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TESTIMONY OF MARC T. LITTLE, Esq.

**President
City of Los Angeles Commission for Community and Family Services
Before the
Committee on Housing and Community and Economic Development
Los Angeles City Council**

January 23, 2013

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Housing, Community and Economic Development Committee, I am Marc Little, President of the Commission for Community and Family Services. As you know, the CCFS is charged, among other things, with the oversight of the CDBG Program policy with a focus on children, youth and families.

I am pleased to come before you this morning in support of Mayor Villaraigosa's proposed five – year Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan for the 39th Program Year. Since its establishment in 2010, the CCFS has promoted a more community-focused approach to community and economic development while still recognizing that a citywide approach is also important. For a city as vast and geographically diverse as Los Angeles, there can be no single approach to addressing the pressing needs in so many of our low-income communities.

As such, the proposal's holistic place-based strategy is one that holds great promise for sustained revitalization of depressed communities and growth of our human capital over time. The overlay of significant investments along major bus and light-rail lines is a critical element of the proposal, facilitating residents' ability to reach jobs and educational opportunities across the city that may currently be geographically unavailable, as well as enriching communities. Of the many goals set forth in the Executive Summary—achieving stricter performance measurements, developing the City's institutional

capacity, leveraging critical public and private resources, and more meaningful public engagement—are critical to not only achieving the outcomes envisioned by the Plan, but also to achieve lasting outcomes.

In preparation for the development of the new Consolidated Plan and Action Plan, the Commission launched a Community Needs Assessment Survey in August of last year that yielded more than 1,120 responses from people all around the city (surpassing previous needs assessment responses). We cast a very wide net to engage the City's human services delivery network—nonprofit community development partners, the Family Source, Work Source and Business Source Centers—as well as City Council offices, the Mayor's office, and our partners including LAHD, HACLA, and LAHSA, CDD's regional area directors, the Neighborhood Councils, among others. Commissioners reached out to their constituents as well. The Survey queried residents' personal family needs along with their views on the assets their communities' hold and the perceived neighborhood needs.

Not surprisingly, the respondents identified their personal and family needs for: expanded affordable housing opportunities; lower utility costs, and; job training and placement, to name a few. Respondents identified community needs for: more healthcare facilities; grocery stores selling wholesome foods; parks; libraries, and; public transportation.

In October, the CCFS, LAHD, HACLA, and LAHSA commissions sponsored nine interactive public meetings throughout the city and will do so again later this month. The public's responses were quite similar to those elicited in the Community Needs Assessment Survey; and, while none of the responses was surprising, they helped focus community development priorities, goals and strategies that would lead to healthier and economically sustainable communities over time. It will take more than five years to achieve the level of community reinvestment and revitalization that this proposal envisions.

For the 38th Program Year, the Commission put forth a number of policy recommendations that we are pleased to see incorporated into the 39th Program Year budget proposal—"project readiness" and a competitive procurement process for neighborhood improvement projects were priority policy recommendations. Project readiness is our major policy position which acknowledges the dwindling

Federal resources and the resulting pressure on the City to more strategically plan for its community and economic development initiatives under the ConPlan, and to allocate these scarce grant dollars in a way that maximizes their benefit to people and communities in need. Likewise, the proposed Neighborhood Improvement Fund suggests a competitive bidding process that would be consistent with the City's strategy for the investment in various neighborhood improvements and facility renovations.

Finally, it is heartening to see the budget's increased support for the Family Source System. I respectfully request your support of the Family Source System which is a vital link to many economic and social resources for struggling families, and an invaluable partner in the City's human services delivery system.

In closing, the Commission for Community and Family Services looks forward to working with you and its ongoing collaboration with other members of the Mayor's Housing and Community Development Cabinet, helping to make our shared vision of socially and economically sustainable communities where children and families thrive and prosper.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the Commission's views.

^{1/} Since 2001, the City's CDBG allocation has been slashed by \$40,268,509—from \$92,946,000 in FY2001 to \$52,677,491 in FY2012. Despite the lingering recession, Congress has not significantly increased CDBG formula funding and the threat of Sequestration may significantly reduce our allocation causing greater stress on our community and economic development budget and the ability to initiate the new place-based vision and strategy.