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PUBLIC HEARING

before

ASSEMBLY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

ASSEMBLY BILLS Nos. 4700, 4701, 4702, 4703, 4704, 4705

(AFDC Legislation)

July 30, 1991
11:30 a.m.
Room 403
State House Annex
Trenton, New Jersey

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Assemblyman George J. Otlowski, Chairman
Assemblywoman Ann A. Mullen
Assemblyman John S. Watson

ALSO PRESENT:

Assemblyman Wayne R. Bryant
District 5

David Price
Office of Legislative Services
Aide, Assembly Health and Human
Services Committee

* * * * *

Hearing Recorded and Transcribed by
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State House Annex
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New Jersey State Legislature
ASSEMBLY HEALTH AND HUMAN
SERVICES COMMITTEE
STATE HOUSE ANNEX, CN-068
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625-0068
(609) 292-1646

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Assembly Health and Human Services Committee will hold a public hearing on the following legislation:

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| A-4700
Bryant | The "Family Development Act". |
| A-4701
Bryant | Establishes comprehensive social services information hotline in DHS. |
| A-4702
Bryant | Provides for AFDC eligibility for certain family members. |
| A-4703
Bryant | Directs the Commissioner of Human Services to revise the schedule of AFDC benefit amounts. |
| A-4704
Bryant | Directs DHS to allow full benefits for AFDC two parent families. |
| A-4705
Bryant | Establishes the Council on Community Restoration. |

The hearing will be held on Tuesday, July 30, 1991 at 11:00 A.M. in Room 403 of the State House Annex, Trenton, New Jersey.

The public may address comments and questions to David Price, Committee Aide and persons wishing to testify should contact Pamela Chisolm, secretary, at (609) 292-1646. Those persons presenting written testimony should provide 10 copies to the committee on the day of the hearing.

Issued 7/11/91

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ASSEMBLY, No. 4700
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STATE OF NEW JERSEY

INTRODUCED APRIL 15, 1991

By Assemblyman BRYANT

1 AN ACT concerning family development, supplementing Title 44
2 of the Revised Statutes and amending P.L.1947, c.156,
3 P.L.1987, c.282 and P.L.1987, c.283.

4
5 BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the*
6 *State of New Jersey:*

7 1. (New section) This act shall be known and may be cited as
8 the "Family Development Act."

9 2. (New section) The Legislature finds and declares that
10 within New Jersey, there are counties and municipalities which
11 are experiencing high unemployment and underemployment
12 among their populations, and that these are conditions which
13 contribute to the overall economic decline of the State and
14 generally threaten the public health, safety, morals and welfare;
15 that the population within each of these counties and
16 municipalities consists of a disproportionate number of
17 economically disadvantaged and unskilled individuals who face
18 crippling barriers to employment and who are in need of special
19 training in order to become members of the productive work
20 force; that the REACH program established pursuant to P.L.1987,
21 c.282 (C.44:10-9 et seq.) has not and cannot, as it is currently
22 operating, provide the variety or intensity of services to address
23 the many and deep-rooted needs of the populations of these
24 counties and municipalities; and that the obstacles to economic
25 achievement and permanent escape from the bonds of welfare
26 dependency for these people can only be overcome through a new
27 initiative which offers intensified and coordinated services that
28 go beyond the parameters of the REACH program and address the
29 educational, vocational and other needs of the public assistance
30 recipient's family, rather than the recipient alone.

31 3. (New section) As used in this act:
32 "Benefits" means benefits received under the program of aid to
33 families with dependent children established pursuant to
34 P.L.1959, c.86 (C.44:10-1 et seq.).

35 "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Human Services.

36 "Department" means the Department of Human Services.

37 "Program" means the "Family Development Initiative"
38 established pursuant to this act.

39 "Recipient" means a adult recipient of benefits under the
40 program of aid to families with dependent children.

EXPLANATION—Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the
above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

1 4. (New section) The Family Development Initiative is
2 established in the Division of Economic Assistance of the
3 Department of Human Services. The objective of the Family
4 Development Initiative is to enable recipients of aid to families
5 with dependent children to secure permanent full-time
6 unsubsidized jobs, preferably in the private sector, with wages
7 and benefits that are adequate to support their families, and to
8 ensure that these individuals and their family members obtain the
9 necessary educational skills and vocational training, as
10 appropriate, to secure these kinds of jobs, in addition to other
11 health-related, social, educational and vocational services that
12 may be necessary to assist the family.

