



General Assembly

January Session, 2021

Raised Bill No. 6635

LCO No. 4590



Referred to Committee on HUMAN SERVICES

Introduced by:
(HS)

AN ACT CONCERNING TEMPORARY FAMILY ASSISTANCE.

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 Section 17b-112 of the general statutes is repealed and the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 July 1, 2021*):

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 program,
10 separate from the federal temporary assistance for needy families
11 program, if the commissioner determines that doing so will enable the
12 state to avoid fiscal penalties under the temporary assistance for needy
13 families program. Families receiving assistance under the solely state-
14 funded portion of the temporary family assistance program shall be

15 subject to the same conditions of eligibility as those receiving assistance
16 under the federal temporary assistance for needy families program.
17 Under the temporary family assistance program, benefits shall be
18 provided to a family for not longer than [twenty-one] sixty months. [,
19 except as provided in subsections (b) and (c) of this section.] For the
20 purpose of calculating said [twenty-one-month] sixty-month time limit;
21 [, months]

22 (1) Months of assistance received on and after January 1, 1996,
23 pursuant to time limits under the aid to families with dependent
24 children program, shall be included, except for any months of assistance
25 received during the public health emergency declared by Governor Ned
26 Lamont related to the COVID-19 pandemic. For purposes of this section,
27 "family" means one or more individuals who apply for or receive
28 assistance together under the temporary family assistance program. If
29 the commissioner determines that federal law allows individuals not
30 otherwise in an eligible covered group for the temporary family
31 assistance program to become covered, such family may also, at the
32 discretion of the commissioner, be composed of [(1)] (A) a pregnant
33 woman, or [(2)] (B) a parent, both parents or other caretaker relative and
34 at least one child who is under the age of eighteen, or who is under the
35 age of nineteen and a full-time student in a secondary school or its
36 equivalent. A caretaker relative shall be related to the child or children
37 by blood, marriage or adoption or shall be the legal guardian of such a
38 child or pursuing legal proceedings necessary to achieve guardianship.
39 If the commissioner elects to allow state eligibility consistent with any
40 change in federal law, the commissioner may administratively transfer
41 any qualifying family cases under the cash assistance portion of the
42 state-administered general assistance program to the temporary family
43 assistance program without regard to usual eligibility and enrollment
44 procedures. If such families become an ineligible coverage group under
45 the federal law, the commissioner shall administratively transfer such
46 families back to the cash assistance portion of the state-administered
47 general assistance program without regard to usual eligibility and
48 enrollment procedures to the degree that such families are eligible for

49 the state program; [.]

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

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

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

110 (2) A month shall count toward the limit if the family receives
111 assistance for any day of the month; [J] and

112 [(II) a] (3) A month in which a family receives temporary assistance
113 for needy families benefits that are issued from a jurisdiction other than
114 Connecticut shall count toward the limit.

115 [(d)] (b) Under said program [(1)] no family shall be eligible that has

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

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

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

150 provided by the Department of Social Services, [. Said interview shall
151 also include a determination of] and (2) whether such family is eligible
152 for supplemental nutrition assistance or Medicaid. Information and
153 referrals shall be made to such a family for services and benefits
154 including, but not limited to, the earned income tax credit, rental
155 subsidies, emergency housing, employment services and energy
156 assistance.

157 (e) Notwithstanding section 17b-104, commencing on July 1, 2021, the
158 Commissioner of Social Services shall provide a cost-of-living
159 adjustment in temporary family assistance benefits equal to the most
160 recent percentage increase in the consumer price index for urban
161 consumers whenever funds appropriated for temporary family
162 assistance lapse at the close of any fiscal year and are sufficient to cover
163 such adjustment. The commissioner shall provide a pro-rated benefit
164 increase from available lapsed funds in any fiscal year when such funds
165 are not sufficient to cover a cost-of-living adjustment in accordance with
166 this subsection.

