

The Governor proposes to cut off families' TAFDC where a parent or child has a severe disability.

The Governor's proposal:

- The Governor's budget proposed to cut \$39.5 million from the TAFDC account (4403-2000), which funds cash assistance for very low income families with children.
- Most of the money (\$29.5 million) would be "saved" by slashing TAFDC benefits for families where a parent or child is so severely disabled that they receive federal SSI benefits.
- 6,900 families would lose TAFDC altogether. The whole family would have to live on the SSI benefit intended to meet the needs of the parent or child with a disability.
- TAFDC benefits for another 1,600 families would be drastically cut.

The proposal will harm children and their families:

- Families who are already far below the poverty level would lose between 35 percent and 50 percent of their cash income.
- Many of the families will not be able to pay rent and will become homeless.
- Hunger and illness among families will increase.
- Families will not be able to pay for the additional medical and other expenses of the person with a disability.¹

Please urge the Chairs of House and Senate Ways and Means and the Speaker and the Senate President to –

REJECT THIS TERRIBLE PROPOSAL

This short-sighted proposal will have negative budget and economic impacts:

- Shelter costs will go up. If 1,000 of the 8,500 families become homeless as a result of the cut and access shelter, the annual cost would be more than \$37 million.²
- About \$7 million more would be needed for the SSI state supplement account because some of the families' SSI benefits would go up by \$84/month.
- The legislature will have to appropriate more money for state public housing, which will collect less rent when the families' incomes go down.
- Increases in family homelessness will cause increased costs to the state and localities for transportation from shelters to schools.
- Loss of income and homelessness correlates with increases in illness and higher health costs.

Massachusetts would be an outlier:

- Idaho and New Hampshire are the only states that count the full amount of SSI as income. West Virginia, Minnesota and Washington State abandoned their schemes to count all or part of the SSI in their cash assistance programs. Vermont recently cut cash assistance for families with SSI by \$125, causing a huge dent in already tight budgets.³
- Governor Patrick made a similar proposal in 2009 as part of package of 9C cuts when the state had a severe shortfall in revenues. The Legislature persuaded him that it was short-sighted and harmful.

¹ See Parish, et al., *Material Hardship in U.S. Families Raising Children with Disabilities*, 75 *Exceptional Children* 71 (Fall 2008); Stabile, et al., *The Economic Costs of Childhood Disability*, 22 *Future Child* 65 (2012); Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities, *Families in Poverty: Parents with Disabilities and Their Children*, (1998).

² The average shelter cost per family is 37,674.
See <http://www.mass.gov/hed/docs/dhcd/hs/ea/fy16q1eareport.pdf>.

³ <http://digital.vpr.net/post/cuts-reach-program-strain-some-vermonts-most-vulnerable#stream/0>.

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