



General Assembly

February Session, 2016

***Raised Bill No. 314***

LCO No. 1967



Referred to Committee on LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

Introduced by:  
(LAB)

***AN ACT CONCERNING THE TEMPORARY FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION BENEFITS.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 17b-112 of the general statutes is repealed and the  
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2016*):

3 (a) The Department of Social Services shall administer a temporary  
4 family assistance program under which cash assistance shall be  
5 provided to eligible families in accordance with the temporary  
6 assistance for needy families program, established pursuant to the  
7 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of  
8 1996. The Commissioner of Social Services may operate portions of the  
9 temporary family assistance program as a solely state-funded  
10 program, separate from the federal temporary assistance for needy  
11 families program, if the commissioner determines that doing so will  
12 enable the state to avoid fiscal penalties under the temporary  
13 assistance for needy families program. Families receiving assistance  
14 under the solely state-funded portion of the temporary family  
15 assistance program shall be subject to the same conditions of eligibility

16 as those receiving assistance under the federal temporary assistance for  
17 needy families program. Under the temporary family assistance  
18 program, benefits shall be provided to a family for not longer than  
19 twenty-one months, except as provided in subsections (b) and (c) of  
20 this section. For the purpose of calculating said twenty-one-month  
21 time limit, months of assistance received on and after January 1, 1996,  
22 pursuant to time limits under the aid to families with dependent  
23 children program, shall be included. For purposes of this section,  
24 "family" means one or more individuals who apply for or receive  
25 assistance together under the temporary family assistance program. If  
26 the commissioner determines that federal law allows individuals not  
27 otherwise in an eligible covered group for the temporary family  
28 assistance program to become covered, such family may also, at the  
29 discretion of the commissioner, be composed of (1) a pregnant woman,  
30 or (2) a parent, both parents or other caretaker relative and at least one  
31 child who is under the age of eighteen, or who is under the age of  
32 nineteen and a full-time student in a secondary school or its  
33 equivalent. A caretaker relative shall be related to the child or children  
34 by blood, marriage or adoption or shall be the legal guardian of such a  
35 child or pursuing legal proceedings necessary to achieve guardianship.  
36 If the commissioner elects to allow state eligibility consistent with any  
37 change in federal law, the commissioner may administratively transfer  
38 any qualifying family cases under the cash assistance portion of the  
39 state-administered general assistance program to the temporary family  
40 assistance program without regard to usual eligibility and enrollment  
41 procedures. If such families become an ineligible coverage group  
42 under the federal law, the commissioner shall administratively transfer  
43 such families back to the cash assistance portion of the state-  
44 administered general assistance program without regard to usual  
45 eligibility and enrollment procedures to the degree that such families  
46 are eligible for the state program.

47 (b) The Commissioner of Social Services shall exempt a family from  
48 such time-limited benefits for circumstances including, but not limited

49 to: (1) A family with a needy caretaker relative who is incapacitated or  
50 of an advanced age, as defined by the commissioner, if there is no  
51 other nonexempt caretaker relative in the household; (2) a family with  
52 a needy caretaker relative who is needed in the home because of the  
53 incapacity of another member of the household, if there is no other  
54 nonexempt caretaker relative in the household; (3) a family with a  
55 caretaker relative who is not legally responsible for the dependent  
56 children in the household if such relative's needs are not considered in  
57 calculating the amount of the benefit and there is no other nonexempt  
58 caretaker relative in the household; (4) a family with a caretaker  
59 relative caring for a child who is under one year of age and who was  
60 born not more than ten months after the family's enrollment if there is  
61 no other nonexempt caretaker relative in the household; (5) a family  
62 with a pregnant or postpartum caretaker relative if a physician has  
63 indicated that such relative is unable to work and there is no other  
64 nonexempt caretaker relative in the household; (6) a family with a  
65 caretaker relative determined by the commissioner to be unemployable  
66 and there is no other nonexempt caretaker relative in the household;  
67 and (7) minor parents attending and satisfactorily completing high  
68 school or high school equivalency programs.

69 (c) A family who is subject to time-limited benefits may petition the  
70 Commissioner of Social Services for six-month extensions of such  
71 benefits. The commissioner shall grant not more than two extensions to  
72 such family who has made a good faith effort to comply with the  
73 requirements of the program and despite such effort has a total family  
74 income at a level below the payment standard, or has encountered  
75 circumstances preventing employment including, but not limited to:  
76 (1) Domestic violence or physical harm to such family's children; or (2)  
77 other circumstances beyond such family's control. The commissioner  
78 shall disregard ninety dollars of earned income in determining  
79 applicable family income. The commissioner may grant a subsequent  
80 six-month extension if each adult in the family meets one or more of  
81 the following criteria: (A) The adult is precluded from engaging in