167 ~~[(g)]~~ (f) An applicant or recipient of temporary family assistance who
168 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. Subsection (a) of section 17b-112b of the general statutes is
172 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
173 *2021*):

174 (a) An applicant or recipient who is a past or present victim of
175 domestic violence or at risk of further domestic violence, pursuant to
176 subsection (c) of section 17b-112a, shall, for good cause: (1) Be excused
177 from failing to participate in a work activity; or (2) be exempted from
178 child support enforcement requirements pursuant to subsection ~~[(e)]~~ (c)
179 of section 17b-112, as amended by this act. [Such an applicant or
180 recipient may, for good cause, be granted an extension of cash assistance
181 beyond twenty-one months, provided the domestic violence

182 experienced is of sufficient magnitude to reasonably render the
183 individual unable to obtain or maintain employment.]

184 Sec. 3. Section 17b-112e of the general statutes is repealed and the
185 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2021*):

186 (a) The Department of Social Services shall provide safety net services
187 for certain families identified as having significant barriers to
188 employment and families who are at risk of losing benefits under the
189 temporary family assistance program or no longer receiving program
190 benefits. To be eligible for safety net services, such families shall: (1)
191 Have been identified as having significant barriers to employment
192 during the initial assessment by the department's eligibility worker or
193 during the first twelve months of employment services by an
194 employment services case manager; (2) have made a good faith effort to
195 seek and maintain employment but have not been able to do so or be at
196 risk of failing to complete the employment services program; or (3) have
197 exhausted their eligibility for temporary family assistance program
198 benefits. [; or (4) not be eligible for six-month extensions of temporary
199 family assistance benefits due to: (A) The receipt of two sanctions from
200 the department during the first twenty months of the twenty-one-month
201 time limit of said temporary family assistance program; or (B) the
202 determination by the department that such a family has not made a
203 good faith effort to seek and maintain employment.]

204 (b) Said safety net shall consist of services provided through the
205 existing community service delivery network with additional resources
206 provided by the Department of Social Services. Services shall be
207 provided in-kind or through vendor or voucher payment. Services may
208 include the following: (1) Food, shelter, clothing and employment
209 assistance; (2) eviction prevention; (3) an in-depth family needs
210 assessment; (4) intensive case management that includes visits to the
211 family's home; (5) continuous monitoring for child abuse or neglect; and
212 (6) for families at risk of losing benefits under the temporary family
213 assistance program, individual performance contracts administered by
214 the Labor Department that require job training, job searching, volunteer

215 work, participation in parenting programs or counseling or any other
216 requirements deemed necessary by the Labor Commissioner.

217 (c) Families successfully meeting the program requirements
218 established by the individual performance contracts in subdivision (6)
219 of subsection (b) of this section [prior to the end of the twenty-one-
220 month time limit] shall be considered to have made a good faith effort
221 to comply with the requirements of the program, [for the purposes of
222 qualifying for a six-month extension,] provided they have made a good
223 faith effort to comply with the individual performance contract or have
224 not incurred a sanction subsequent to completing the individual
225 performance contract.

226 (d) The Commissioner of Social Services shall implement policies and
227 procedures necessary for the purposes of this section while in the
228 process of adopting such policies and procedures in regulation form,
229 provided the commissioner [prints] posts notice of intention to adopt
230 the regulations [in the Connecticut Law Journal within twenty days of]
231 on the eRegulations System and the department's Internet web site not
232 later than twenty days after implementing such policies and procedures.
233 Policies and procedures implemented pursuant to this subsection shall
234 be valid until the time final regulations are effective.

235 Sec. 4. Section 17b-112k of the general statutes is repealed and the
236 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2021*):

237 (a) The Commissioner of Social Services and the Labor Commissioner
238 shall, within available appropriations, implement a pilot program that
239 serves not more than one hundred persons who are receiving benefits
240 under the temporary family assistance program and participating in the
241 Jobs First employment services program. The pilot program shall
242 provide to participants: (1) Intensive case management services to
243 identify participants' (A) employment goals, (B) support service needs,
244 and (C) training, education and work experience needs; (2) assistance in
245 accessing needed support services, training, education and work
246 experience; or (3) funding to facilitate participation in necessary adult

247 basic education, skills training, postsecondary education or subsidized
248 employment.