13 The commissioner shall initially establish the program in the
14 three counties which have the largest numbers of recipients,
15 during the first year of the operation of the program. During the
16 two succeeding years, the commissioner shall phase in the
17 program in the remaining counties Statewide. As the program is
18 implemented in each county, the fiscal and personnel resources of
19 State, county and municipal government agencies which are being
20 utilized by the REACH program established pursuant to P.L.1987,
21 c.282 (C.44:10-9 et seq.) shall be transferred to the program, and
22 the REACH program shall be terminated in that county.

23 5. (New section) a. A recipient whose youngest child is two
24 years of age or older shall participate in education, vocational
25 assessment and training, or employment activities, or a
26 combination thereof, under the program.

27 b. A recipient whose youngest child is less than two years of
28 age shall participate in counseling and vocational assessment
29 activities and the development of a family plan pursuant to
30 section 7 of this act, and may voluntarily participate in
31 education, vocational training or employment activities, or a
32 combination thereof, under the program.

33 6. (New section) A recipient who without good cause fails or
34 refuses to enroll and actively participate in the program, which
35 includes failure to attend or make satisfactory academic progress
36 in educational or vocational training classes under the program,
37 according to rules and regulations adopted by the commissioner,
38 shall thereupon, as determined by the commissioner, be subject to
39 a reduction in benefits of at least 20%, or shall become ineligible
40 for benefits, for a period of at least 90 days. The period of
41 ineligibility shall commence at the end of the current benefit
42 period, and at the end of the period the recipient shall again
43 become eligible for benefits, if the recipient complies with all
44 requirements of the program as determined by the commissioner
45 or shows a willingness to do so. For a subsequent failure or
46 refusal to enroll and actively participate in the program without
47 good cause, the recipient may be subject to a termination of
48 benefits.

1 7. (New section) a. Services shall be provided to each
2 participant in the program according to a family plan which
3 includes a written contract. The contract shall be signed by the
4 participant and a program representative who shall act as a case
5 manager, advocate and broker of services for the participant and
6 the participant's family, and shall set forth the specific mutual
7 obligations of the participant and the program and a detailed plan
8 for the participant and the participant's family. The family plan
9 and contract, which shall explicitly state the services that the
10 program will provide to the participant, shall be reviewed by both
11 the participant and the program representative at least once a
12 year and may be revised from time to time according to the
13 needs of the participant, the participant's family and the
14 program.

15 b. The services to be provided under the program shall include,
16 but not be limited to: job development and placement in
17 full-time permanent jobs, preferably in the private sector;
18 counseling and vocational assessment; intensive remedial
19 education, including instruction in English-as-a-second language;
20 job search assistance; community work experience; employment
21 skills training focused on a specific job; and on-the-job training
22 in an employment setting.

23 c. The program shall be designed to ensure that each
24 participant and member of the participant's family, as age
25 appropriate, has attained the equivalent of a high school degree,
26 before assigning that person to a vocational-related activity
27 under the program.

28 d. The program shall assign one or more persons in each county
29 which is participating in the program to be responsible, on a
30 full-time basis, for job development for persons who have
31 completed their educational or training activities under the
32 program, with an emphasis on finding and creating permanent
33 full-time unsubsidized jobs, preferably in the private sector,
34 which offer wages and benefits that are adequate to support
35 recipients and their families.

36 e. The commissioner, in consultation with the Commissioner of
37 Commerce, Energy and Economic Development, shall seek to
38 recruit private sector employers in each county to offer
39 employment to persons who have completed their educational or
40 training activities under the program.

41 f. The commissioner, in consultation with the Chancellor of
42 Higher Education, shall develop a scholarship program to provide
43 tuition and related financial assistance, as needed, to each
44 program participant or other family member who has been
45 accepted into an institution of higher education or a
46 post-secondary vocational training program, according to
47 standards established by the commissioner.

