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Opening Statement

Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

**Subcommittee on Technology, Information Policy, Intergovernmental
Relations and Procurement Reform**
Hearing on "Improving Oversight and Accountability in Federal Grant Programs"

June 23, 2011

Thank you, Chairman Lankford and Ranking Member Connolly for convening this hearing today.

Federal grants to states and local governments, as well as non-profit organizations, help provide vital resources and services to our communities. They help ensure that our police officers and firefighters have the tools and manpower they need to protect our streets and reduce violence. They provide meals to homebound senior citizens and low income children. They help communities respond to natural disasters, and help them improve preparation for the next one. And, they ensure our most vulnerable citizens have access to critical medical services. In these and many other ways, federal grant programs benefit all Americans and our national community.

Given the importance of these programs, we owe it to our constituents to ensure that every dollar we spend in these grants goes to its intended purpose. I am grateful we are holding this hearing today and look forward to the testimony of the experts.

I believe the goal of this hearing should be to carefully consider how we can *strengthen* federal grant programs. As we work to eliminate the deficits and debt, we should demand effective and efficient administration of all federal grant programs, and take any needed steps to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse.

I do not believe this forum should be used as a platform for advocating arbitrary cuts to critical grant programs. State and local governments collectively receive 90% of all federal grant dollars, and they compete for many of these dollars in programs that award funds based on merit and the grantees' ability to promote public priorities.

I strongly support efforts to clean up waste, fraud, and abuse. Let's also work to make the award process more transparent and accessible for state and local governments and non-profit organizations.

But let's not use the banner of "accountability" as an excuse to stop providing state and local governments with the means to provide for their citizens. Now is not the time to cut funding for nutritional programs for women, infants, and low-income children. Now is not the time to cut Homeland Security grants for state and local fire departments. Now is not the time to arbitrarily reduce federal funding for the sciences at our public and private universities. And, now is not the time to cut Medicaid funding to the states, or to convert them into an insufficient - and, I might add, less accountable -- block grant program.

Together, we should look for ways to promote better management of all grant programs, but we should not arbitrarily cut the federal government's contributions by hundreds of billions of dollars, forcing States and individual beneficiaries to bear the costs of a healthier, stronger, and safer society.

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