

Recommendations for Fair, Effective Welfare Reform

Pathways to Work and Financial Stability

- **Promote participation in education, training and job development activities leading to sustainable employment.** Increase recipients' access to education, training, and employment programs, including those that integrate adult education with vocational skills training. Establish effective programs that include on-the-job training, internships including paid internships at state agencies, paid work study for college participants, coaching and support for recipients in college to ensure successful completion, case management, job placement and retention for up to two years. Allow participants to meet the welfare work requirement through participation in education and training beyond the current 12-month limit.
- **Conduct individualized employability assessments to identify and address barriers to employment.** Designate experienced entities to administer assessments, prepare recipients' economic development plans, and connect recipients with programs and services best suited to their needs. Protect families with unaddressed barriers.
- **Support the transition to paid work.** Provide transportation assistance so recipients can get to training and work. Simplify rather than increase the frequency and means of verifying job search, to lessen the burden on recipients and DTA. Ease the "cliff effect" by raising the amount parents can earn before losing eligibility for benefits.
- **Promote financial stability.** Eliminate asset limits and modify lump sum disqualification rules so families can build resources to weather financial storms, own a reliable car, plan for the future, and move off assistance. Set aside \$148.50/month for TAFDC families in shelter instead of lowering their grants by that amount, so they can have the money needed to move out of shelter. Support vulnerable teens by providing them with financial assistance and shelter at any stage of pregnancy.

Investments in Program Integrity

- **Modernize management practices.** Make better use of technology to improve agency accountability, customer service, and program outcomes. Use computerized data matches with cost-effective, reliable data sources to facilitate the application process and verify eligibility for benefits. Improve record keeping with electronic document imaging.

TAFDC Families Today

- 49,251 families received Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) in July 2013¹, less than half the number served 20 years ago.²
- The TAFDC grant has lost almost half of its value to inflation since 1988.³
- The average grant is \$456/month. The typical household has 1-2 children.⁴
- Over 41% of parents receiving TAFDC did not complete high school or a GED. Over 32% have a high school diploma and no more. 11% have a GED and no more. Less than 15% have any education beyond the high school/GED level.⁵
- Spending on TAFDC education and training declined from \$36.2M in FY 2002 to \$7.7M in FY 2014.⁶
- Families need TAFDC for a range of reasons, including to supplement very low wage work or to endure a family crisis. Many families face significant barriers to employment, such as low educational attainment, domestic violence, disability, caring for a disabled child, homelessness, and limited proficiency in English.

Key Provisions to Keep OUT of a Welfare Bill

Provisions Leadership kept out of the FY14 budget (but in the FY13 House supp)

- **Counting income and assets of grandparents and other relatives who are receiving benefits for children but not for themselves.** *Would reverse long-standing policy and increase the risk that children will be placed with DCF.*
- **Limits on use of "self-declaration."** *Most elements of eligibility are already cross-checked with multiple databases. Federal government encourages and sometimes requires attestation – subject to cross-checking – for SNAP and health programs (as well as federal income tax) to increase program efficiency. Limiting use of self-attestation adds unnecessary paperwork for applicants and the agency.*
- **Requiring recipients to pay rent and utilities on line.** *Totally unrealistic and impractical.*

Unacceptable provisions in the Senate welfare bill

- **Requiring job search for applicants for TAFDC before benefits are approved.** *A family who applies for welfare typically is in crisis, has been looking for a job but has not documented the job search, may not have a phone, usually does not have internet or money for child care or transportation, or even food for the children. Requiring job search before benefits are approved puts children at risk.*
- **Imposing work requirements and time limits on disabled parents and pregnant women in their last trimester.**
 - **Senate bill would impose work requirements on 4,500 parents determined severely disabled by MA's Disability Evaluation Service.** *This was proposed by Romney in 2005 and rejected by the Legislature. Under the Senate bill, someone with a severe disability who will be able to work within a year would be subject to work requirements while she is still unable to work.*
 - **Senate bill would impose work requirements on unemployed pregnant women in the last trimester.** *Pregnant women who can work never quit a job to go on welfare. Imposing work requirements on unemployed pregnant women even though no one will hire them puts them and the baby at risk.*
- **Making applicants who previously received assistance ineligible for benefits unless they can prove compliance with a DTA plan that was made when they received assistance previously.** *Senate bill does not assure that the plans are tailored to the recipient, that services are provided to enable recipients to meet the goals in the plan, or that there is trained staff to develop the plans. Denying benefits for noncompliance during the time the family was not receiving benefits is irrational and inconsistent with the TAFDC program's goal of protecting children.*

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