



February 10, 2003

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the National Women's Law Center, we are writing to urge you to oppose H.R. 4, the "Personal Responsibility, Work, and Family Promotion Act of 2003," when it comes to the floor this week. It would be a major step backward for welfare reform – and for many programs in addition to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). We urge you instead to support the Cardin substitute that would help parents striving to support their families.

Since the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program was adopted in 1996, many women have left welfare for work. However, most can find only unstable, low-wage jobs that do not enable them to lift their families out of poverty. The Cardin substitute would build on what we have learned over the last five years about how to help families achieve long-term self-sufficiency. It would expand access to affordable, quality child care; significantly increase the amount of child support that goes to poor children; give states additional flexibility to structure programs offering the mix of work, education, training, and other services individuals need to enter and advance in the workforce; allow states to offer TANF-funded services to legal immigrants, among other reforms.

At a time when states face their worst fiscal crisis in 50 years and the economy has lost over two million jobs in the past year, H.R. 4 will make it more difficult for struggling families to achieve self-sufficiency.

- Instead of expanding access to child care, the bill would make it even more difficult for parents to get the child care assistance they need to be able to work. It fails to provide sufficient funding to meet current child care needs, much less the increased demand for child care that the bill's increased work requirements will create.
- H.R. 4 contains very modest child support reforms that fall far short of the reforms that are needed and that have previously received bipartisan support. Moreover, they are financed by imposing a new fee – in effect, a tax on child support collections for single-parent families that never received TANF, many of whom are low- and moderate-income themselves.
- Many families leaving TANF lose access to health insurance, but H.R. 4 reauthorizes Transitional Medicaid Assistance for only one year, not five.

Finally, the negative effects of H.R. 4 will be felt far beyond the TANF program. The "superwaiver" provision of H.R. 4 would enable the executive branch to grant waivers of funding decisions and program requirements established by Congress in a wide range of programs, including Food Stamps, child care, TANF, various education and training programs, housing and homelessness programs, and the Social Services Block Grant.

I urge you to help women struggling to leave welfare and poverty by voting for the Cardin substitute amendment and against H.R. 4.

Sincerely,

Nancy Duff Campbell  
Co-President

Joan Entmacher  
Vice President and Director,  
Family Economic Security