

Legislative Alert - The HOPE Act up for possible vote today

The Health Conference Committee has placed Senate Bill 372 - The HOPE Act - into the Conference Committee Report for House Substitute for Senate Bill 402. The provisions of this bill would make it more difficult for very poor Kansas families with children to use state safety net services like cash assistance, food assistance, and child care assistance. This bill would reduce lifetime Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) eligibility from three to two years.

The provisions of this bill do not serve to lift families out of poverty or protect young children from harm. Rather, they add more restrictive policy changes that make TANF less available and could further reduce TANF caseloads.

Most troubling about limiting access to public assistance is that it harms children. Research shows that poverty among young children not only slows their progress in school but also shrinks their earnings as adults. TANF is often a critical source of income for the most vulnerable families with young children, suggesting that policy changes that cut TANF income, such as establishing harsher sanctions, shorter time limits or significantly reducing benefits, could harm young children now and in the future.

Statewide, TANF serves only 12 for every 100 children living in poverty. In 2010, TANF reached 20 poor children for every 100. In Johnson County the reach is even less, with only five of every 100 poor children served by TANF. The Kansas TANF program is not providing an effective safety net now. More restrictions will further diminish the positive role that the safety net can play to help families gain stability.

Further restrictions do not benefit the State General Fund; TANF is funded by a federal block grant to the state and SNAP is directly paid by the federal government.

At UCS, we believe the state has an obligation to help Kansans who are struggling. Meeting that obligation begins with an accessible and responsive TANF program. If you agree, please contact your state representative today.

To find your representative: http://openstates.org/find_your_legislator/

Our mission: Provide data analysis, lead collaborative planning and mobilize resources to enhance the availability and delivery of health and human services.

Contact us at 913-438-4764 or www.ucsjoco.org

STAY CONNECTED

