



To Make Sure All Families Can Meet their Children's Basic Needs Let's Reform DC's Rigid TANF Time Limit

DC's TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) program provides income and employment services to protect children whose families face economic hardship. This is not only the right thing to do, it also provides stability so that children can go to school ready to learn and develop healthfully. Stable income helps families avoid crises, such as eviction and hunger, which can harm a child's chances for future success.

A 2016 Working Group convened by the Department of Human Services recommended reforming the District's rigid TANF time limit, which currently puts thousands of vulnerable children at risk of falling deeper into poverty. Mayor Bowser and the DC Council should work in 2017 to adopt these recommendations and provide the needed resources.

Without action, the District's current TANF time limit will eliminate cash assistance for 5,800 families – including more than 10,000 children - in October 2017. Like all states, the District has flexibility to modify the federal time limit. Yet unlike most states, the District does not offer time limit extensions under any circumstances, even for parents fleeing domestic violence, caring for a child with a disability, or facing other hardships. Once a family is cut off, DC's time limit never allows families to get back on. Without reform:

- **More families will be at risk of homelessness:** Most DC TANF families get no housing assistance; many are living within someone else's household (family, friends, etc.) and rely on TANF to help contribute to the household's rent or utilities.
- **More families will struggle to find and keep stable work:** TANF provides job training, subsidized childcare and transportation support. Families cut off will lose access to these supports, making it extremely difficult to find and maintain a job.
- **More children will face hardship:** Research shows when parents are cut off from TANF, their children are more likely to experience hunger and problems in school.
- **More families will be forced into unsafe circumstances:** Parents desperate for income to support their children are often forced to stay with an abuser or engage in dangerous activities to support their family.

The TANF Working Group's "Preferred Option" would guarantee most of a family's TANF benefit -- without a time limit -- to ensure resources are always there to meet children's needs. A portion of the parents' benefit can be reduced if parents do not participate in required TANF activities. This policy will protect the many parents who face extreme hardships, such as domestic violence or serious health problems. It also helps those in low-wage jobs who rely on TANF as a safety net from an uncertain job market.

The Working Group's recommendation provides this safety net. Mayor Bowser and the DC Council now need to turn it into law and provide the funding necessary to protect the District's most vulnerable families and children.

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