

CLEAN LONG-TERM EXTENSION OF TANF! KEEP WELFARE REAUTHORIZATION OUT OF BUDGET RECONCILIATION!

**TANF Reauthorization Briefing
September 8, 2005
Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C.**

Sponsored by: LIFETIME (Low-Income Families' Empowerment through Education), FUREE (Families United for Racial and Economic Equality), National Welfare Engine, IWPR (Institute for Women's Policy Research), Community Voices Heard, Legal Momentum, Ohio Empowerment Coalition, WEEL (Working for Equality and Economic Liberation), Texas Welfare Rights Organizing, Stop Family Violence, and NOW (National Organization for Women).

Support and vote for a clean, long-term extension of TANF! Welfare policy changes should not be made in the federal budget reconciliation process, but only after a full and public debate over the direction of the next phase of welfare reform focusing on how to help families move out of poverty. **We encourage our senators and representatives to proceed in regular order to bring a welfare reauthorization bill to the floor.** Given that the value of the block grant dropped over the last eight years, state budgets are hurting and this hurts children and their families. Maintain block grant funding, particularly without the proposal to increase work requirements that will cost the states \$11 billion to implement.

I. Domestic Violence and the Family Violence Option

Domestic violence is the major reason low-income mothers end up in the welfare system. Studies show that the majority of single mothers in the welfare system have experienced domestic violence. Nationally, up to two thirds of mothers on welfare have suffered domestic violence at some time in their adult lives, and between 15% and 20% are current victims of serious domestic violence.ⁱ In California the numbers are alarming: in a recent study of welfare mothers in two counties, the California Institute for Mental Health found that **83% had experienced domestic violence** at some point in their lives. In a 1999 study of Wisconsin's welfare mothers, the Institute for Wisconsin's Future found **63% were fired or forced to quit their jobs due to domestic violence.**

Protecting battered women and their children is as important as promoting marriage.

Under TANF, the Family Violence Option gave states the option of providing protections to victims of domestic violence, including waivers from welfare program requirements that could endanger them or their children. However, **Congress has never provided funding for domestic violence counseling and services for battered women in the welfare system, while spending billions to promote marriage and fatherhood.** Consequently, battered women and their children are being further abused by the welfare system. For example, in California less than one-fifth of one percent of mothers on welfare were given domestic violence waivers in 2003 - only 780 out of a caseload of more than 400,000 mothers. To protect battered women and their children, **Congress must make family violence programs and services mandatory under TANF reauthorization, and provide funding for victim counseling and services for battered women and their children in the welfare system.** *For more information on this topic, please contact LIFETIME at 510-452-5192.*

II. Education and Training

Despite the slow economic recovery, poverty continues to increase in America. Between 2000 and 2004 over **5 million people** joined the ranks of the poor. Not only are more people poor, but more are living in deep poverty. In 2004, the average poor person's income was further below the poverty line than at any other time since 1975--the first year that datum was collected. Still, as poverty went up, little change occurred on the welfare rolls. According to the Department of Health and Human Services **less than half of families eligible for TANF assistance actually receive it.** Clearly, increasing

poverty and decreasing assistance **indicates a significant reduction in the overall well-being of low-income families.**

Higher education provides an especially effective avenue for escaping poverty. And while education matters for everyone, it clearly *matters most for women.* According to Current Population Survey data, in 2003, among men and women who did not complete high school, **women were 43% more likely to live in poverty than their male counterparts.** Completing high school only slightly narrowed the gap as women with a high school degree were still 40% more likely to be poor than men with the same level of education. However, among those who completed at least a Bachelor's degree, poverty rates for men and women were miniscule and virtually identical at only 3.8 and 3.9 percent respectively. *For more information on this topic, please contact Avis Jones-DeWeever at IWPR at 202-785-5100.*

III. Weekly Work Requirements

Nearly 92% of those referred to NYC's job search and job readiness program do not have their needs met by it. Instead welfare recipients are perpetually recycled through a system that fails to address their needs. Though New York City is often held up as a model in regards to work-first welfare programming; research into the "success" of this model has revealed the true limitations of the approach. While the primary goal of NYC's main job search and job readiness program is to move people into jobs and off of welfare, **less than 1 in 10** welfare recipients referred to the system are placed in jobs within six months. Within another six months, **almost 1 in 3 of those individuals return to public assistance.**

Sanctioning individuals for non-compliance, rather than address the underlying barriers that prevent people from complying, results in clients going around and around in circles instead of heading forward on a path toward long-term employment and self-sufficiency. For programs to meet success, sufficient resources must be available to provide the services needed and the focus must be on helping people move forward rather than scolding people for being unable to succeed in programs that are ill-designed in the first place. **Increasing work hours and work requirements will not lead to increased job placement** if such programs do not start to prioritize education and training and getting people the supports they need to be successful. *For more information on this topic, please contact Community Voices Heard at 212-860-6001.*

IV. Critical Need for TANF and other Social Programs after Hurricane Katrina

Current projections suggest that Katrina may cost the nation more than 400,000 jobs and that New Orleans alone could lose as much as \$1 billion in convention revenue. Many of Katrina's survivors have lost homes, jobs, and economic opportunity and **will desperately need federal support including TANF, Medicaid, and food stamps.** Funding for these programs must be **increased,** not cut as had been threatened in recent months. *For more information on this topic, please contact Legal Momentum at 202-326-0040.*

For more information about LIFETIME
and our work on welfare reauthorization,
please visit www.geds-to-phds.org,
or call our office at 510-452-5192.



ⁱ See Jody Raphael & Richard M. Tolman, Taylor Inst. and the Univ. of Mich. Research Dev. Ctr. on Poverty, Risk and Mental Health, Trapped by Poverty, Trapped by Abuse: New Evidence Documenting the Relationship Between Domestic Violence and Welfare, 12 (1997).