



THE GENERAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, MA 02133

March 26, 2014

Dear Chairman Dempsey:

We are writing to ask you to consider **level funding for TAFDC (4403-2000)** in the FY15 budget. Because of a projected decline in the TAFDC caseload, level funding would allow the state to pay struggling families approximately \$70 a month more. This small amount would make a significant difference for TAFDC families.

The amount of the TAFDC benefits directly affects victims of violence. The Berkshire Commission on the Status of Women noted, “[f]inancial stress and homelessness are common reasons a victim of violence feels trapped and remains with or returns to her abuser. Victims will not leave an abusive relationship unless we can provide protection. They will suffer abuse longer if they cannot shelter and feed their family. And because there is no place for families to move, they are staying longer in our domestic violence shelters.”

Research shows low-income children whose families receive an income boost in the range we propose have better school results. Children’s HealthWatch at Boston Medical Center similarly determined that the federal Recovery Act’s boost in SNAP benefits correlated with children more likely to be classified as “well.” Unfortunately, the SNAP increase expired last fall, making it critical that TAFDC benefits for very low-income families be increased so we do not lose the gains made from the Recovery Act.

Moreover, there is ample research confirming that young children who experience hardships such as lack of nutritious food, unstable housing and utility cut-offs are at an increased risk of negative health effects, including developmental delays, that can have life-long consequences. Here are some examples of how level funding line item 4403-2000 would really make an impact. These families are clients of Greater Boston Legal Services; the individuals’ names have been changed to protect their identity.

- Sandra and her child are doubled-up with a cousin and the cousin’s family. Sandra contributes half her TAFDC for rent but the overcrowding is causing a lot stress and the cousin says Sandra will have to leave unless she increases her contribution. Sandra says that if she could pay even a small amount more, the cousin would let her stay longer and she and her child would not be out on the street.

- Lila is a single mother of a 2-year old who has been placed in a shelter in Waltham without stores or services nearby. Her TAFDC grant is only \$329 a month. An additional \$70 would help her buy a transit pass so she could bring her son to day care, get to her computer classes every day, and get to doctor appointments and job interviews.
- Kelly is disabled and receives SSI for herself. Her husband and two young children receive TAFDC. They are always behind on the rent. An additional \$70 a month would help them pay their rent and not live with the constant worry of being evicted. The money could also help pay for public transportation so they could take their 4-year-old to her Head Start program on days when it is too cold or rainy to walk there.
- Ashley, a mother of three, would use the additional money to pay her phone bill and boots for her son. Without a phone, her children’s schools and doctors cannot reach her and she cannot contact potential employers. This winter, her 10-year-old son’s boots wore out and she could not afford to replace them. Her son’s feet were constantly cold and wet. “Spring can’t come soon enough,” she says.

The dramatic decline in the TAFDC caseload provides an unusual opportunity to make a significant difference for vulnerable children without adding any new money to the account. We ask that the House Ways and Means budget take advantage of this opportunity to level-fund the TAFDC account and provide a much-needed increase in grant levels that will have a sure positive impact on our children and families in meeting basic needs of survival.

Thank you in advance for considering this possibility.

Sincerely,

Representative Kay Khan
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Representative Marjorie C. Decker
25th Middlesex

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7th Suffolk

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