



December 21, 2011

The Honorable John Boehner  
United States House of Representatives  
The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Majority Leader Harry Reid  
United States Senate  
The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Speaker and Mr. Majority Leader:

Unless Congress acts before the end of December, the authorization for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program will expire. Should this happen, more than a million families representing 4.5 million citizens will lose access to funds to help them move to employment and cover their everyday expenses in the interim. Because many states use federal TANF funds to support their child care (enabling parents to work) and child welfare programs (keeping children safe at home), those programs will be threatened as well. This lapse in federal funding will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for states to cover while waiting for Congress to act when it returns in January.

Under current law, the TANF authorization expires December 31 and while both the House and the Senate took action toward extending the program, the issue was not resolved before members left town for the remainder of the year. The House passed HR 3659, the Welfare Integrity and Data Improvement Act on December 15, which included an extension of the TANF authorization until September 30, 2012. The Senate did not act on that bill, but instead inserted a two-month extension in the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act, HR 3630, which appears unlikely to pass before the end of the year.

TANF funds can constitute a major portion of their child welfare and child care budgets. Many states use TANF dollars to fund much of the preventive work done by child welfare programs. This spending is allowable under purposes one and four of TANF (assisting needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes). States can transfer up to 30% of their TANF funds into the child care block grant and SSBG. These funds will no longer be available if the TANF program authorization expires. Since states had no reason to believe that the TANF program was going to expire, they have not planned for this situation. Asking the states to cover the loss of federal funding for such critical programs with virtually no notice is simply unconscionable for our already cash-strapped states, and jeopardizes essential support for the millions of Americans who can least afford it.

It is with the upmost urgency that APHSA requests that the House and Senate do whatever is necessary, including returning to Washington, to prevent the TANF program from expiring. There can be no more urgent need during this holiday season than to ensure the well-being of millions of our most vulnerable citizens who rely on TANF and the programs it funds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracy L. Wareing". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Tracy L. Wareing  
Executive Director, APHSA