.

➤ Attendance

Director Orr reminded Council Members that attendance is important. The meeting dates are sent out ahead of time to make sure of the attendance and quorum is reached.

Greg Richards announced he is going to represent NY, NJ and Puerto Rico regions on National Community Partnership Board (NCAP) starting in March.

Charles Quinn inquired about members who have not been participating removed from Council. Director Orr responded that one person, David Hahn-Baker resigned. Director Orr is working with Chairperson Mike Bobbitt on other members attendance.

Laura Rossman noted that Nicole Laurin, Executive Director of CAA JCEO in Clinton and Franklin Counties, is an Advisory Council candidate, and Director Orr confirmed that Executive Director Laurin is in the gubernatorial process

## VII. Current Challenges

*The floor was opened to discuss current challenges by Nikoletta Battistoni*

Greg Richards flagged current advocacy work on Weatherization issue with LIHEAP Weatherization programs. In the next year's contracts funding being cut off from HEAP and the active sign on letters in assembly and senate. Also, NYSCAA and NYSWDA are working jointly on this issue.

Greg Richard continued, 10% of the federal NYS LIHEAP designation goes to Weatherization, which makes 60% of all Weatherization budget in NYS. NYS is number 1 producer of weatherization services in the nation. Anna Kellis, assembly member for Cortland, is carrying the letter for the state network, and senator Barrello, from Cattaraugus County, is carrying the letter to the senate. Tim Nichols has also been advocating actively in the past weeks. The Governor's budget eliminated weatherization programs funding. The weatherization funds have been underspent in the last 2 years, but also contract delays up to nine months last year led to several programs not being able to meet production and spend out.

Charles Quinn stated weatherization is currently large problem, particularly in NYS because the contracts have not come out timely, problem with all funders including NY Department of State. Assembly and Senate asked the law to get contracts out on time, governor vetoed that legislation. All of this makes it difficult for CAAs to plan even for next couple of months.

Director Orr stated she understood the challenges CAAs have and suggested filling out a form through Empire Justice site and submitting their contract information and what is being held up. Also recommended to advocate and sign letters and be part of the coalition. Advocacy is needed to keep from being vetoed.

Laura Rossman noted all CAAs have signed on to letter.

Nikoletta Battistoni reaffirmed next meeting, on April 23, 2026, will be in person and asked members to

attend at one of DCS three locations in person.

Mike Bobbitt reiterated the importance of Council members' attendance for the next meeting, expects to have quorum.

**VIII. New Business**

No new business was discussed.

**IX. Next Meeting:**

Thursday, April 23, 2026, at 10:00 am

Thursday, July 23, 2026, at 10:00 am

Thursday, October 8, 2026, at 10:00 am

**X. Adjournment**

Nikoletta Battistoni officially concluded the meeting at 11:00

**\*Note:**

Pursuant to NY Open Meetings Law section 103-a(3) "during a state disaster emergency declared by the governor pursuant to section twenty-eight of the executive law, or a local state of emergency proclaimed by the chief executive of a county, city, village or town pursuant to section twenty-four of the executive law, if the public body determines that the circumstances necessitating the emergency declaration would affect or impair the ability of the public body to hold an in person meeting."

On January 23, 2026, Governor Kathy Hochul issued Executive Order 57 in which declared a State Disaster Emergency, effective January 23, 2026, for the entire State of New York. This Executive Order shall be in effect through February 22, 2026.

Given this Emergency Declaration, members may attend remotely. Department of State staff members will be at the Albany, Buffalo and NYC offices.