

Testimony Prepared for the

**Senate Appropriations Committee – Human Resources Division**

February 8, 2023

By: Desiree Sorenson, Mountrail McKenzie Human Service Zone Director

**RE: Senate Bill 2291 – Temporary Assistance to Needy Families  
(TANF)**

Chairman Dever and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, my name is Desiree Sorenson. I am the Mountrail McKenzie Human Service Zone Director, which includes the service area of Mountrail and McKenzie Counties. In addition, I am a member of the North Dakota Human Service Zone Director Association. Please consider my testimony in support of SB 2291.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is an economic assistance program administered by human service zones. This program assists the lowest income and most economically fragile families with young children. At the same time, TANF is highly regulated and technical program both to participate in and to administer. The Human Service Zones do the important work of determining eligibility for these economically fragile families with young children.

The TANF program is intended to move low-income families from public assistance to self-sufficiency by providing cash assistance along with work readiness, training, and job placement services.

As Michele Gee, Director of Economic Assistance, has previously testified to, Senate Bill 2291 and proposes changes to North Dakota Century Code section 50-09-29, setting the maximum benefit level for the TANF Program to “at least fifty percent of the federal poverty level based on household size”.

The House Human Services Committee is currently considering House Bill 1036 with the same intent to raise the maximum benefit level for the TANF Program.

Many of our current policies and laws surrounding TANF are over twenty-five years old and stem from 1997's Welfare Reform Reauthorization Act. Currently a single parent with two children could receive \$422 of earnings per month. With the proposed changes, a single parent household with two children could receive \$960 a month. This would allow for young families to provide the basic necessities to their children.

This concludes my testimony. I would be happy to try to answer any questions the committee may have. Thank you.