



September 23, 2010

Hon. Max Baucus
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee
SD-219 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Baucus:

The National Association of State TANF Administrators (NASTA), an affiliate of the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA), would like to thank your office for its work on the Job Creation and Tax Cut Act of 2010. NASTA and APHSA are very supportive of a number of features in this language that would help thousands of struggling American families.

An extension of both the TANF block grant and the TANF Supplemental Grants for one year will allow states to continue operating the program with some degree of certainty throughout 2011, thus limiting any disruption of service to enrolled families. APHSA and NASTA both look forward to the opportunity to engage in a discussion on how we might strengthen TANF through reauthorization. NASTA and APHSA have prepared a thorough set of recommendations and we look forward to discussing them with you in depth.

We are also encouraged by this legislation's inclusion of both a continuation of the TANF Emergency Contingency Fund (ECF) through FY 2011 as well a restoration of funds for the original Contingency Fund (CF) established through PRWORA. Both the CF and the ECF have enabled state TANF programs to play a more active role in working with low-income families facing the difficulties of a sluggish economy, particularly by providing subsidized employment opportunities and one-time payments to deal with household emergencies. Of course we wish the ECF could be funded at its previous dollar level so that states could fully maintain these efforts, but recognize that budget realities may not allow that to occur.

APHSA applauds the proposed reinstatement of the federal match for the child support enforcement incentive payments. The child support program is a key program that puts money directly into the hands of single parents and plays an important role in keeping many children out of poverty and avoiding the need for ongoing cash assistance for single custodial parents formerly or never on TANF. With over 15 million child support cases nationwide, this legislation will save states from having to make potentially serious cuts to a successful program.

However, while there is a great deal in this legislation that APHSA and NASTA support, we must voice some concern over the proposed changes to the TANF program's reporting requirements in Section 644 of this bill. The proposals made in this section would present a

significant workload burden on states that are already struggling with both shortfalls in their budget as well as diminishing staff capacity due to attrition, furloughs, and staff cutbacks. The new reporting requirements proposed in this legislation would undercut one of the fundamental features of the TANF block grant, which is that states are allowed reasonable discretion and flexibility to fund programs to meet their specific needs. NASTA is happy to have a conversation with Congress on the adequacy of the current measurement structure of TANF and what changes could be made to strengthen this system; however, this conversation should happen in the context of a full reauthorization of the program, which would address a number of other programmatic needs.

Again, we thank you for your work in providing states with the necessary resources to continue to work with low-income families as the nation continues to recover from the most recent recession. We look forward to working with Congress to ensure that this necessary program is strengthened so that it may continue to grow and develop in the future.

Sincerely,



Cari DeSantis
Interim Executive Director
APHS



Russell Sykes
Chairperson
NASTA

Cc:

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid
Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell
Senator Charles Grassley
House Speaker Nancy Pelosi
House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer
House Minority Leader John Boehner