

Legal Assistance Resource Center

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**Testimony before the Human Services Committee on
TANF Spending Report Requirements - Section 5 of SB 220
An Act Concerning the Elimination of Certain
Department of Social Services Reporting Requirements**

by Jane McNichol, Executive Director
March 2, 2010

Good afternoon. I am Jane McNichol, Executive Director of the Legal Assistance Resource Center of Connecticut, the advocacy and support center for legal services programs in the state. We represent the interests of very-low income residents of the state, LARCC is also the convener of the Welfare Working Group, a group of about 25 advocates who have monitored Connecticut's family welfare program since 1995.

I am here to express both support for and concern about the proposed revisions to CGS Sec. 17b-114o in Sec. 5 of SB 220. CGS Sec. 17b-144o was adopted in 2000 to provide legislators and the public with better information on how the state spends the \$267 million received annually in the TANF Block Grant funds and the related state Maintenance of Effort funds, usually slightly less than \$200 million each year.

This reporting has been an important tool for legislators and advocates trying to understand the impact of federal TANF funds on the state budget and on programs not generally associated with TANF. This includes programs such as Priority School Districts, DCF Case Management Services and DCF Investigations.

The meaningful part of the report has always been done voluntarily. DSS matches the spending reported on the federal form to spending in state budget line items. As noted by DSS in the cover letter to these quarterly reports, **"we (DSS) feel that the attached material will better explain the TANF claim and better fulfills the intent of the Public Act"**.

Without the detail provided by DSS, legislators and the public would not have information about what programs were paid for, for instance, under **the \$105 million listed on the federal form as "Other" or the \$70 million on "Prevention of Out of Wedlock Pregnancies"** last year.

The section of the statute proposed for elimination only requires reporting on "unliquidated obligations". This was designed to address a problem that arose in 2000 and has not arisen since. Removing this provision would not affect the information now available through the quarterly reports.

But in amending the statute, **the legislature should require that the useful reporting continue on a quarterly basis.** The proposed language attached to this testimony would accomplish this.

I think that DSS must prepare this information in order to file the federal form, so I do not believe that this requirement would add work for DSS. **The requirement would simply insure that the information continue to be made available to legislators and the public on a regular basis – as it has been for the past 10 years.**

Thank you for your attention to this issue.

DRAFT CHANGES TO TANF Spending Report Requirement- SECTION 5 OF SB 220

An Act Concerning The Elimination Of Certain
Department Of Social Services Reporting Requirements

Sec. 5. Section 17b-114o of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

The expenditure report relative to the temporary assistance for needy families block grant required to be submitted by the Commissioner of Social Services to the federal Department of Health and Human Services AND A REPORT DETAILING SPENDING IN STATE BUDGET LINE ITEMS WHICH MAKE UP EACH REPORT LINE ITEM shall be transmitted to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to human services and appropriations and the budgets of state agencies within forty-five days of the date of such submission. THE REPORT DETAILING SPENDING IN STATE BUDGET LINE ITEMS SHALL INCLUDE: (A) THE FEDERAL EXPENDITURE REPORT LINE IN WHICH THE STATE BUDGET LINE SPENDING IS REPORTED, (B) THE STATE DEPARTMENT AND THE NAME OF THE STATE PROGRAM FUNDED, (C) THE AMOUNT OF SPENDING IN EACH STATE BUDGET LINE WHICH IS ATTRIBUTED TO (1) FEDERAL TANF BLOCK GRANT FUNDS, (2) COMMINGLED MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT FUNDS, (3) SEGREGATED MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT FUNDS, (4) SEPARATE MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT FUNDS, (4) CHILD CARE DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT FUNDS AND (5) CHILD CARE DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT EXCESS MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT FUNDS. [Such report for the last quarter of the fiscal year shall include the identification of unliquidated obligations either identified in previous quarterly reports for the same fiscal year and claimed before the prior quarterly report or those not yet claimed by the commissioner for the purposes of receiving federal reimbursement. In the event that such report identifies any unliquidated obligations, the commissioner shall notify said committees of the commissioner's intention concerning the disposition of such unliquidated obligations, which may include establishing or contributing to a reserve account to meet future needs in the temporary family assistance program.]