

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Charlotte Area Fund Partners with Royal Summer Jazz Series to Spotlight “Date Night” and the Urgent Need to Protect Federal Community Service Block Grant Funding

Jazz, joy, and justice: Free concert tickets offer community connection while underscoring a national call to defend CSBG

Charlotte, NC – The Charlotte Area Fund (CAF), Mecklenburg County’s designated Community Action Agency, has partnered with the **Royal Summer Jazz Series** to provide a “Date Night” concert experience for local low-income families and discounted tickets. While this world class jazz experience offers joy, culture, and a much needed respite to connect, a deeper purpose is served: to raise urgent awareness about the proposed elimination of the **federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)**, the foundational funding stream for Charlotte Area Fund and its 1000 Community Action Agency partners serving the nation’s 9.3 million most marginalized citizens

Under a newly proposed federal budget — referred to as the “**big beautiful bill**” — CSBG would be eliminated, cutting off essential services that reach millions of Americans in poverty. CSBG is the connected tissue that binds together essential services like Head Start, Weatherization, and Low-Income Heating Assistance Programs (LIHEAP)

For Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, that would be devastating.

“The transformative nature of American jazz has always been about social justice. Today, cruel public policy threatens to eliminate vital services for low-income citizens served by CSBG and tributary programs like Head Start, the Weatherization Assistance Program, and Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program,” said **Nick Wharton**, President & CEO of Charlotte Area Fund. “Our partnership with the Royal Summer Jazz Series is a shining example of what happens when we invest in people — we create opportunity, joy, and transformative healing. Without CSBG, this kind of community transformation vanishes.”

The **Charlotte Area Fund is one of 33 Community Action Agencies across North Carolina** investing in the **economic self-sufficiency of families living at or below 125% of federal poverty guidelines**, using CSBG to fund proven, locally controlled, person-centered services. CAF’s primary focus is **workforce development in high-demand careers** with comprehensive support services, helping families break generational cycles of poverty. In **Mecklenburg County**, CSBG funding is *mission critical* to addressing the deep and growing economic mobility challenges facing the working poor.

North Carolina’s Community Action Network is considered **one of the most effective networks in the nation**, among the 1,000 agencies operating in 95% of U.S. counties. CSBG’s broad support of family-strengthening programs has a **proven track record** of moving children and

families out of poverty — while effectively leveraging additional state, federal, and private resources.

Charlotte Area Fund was recently awarded a **LISC Charlotte Financial Opportunity Center** offering integrated career and financial coaching to help families increase earnings, improve credit, and build long-term financial security.

“CSBG isn’t just a line item in a budget. It’s the backbone of how we deliver hope and real change to thousands of lives in our community,” Wharton added. “The jazz series is a beautiful platform in alignment with the CAF’s tagline to say: *“America’s oldest art form is Helping People and Changing Lives”*”

The **Royal Summer Jazz Series**, running from **June 26 to August 7, 2025**, features nationally acclaimed artists at **The Amp Ballantyne** and is designed to be both sophisticated and accessible. Through this partnership, individuals and couples who might otherwise be priced out of the experience are welcomed as honored guests.

Notable Artists in the 2025 Series Include:

- **Boney James** – Kicked off the series on **June 26**
- **Najee and Regina Belle** – Performing on **July 10**
- **Will Downing** – Performing on **July 24**
- **Dave Koz and Friends Summer Horns 2025** – Final performance on **August 7**

“This partnership reflects the true soul of jazz — inclusion, resilience, and unity,” said **Al Kemp**, Producer of Royal Summer Jazz and 2024 Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award recipient. “By welcoming Charlotte Area Fund families, we celebrate their strength and affirm the necessity of investing in them. Without CSBG, we risk silencing that potential.”

“As someone who’s walked alongside families through struggle and recovery, I know how vital these programs are,” said **Damiko Faulkner**, CAF’s MOU/Outreach Success Coach and the architect behind the partnership. “What we’re doing through this concert series is rooted in dignity — but we can’t offer dignity without resources. That’s why we must speak up now.”

ACT NOW: DEFEND COMMUNITY ACTION

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) is the only federal funding source dedicated to fighting poverty through local, community-led solutions. Eliminating it would devastate frontline efforts nationwide and unravel the infrastructure that supports self-sufficiency and dignity for millions of Americans.

Contact your members of Congress to raise your voice in support.

MEDIA EVENT

Charlotte Area Fund will host a press event on Thursday, July 10th at 10am ET at Aloft Charlotte Ballantyne, celebrating the partnership with the Royal Summer Jazz Series and raising public awareness about the proposed elimination of CSBG funding. Remarks will be made by CAF President & CEO Nick Wharton, community partners, and program participants. Media are encouraged to attend.

To RSVP or request interviews, please contact:

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About Charlotte Area Fund

Charlotte Area Fund is Mecklenburg County's federally designated Community Action Agency. Since 1963, CAF has helped individuals and families rise out of poverty through workforce development, career coaching, emergency support, and community partnerships. Its Financial Opportunity Center®, in partnership with LISC Charlotte, helps families build income and long-term financial stability. Learn more at www.charlotteareafund.org.

About Royal Summer Jazz Series

The Royal Summer Jazz Series is Charlotte's premier summer destination for live jazz, culture, and community. Held at The Amp Ballantyne, the series blends top-tier performances with upscale experiences to create an unforgettable atmosphere for music lovers across the city. Learn more at www.royalsummerjazz.com

About The Amp Ballantyne

The Amp Ballantyne is a state-of-the-art outdoor amphitheater located in Charlotte's dynamic Ballantyne district. With top-notch sound and scenic surroundings, it hosts unforgettable events that celebrate music, art, and community.

View the 2025 event calendar at www.ampballantyne.com/event-calendar