

House Human Services Committee

March 22, 2023

SB 2291

Senator Kathy Hogan

Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee, my name is Kathy Hogan, and I represent District 21.

SB 2291 is a bill that simply raises the monthly Temporary Assistance to Needy Family (TANF) benefit from 25% of the poverty level to 50% of the poverty level. The Senate changed this bill into a study resolution.

TANF is a federal program that was converted from the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program that was established in the 1930's with the Social Security Act during the great depression, to a block grant program with the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA).

Since the major work that was done during the 1997 legislative session to outline the structure for the TANF program, few modifications have been made to that structure. Since that time, the numbers of families receiving assistance have consistently dropped and the percentage of funding to assist low-income families has also dropped as TANF funding has been redirected to other programs.

The current standard of need as outlined in North Dakota Administrative Code means that families whose household income is approximately 22-25% of the Federal Poverty Limit may be eligible to receive assistance from the TANF program.

Translated into dollars and cents, this means that a single parent household with two children may be eligible to receive a financial benefit from TANF if their household income is equal to or less than \$5,069 a year, or approximately \$422 of earnings per month.

After researching this national trend and looking at the ND data, this bill emerged. I hope that we, as a legislature, can better monitor the use of all TANF funds. In some states, there have been excessive abuses of the TANF block grant funds, and we need to assure that we are more diligent in monitoring these funds.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these comments. I am willing to answer any questions.