82 employment activities due to domestic violence or another reason  
83 beyond the adult's control; (B) the adult has two or more substantiated  
84 barriers to employment including, but not limited to, the lack of  
85 available child care, substance abuse or addiction, severe mental or  
86 physical health problems, one or more severe learning disabilities,  
87 domestic violence or a child who has a serious physical or behavioral  
88 health problem; (C) the adult is working thirty-five or more hours per  
89 week, is earning at least the minimum wage and continues to earn less  
90 than the family's temporary family assistance payment standard; or  
91 (D) the adult is employed and works less than thirty-five hours per  
92 week due to (i) a documented medical impairment that limits the  
93 adult's hours of employment, provided the adult works the maximum  
94 number of hours that the medical condition permits, or (ii) the need to  
95 care for a disabled member of the adult's household, provided the  
96 adult works the maximum number of hours the adult's caregiving  
97 responsibilities permit. Families receiving temporary family assistance  
98 shall be notified by the department of the right to petition for such  
99 extensions. Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, the  
100 commissioner shall not provide benefits under the state's temporary  
101 family assistance program to a family that is subject to the [twenty-one  
102 month] twenty-one-month benefit limit and has received benefits  
103 beginning on or after October 1, 1996, if such benefits result in that  
104 family's receiving more than sixty months of time-limited benefits  
105 unless that family experiences domestic violence, as defined in Section  
106 402(a)(7)(B), P.L. 104-193. For the purpose of calculating said sixty-  
107 month limit: (I) A month shall count toward the limit if the family  
108 receives assistance for any day of the month, and (II) a month in which  
109 a family receives temporary assistance for needy families benefits that  
110 are issued from a jurisdiction other than Connecticut shall count  
111 toward the limit.

112 (d) Under said program (1) no family shall be eligible that has total  
113 gross earnings exceeding the federal poverty level, however, in the  
114 calculation of the benefit amount for eligible families and previously

115 eligible families that become ineligible temporarily because of receipt  
116 of workers' compensation benefits by a family member who  
117 subsequently returns to work immediately after the period of receipt of  
118 such benefits, earned income shall be disregarded up to one hundred  
119 fifty per cent of the federal poverty level; and (2) the increase in  
120 benefits to a family in which an infant is born after the initial ten  
121 months of participation in the program shall be limited to an amount  
122 equal to fifty per cent of the average incremental difference between  
123 the amounts paid per each family size. Except when determining  
124 eligibility for a six-month extension of benefits pursuant to subsection  
125 (c) of this section, the commissioner shall disregard the first fifty  
126 dollars per month of income attributable to current child support that a  
127 family receives in determining eligibility and benefit levels for  
128 temporary family assistance. Any current child support in excess of  
129 fifty dollars per month collected by the department on behalf of an  
130 eligible child shall be considered in determining eligibility but shall  
131 not be considered when calculating benefits and shall be taken as  
132 reimbursement for assistance paid under this section, except that when  
133 the current child support collected exceeds the family's monthly award  
134 of temporary family assistance benefits plus fifty dollars, the current  
135 child support shall be paid to the family and shall be considered when  
136 calculating benefits.

137 (e) A family receiving assistance under said program shall cooperate  
138 with child support enforcement, under title IV-D of the Social Security  
139 Act. A family shall be ineligible for benefits for failure to cooperate  
140 with child support enforcement.

141 (f) A family leaving assistance at the end of (1) said twenty-one-  
142 month time limit, including a family with income above the payment  
143 standard, or (2) the sixty-month limit shall have an interview for the  
144 purpose of being informed of services that may continue to be  
145 available to such family, including employment services available  
146 through the Labor Department. Said interview shall contain a  
147 determination of benefits available to said family provided by the

148 Department of Social Services. Said interview shall also include a  
149 determination of whether such family is eligible for supplemental  
150 nutrition assistance or Medicaid. Information and referrals shall be  
151 made to such a family for services and benefits including, but not  
152 limited to, the earned income tax credit, rental subsidies emergency  
153 housing, employment services and energy assistance.

154 (g) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (d) of this section,  
155 a family receiving assistance under said program during the twenty-  
156 one-month time period shall continue to receive assistance during such  
157 twenty-one-month time period when a family member becomes  
158 employed, provided the sum of the family member's wages and such  
159 assistance shall not exceed one hundred fifty per cent of the federal  
160 poverty level.

161 (h) Any member of a family leaving assistance at the end of (1) the  
162 twenty-one-month time limit, including a family with income above  
163 the payment standard, or (2) the sixty-month limit, who was not  
164 employed during the period such family received assistance shall  
165 receive a one-time benefit of one thousand dollars from the program  
166 upon securing employment.

167 ~~[(g)]~~ (i) An applicant or recipient of temporary family assistance  
168 who is adversely affected by a decision of the Commissioner of Social  
169 Services may request and shall be provided a hearing in accordance  
170 with section 17b-60.

171 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Notwithstanding the provisions  
172 of chapter 567 of the general statutes, an individual receiving  
173 unemployment compensation benefits pursuant to the provisions of  
174 said chapter who again becomes employed may continue to receive  
175 benefits with respect to any week in his or her eligibility period,  
176 provided (1) the wages paid to the individual by his or her employer  
177 are less than that of the individual's weekly benefit rate, and (2) the  
178 sum of such wages and benefits shall not exceed the individual's

179 weekly benefit rate.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>October 1, 2016</i>	17b-112
Sec. 2	<i>from passage</i>	New section

**Statement of Purpose:**

To allow certain families who earn not more than one hundred fifty per cent of the federal poverty level to receive temporary family assistance, to allow for a one-time benefit to be paid to individuals who have exhausted temporary family assistance but have subsequently secured employment, and to allow individuals receiving unemployment benefits to continue to receive a portion of such benefits upon accepting employment at a rate lower than their unemployment benefit rate.

*[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]*