

## Igniting Change - Ms. Foundation Blog Posting

---

### Support Women and Families in Dire Economic Straits

Posted: 23 Aug 2010 by Kasia Gladki at 4:39 PM

Recent debate about whether the US economy is in recovery or continuing recession has often remained heavily theoretical and numbers-centric – highlighting large-scale calculations over the more personal impacts of our present economic situation. The truth is that the real effects of today's economy are felt by real people – by women, families, children, immigrants and communities; their personal stories are the most illuminating economic indicator. The economic downturn has had a serious impact on many peoples' lives, leaving hundreds of thousands unemployed, generating a housing crisis that puts families in danger of foreclosure and homelessness, and making many more people reliant on the social safety net.

Understanding the dire straits faced by so many women and families across America, one Ms. Foundation grantee, LIFETIME, has devoted itself to lifting up the stories and voices of those most heavily impacted by this recession, and to making sure legislators hear the human story behind the numbers.

In February LIFETIME, as part of Women for Economic Justice -- a national coalition which includes Ms. Foundation grantees the Georgia Citizens Coalition on Hunger, Community Voices Heard and 9to5 National Association for Working Women -- brought together ten low-income women from seven states to give testimony in front of a congressional briefing in support of extending the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund, which is due to expire on October 1st. This fund was part of the stimulus bill and is an essential resource for women and families facing economic insecurity due to the recession. It has "enabled states to meet rising welfare caseloads in this recession, while providing paid employment to 200,000 low-income parents nationwide" and ensured assistance to those in need with one-time, non-recurring expenses, such as emergency housing assistance in the face of homelessness and foreclosure.

The ten women who gathered before Congress told stories of real economic distress and the importance of vigorous and meaningful social programs, like TANF ECF, to their livelihood. A room full of legislative staff, advocates, community leaders, and congressional representatives heard their testimony and after the hearing the number of legislators who were signed-on to support an extension of these benefits rose from 10 to 95.

LIFETIME's passionate advocacy helped the bill pass in the House, but the legislation was unable to garner the 60 votes needed to pass in the Senate. Since then the House has passed the bill three more times, but each time it has failed to find the support it needs in the Senate.

TANF ECF is an essential funding support for the social safety net in each state and is an important lifeline for women and families who are struggling in this recession -- we simply cannot let allow its funding to

run out in October. LIFETIME urges you to call your senators and support economic security for low-income women, families and communities.

LIFETIME has a toll-free number so you can call your Senators at no cost. To speak to your representative, just call 888-245-0215 and ask for your Senator by name, and the Capitol operator will connect you to their office. Tell them that it is crucial that they support an extension of the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund, so that the states can provide help to struggling families in these hard economic times.

Here's some sample language when you make your call:

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm calling to ask Senator \_\_\_\_\_ to support the extension of the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund, which expires October 1st. The TANF Emergency Contingency Fund has enabled states to help families (like mine) who are struggling in this recession, and to create 200,000 jobs for low-income parents (like me) nationwide. Please support the extension of this important program!