

Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6635

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING TEMPORARY FAMILY ASSISTANCE.

Vote Date: 4/1/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/25/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Human Services Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This legislation, passed with Joint Favorable Substitute language, would extend the benefits of temporary family assistance from twenty-one months to sixty months. Months associated with the public health crisis declared by Governor Ned Lamont will be excluded from any time limit under the program. The Department of Social Services would be required to provide a cost-of-living adjustment equal to the most recent percentage increase in the consumer price index. It also grants the Commissioner of Social Services the ability to exempt a family from time-limited benefits under certain circumstances. The bill is intended to improve assistance to families experiencing financial hardship.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Dr. Deidre S. Gifford, Connecticut Department of Social Services, Commissioner:](#)

Commissioner Gifford is opposed to the bill as written for several reasons. The policy in this legislation is not in accordance to the Governor's budget and money is not allocated to fund the changes in this bill. Dr. Gifford states Connecticut is at a low level of enrollment and expanding the time-limit on future enrollments will result in increasing costs associated with the change. The elimination of "family cap" would increase the benefit of families.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Elizabeth Fraser, Connecticut Association for Human Services:](#) Believes the current statute does not provide enough time to fulfill its purpose of assisting families back on their feet following hardships. Connecticut funds TANF at 8%, while the national average is 21%.

[Dr. Stephen Tomczak, National Association of Social Workers](#): Restrictive time-limit policies have exacerbated poverty and economic insecurity for low-income families. Family cap policies have proven to be harmful to children and families. The cost-of-living in Connecticut is high and the burden falls disproportionately on low-income families.

[Ife Floyd, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#): The changes in the proposal are long overdue. Extending the time limit to 60 months gives families more time to stabilize when they fall on hard times. Connecticut's 21 months are less than the regional and national level. Most families do not remain on the program for the full 60 months but granting the opportunity for families is essential.

[Center for Law and Social Policy](#): The family cap penalizes mothers who have children receiving cash assistance by reducing the additional benefit amount that families can receive for such children by 50%. This cap is outdated. This bill would increase access to financial support for low-income families, reduce child poverty, and promote positive outcomes for mothers and children.

[Myra Duran, If When How](#): Aims to repeal racist eugenic family caps in temporary assistance for needy families policies. Welfare caps are designed to coerce low-income people into not having children and they exacerbate poverty, increase food and housing insecurity, and worsen health and social outcomes.

[Madri Hall-Faul](#): 14% of Connecticut's children live in poverty and represent the largest share of the population in poverty. Cash transfers have been shown to be the most effective means of lifting families out of poverty.

[Alison Weir, Greater Hartford Legal Aid](#): The current pandemic exhibits how a 21 month period is not enough time to recover from a job loss, particularly during a widespread recession. Relatively few people stay on the program for 21 months. Nationally, 63% of participants on the program receive benefits for one year or less.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None offered.

Reported by: Cassandra Gallion

Date: April 6, 2021