



POLICY ALERT

Center for Public Policy Priorities

900 Lydia Street Austin, Texas 78702 PH: 512.320.0222/FAX: 512.320.0227 www.cppp.org

April 24, 2007

For More Information: Celia Hagert, hagert@cppp.org

TANF LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

We wanted to share with you these latest developments on the various TANF bills making their way through the 80th Legislature. Thank you for your support on these important issues!

SB 1096 (Sen. Janek)

The Senate will vote on SB 1096 today, April 24, 2007. Sen. Kyle Janek has agreed to accept an amendment from Sen. Carlos Uresti that would better protect people with disabilities. The amendment would:

- Retain a temporary, one-time exemption for adults with disabilities and those caring for children with disabilities if the disability is likely to last for 6 months or longer.
- Give the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) the responsibility for doing the initial disability determination with applicants and for granting the temporary exemption.
- Give the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) the responsibility for granting good cause exemptions from the work requirement in all other situations. (**Exception:** Adult recipients with an SSI application pending would remain eligible for an exemption from HHSC throughout their time on TANF).
- Charge HHSC, TWC, and the Department on Aging and Disability Services (DADS) with developing a disability screening process to ensure that recipients are granted an exemption or good cause only when they need one, and that persons who are able to work are referred to the Choices work program. These agencies would also be charged with ensuring that the TANF work program guarantees equal access and opportunity to persons with disabilities in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Require TWC to train local workforce boards on the disability screening process and issues related to ADA compliance.

We believe this amendment will better protect recipients with disabilities. Senator Zaffirini may offer another amendment to SB 1096 to add a provision from her TANF bill, SB 1861 (see below), that would amend the state-funded program that currently serves two-parent families to include persons with disabilities. The state-funded program would serve these families more effectively without subjecting the state to penalties for failure to meet federal work participation rate requirements. At press time, it was unclear whether Sen. Janek would accept this amendment.

Actions:

- Email Rebekah Shroeder (rebekah.shroeder@senate.state.tx.us) in Sen. Janek's office and Diana Martinez (diana.martinez@senate.state.tx.us) in Sen. Uresti's office to thank these senators for working with advocates in the disability community to improve SB 1096.
- Urge Sen. Janek to accept Sen. Zaffirini's amendment to SB 1096.

HB 2902 (Rep. Harper-Brown)

HB 2902, the companion to Sen. Janek's SB 1096, has a hearing this Thursday, April 26, 2007, in the House Human Services Committee. This bill is identical to the introduced version of SB 1096, by Sen. Janek, which we opposed. HB 2902 would also subject certain nonrecipient parents (whose children are on TANF) to the TANF work requirement and sanctions for failure to meet that requirement.

Actions:

- Please contact Rep. Harper Brown's office and urge her to incorporate Sen. Janek's amendment(s) into HB 2902, and replace the nonrecipient parent language with the language in SB 589 and HB 2904, Rep. Harper-Brown's other TANF bill (see below).
- If you can, **please testify against the bill as filed** at the Thursday hearing.
- Contact members of the House Human Services Committee and urge them to OPPOSE HB 2902 as filed.

See <http://www.cppp.org/research.php?aid=657&cid=3&scid=12> and <http://www.cppp.org/research.php?aid=651> for more on CPPP's opposition to HB 2902 and SB 1096 as filed.

HB 2904 (Rep. Harper-Brown)/SB 589 (Sen. Nelson)

HB 2904 is the companion bill to SB 589, which passed the Senate in March. HB 2904 will also be heard this Thursday in the House Human Services Committee. HB 2904 encourages certain nonrecipient parents to work by giving HHSC the ability to provide them with employment and other support services. HB 2904 notably does *not* require these parents to work or subject them and their children to penalties (sanctions) if they fail to meet work rules. We support this bill.

Actions:

- Please support HB 2904 on Thursday.
- Contact members of the House Human Services Committee and urge their support for this bill.

See: <http://www.cppp.org/research.php?aid=630&cid=3&scid=12> for CPPP's testimony on SB 589.

CSHB 3759 (Rep. Naishtat)/SB 1861 (Sen. Zaffirini)

The committee substitute for HB 3759 was heard in the House Human Services Committee last week. It is now pending. Rep. Naishtat is working on some changes to the bill to help get it out of committee. The bill may be voted on Thursday as well.

- Please email Nancy Walker (nancy.walker@house.state.tx.us) in Rep. Naishtat's office and Jessica Ramos (jessica.ramos@senate.state.tx.us) in Senator Zaffirini's office and thank these senators for all their hard work moving **GOOD** TANF policy ideas forward this session.
- Contact members of the House Human Services Committee and urge their support for CSHB 3759.

See: http://www.cppp.org/files/3/SB%201861_SB%201096%20comparison.pdf (PAGE 2) and <http://www.cppp.org/research.php?aid=656> for CPPP's analysis of these bills.