



**Connecticut Council of
Family Service Agencies**

Strengthening Connecticut's Families

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MARCH 11, 2008

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF TRACEY WALKER, CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF FAMILY SERVICE AGENCIES, ON **H.B. 5907 AN ACT CONCERNING THE TEMPORARY FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Thank you Senator Harris, Representative Villano and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee for this opportunity to offer written testimony in support of H.B. 5907 An Act Concerning the Temporary Family Assistance Program. I am Tracey Walker, the Director of Programs for the Connecticut Council of Family Service Agencies.

The Council is the Connecticut network and association of the family serving agencies throughout the state representing 17 agencies with over 100 community based service sites. Council members serve individuals and families of all ages and in many capacities. The Council has been the statewide provider of the Empowering People for Success (EPS) program since 1997. This program has served over 12,000 recipients and recent recipients of Temporary Family Assistance (TFA). H.B. 5907 provides much needed provisions to help safeguard the hard won self reliance of those TFA recipients able to become employed to the fullest degree possible.

Specifically, the Council fully supports the creation of a transition program to phase TFA recipients off of cash benefits rather than the abrupt cessation of benefits that currently occurs once a family's income exceeds the payment standard. Many working families are one crisis away from needing assistance or returning to welfare. Stepping families' benefits down over the course of a year will help them build the reserves necessary to remaining self sufficient. The Council also supports expanding the definition of those exempt from time-limited benefits to include those with a documented medical impairment who are employed to the capacity limited by their impairment, the inclusion of homelessness or risk of homelessness as a barrier to employment recognized by Connecticut statute, and increasing the child support allowance included in the formula for determining family eligibility for TFA. Each of these measures will assist families in establishing economic stability.

Given the above, the Connecticut Council of Family Service Agencies respectfully requests that you support H.B. 5907. I would be happy to address any questions you may have regarding this testimony and can be reached as indicated below.

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