249 [(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections (a) and (c) of
250 section 17b-112, the Commissioner of Social Services shall, within
251 available appropriations, grant a six-month extension of time-limited
252 cash assistance benefits to any person who (1) has made a good-faith
253 effort to comply with the requirements of the pilot program, (2) has not
254 exceeded the sixty-month limit, described in subsection (c) of section
255 17b-112, and (3) has not been granted more than two extensions.]

256 [(c)] (b) The Commissioner of Social Services and the Labor
257 Commissioner shall jointly submit annual reports, in accordance with
258 the provisions of section 11-4a, not later than October 1, 2012, and
259 October 1, 2013, to the joint standing committees of the General
260 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to human services and
261 appropriations and the budgets of state agencies concerning the pilot
262 program. Such reports shall include, but shall not be limited to: (1) The
263 number of persons participating in the pilot program for the preceding
264 fiscal year; (2) the education, training and work experience activities of
265 the participants; (3) the support services identified as needed by
266 program participants through the provision of case management
267 services by the Department of Social Services and the Labor Department
268 and the support services actually received by each program participant;
269 (4) the educational degrees and certificates obtained by participants; and
270 (5) descriptions of the employment obtained by participants as a result
271 of the pilot program.

272 Sec. 5. Subsection (b) of section 17b-688c of the general statutes is
273 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1,*
274 *2021*):

275 (b) In no event shall temporary family assistance be granted to an
276 applicant for such assistance, who is not exempt from participation in
277 the employment services program, prior to the applicant's attendance at
278 an initial scheduled employment services assessment interview and

279 participation in the development of an employment services plan. The
280 Department of Social Services shall not delay temporary family
281 assistance to an applicant in cases where the department schedules the
282 initial employment services assessment interview more than ten
283 business days after the date on which application for assistance is made,
284 or in cases where the Labor Department does not complete an
285 employment services plan for the benefit of the applicant within ten
286 business days of the date on which the applicant attends an employment
287 services assessment interview. The Commissioner of Social Services
288 shall refer any applicant denied temporary family assistance, who may
289 be in need of emergency benefits, to other services offered by the
290 Department of Social Services or community services that may be
291 available to such applicant. The Department of Social Services shall
292 reduce the benefits awarded to a family under the temporary family
293 assistance program when a member of the family who is required to
294 participate in employment services fails to comply with an employment
295 services requirement without good cause. The first instance of
296 noncompliance with an employment services requirement shall result
297 in a twenty-five per cent reduction of such benefits for three consecutive
298 months. The second instance of noncompliance with such requirement
299 shall result in a thirty-five per cent reduction of such benefits for three
300 consecutive months. A third or subsequent instance of noncompliance
301 with such requirement shall result in the termination of such benefits
302 for three consecutive months. If only one member of a family is eligible
303 for temporary family assistance and such member fails to comply with
304 an employment services requirement, the department shall terminate all
305 benefits of such family for three consecutive months. Notwithstanding
306 the provisions of this subsection, the department shall terminate the
307 benefits awarded to a family under the temporary family assistance
308 program if a member of the family [who is not exempt from the twenty-
309 one-month time limit specified in subsection (a) of section 17b-112] fails,
310 without good cause, to: (1) Attend any scheduled assessment
311 appointment or interview relating to the establishment of an
312 employment services plan, except that such individual's benefits shall
313 be reinstated if the individual attends a subsequently scheduled

314 appointment or interview within thirty days of the date on which the
315 department has issued notification to the individual that benefits have
316 been terminated, or (2) comply with an employment services
317 requirement. [during a six-month extension of benefits.] Any individual
318 who fails to comply with the provisions of subdivision (1) of this
319 subsection may submit a new application for such benefits at any time
320 after termination of benefits.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2021</i>	17b-112
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2021</i>	17b-112b(a)
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2021</i>	17b-112e
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2021</i>	17b-112k
Sec. 5	<i>July 1, 2021</i>	17b-688c(b)

Statement of Purpose:

To extend the time limit for temporary family assistance to sixty months, exempt benefits received during the COVID-19 public health emergency from the time limit, eliminate the penalties for families with children born after enrollment in the program and ensure benefits are adequate to meet the cost of living for beneficiaries.

[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.]