



Illinois House Bill 2383—Tailoring TANF for This Recession

Why the Illinois Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program needs tailoring for recessionary times:

- The TANF cash assistance program has not responded to the worsening economic situation in Illinois. Over the past year, the unemployment rate has increased by 54% (rising from 5.9% to 9.1%) and unemployment insurance claims by 58%, but enrollment in TANF has decreased. Less than one in five Illinois children living in deep poverty (below 50% FPL) receives benefits.
- Sixty-three percent of workers who lose their jobs don't qualify for unemployment insurance because they worked part-time, hadn't held their jobs long enough, or for other technical reasons. TANF is supposed to be their family's safety net.
- This bill's proposed changes would allow Illinois' TANF program to provide working families with the temporary support they need in tough economic times while preserving TANF's foundation as a temporary and work-focused program.

What the federal government is offering:

- Under President Obama's economic recovery plan, states whose TANF caseloads rise receive an 80% federal match for all increases in assistance costs. Every \$1 Illinois invests in meeting this rising need leverages \$4 in federal funds.

What HB 2383 does:

1. Improves access by stressing that TANF's purpose is to target assistance to families in need and that caseloads may increase during times of severe economic downturn. Work requirements and time limits remain as core elements of the program.
2. Makes all families living in "deep poverty" (below 50% FPL, \$9156/year for family of 3) financially eligible for TANF.
3. Continues to encourage families to seek and retain employment by allowing them to continue receiving limited assistance until their earnings have lifted them out of poverty (above the federal poverty level).
4. Provides that applicants will receive timely assistance needed to stabilize their lives and promptly undergo a thorough assessment to guide their assignment to work activities.

5. Protects victims of violence by expanding crisis assistance and extending protection to victims of sexual violence.

Bill Status as of May 1, 2009—The bill passed the Illinois House of Representatives by a vote of 68 to 38 on March 27. It passed the Senate Human services Committee on April 29 by a vote of 5-2-2. The Senate will vote on the bill in May. To check on the bill's updated status, see the Illinois General Assembly website, www.ilga.gov.

Actions Needed—Please call, email, or write to members of the Illinois Senate, both Democrats and Republicans, asking them to please vote in favor of HB 2383 when it is called for a vote on the Senate floor in the next few weeks. For contact info for your Illinois state senator go to www.votesmart.org. Please tell your Senator that:

- the changes to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program made by HB 2383 are needed to tailor the TANF program to meet the needs of Illinois families in these recessionary times and
- that under the federal economic recovery plan 80 cents of every \$1 Illinois spends on increased TANF assistance costs will be funded by the federal government.

For more information about HB 2383, please contact the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law—danlesser@povertylaw.org, jenniferhrycyna@povertylaw.org, or mstapleton@povertylaw.org.