48 g. The program shall provide supportive services to a program

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1 participant as a last resort when no other source is available
2 therefor and when these services are included in the family plan.
3 The supportive services shall include, but not be limited to, one
4 or more of the following:

5 (1) day care services for the participant's child, to be
6 purchased through a voucher issued to the participant by the
7 program, which may be used to obtain care at a State licensed
8 child care center or school age child care program, or at a family
9 day care home approved by the department, that accepts the
10 voucher;

11 (2) transportation services, to be provided directly by the
12 program or through an allowance or other means of subsidy by
13 which the participant may purchase transportation; and

14 (3) health insurance coverage, to be provided by a participant's
15 employer, or through a continuation of Medicaid benefits
16 pursuant to P.L.1968, c.413 (C.30:4D-1 et seq.) for up to one year
17 if the participant becomes ineligible for financial assistance
18 under P.L.1959, c.86 (C.44:10-1 et seq.) as a result of earned
19 income.

20 8. (New section) In each county, the designated representative
21 of the commissioner responsible for the development of a family
22 plan for a participant in the program shall conduct an assessment
23 of the health-related, social, educational and vocational needs of
24 the participant's family unit in preparing the family plan for the
25 participant. If the designated representative determines that the
26 participant faces multiple barriers to employment, is not eligible
27 for the services of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
28 pursuant to P.L.1955, c.64 (C.34:16-20 et seq.), or needs special
29 individualized services in order to be able to maintain steady
30 employment after participation in the program, or that any of the
31 other family members require educational services or vocational
32 training, then the designated representative shall include in the
33 family plan a requirement that the participant, or the other
34 family members, as appropriate, receive special services in
35 addition to the other services provided to the participant
36 pursuant to this act. The designated representative shall then
37 arrange for the provision of these services. These special
38 services may include: individual counseling; family counseling;
39 parental skill training and development; individualized job
40 training services; substance abuse counseling; individualized
41 remedial educational or tutorial services for the participant or
42 other family members based upon the assessment of the family's
43 educational needs; and any other health-related, counseling,
44 educational or vocational training services determined by the
45 commissioner to be necessary to provide each family member
46 who is eligible for benefits with the basic skills that are
47 necessary to secure and maintain gainful employment, and to
48 prepare the program participant for steady employment following

1 participation in the program.

2 The special services shall be provided to program participants
3 in accordance with guidelines established by the commissioner, in
4 consultation with the Commissioners of Health, Labor, Education,
5 Community Affairs, and Commerce, Energy and Economic
6 Development, and with the implementation plans established for
7 each county pursuant to this act.

8 9. (New section) The commissioner shall establish a program
9 office in each of the three counties with the largest number of
10 recipients, to be designated as a family resource center. The
11 center shall provide all program enrollment and case management
12 services, including counseling and health-related, social,
13 educational and vocational needs assessment services, to program
14 participants and their families in a single setting within the
15 county, in order to facilitate their access to these services.

16 10. (New section) The commissioner shall take such actions as
17 are necessary to reorganize the services provided by the Divisions
18 of Economic Assistance, Youth and Family Services, and Mental
19 Health and Hospitals of the department, the county welfare
20 agencies and private nonprofit agencies and organizations with
21 which the department contracts to provide services, and to
22 promote innovative approaches to the delivery of program
23 services through partnerships between public and private entities,
24 and between nonprofit and for-profit entities within the private
25 sector, in order to provide for the most effective and efficient
26 use of public and private resources in the implementation and
27 operation of the program.

28 11. (New section) a. The commissioner shall establish a
29 planning council in each county to determine the most effective
30 way to organize and administer the program in that county. The
31 planning council shall include no less than 12 and no more than 15
32 persons and shall, at a minimum, include: the director of the
33 program in each county, who shall be designated by the
34 commissioner; the director of the county welfare agency; a
35 member of the board of chosen freeholders; a representative of
36 the county human services advisory council; a representative of
37 the local Private Industry Council established pursuant to the
38 "Job Training Partnership Act," Pub.L.97-300 (29 U.S.C. §1501 et
39 al.), or of a successor entity as may be provided by federal law; a
40 representative of a child care agency in the county; a
41 representative of the local community college; a representative
42 of the county vocational school; a representative of private
43 business or industry in that county; a recipient of aid to families
44 with dependent children residing in that county; a representative
45 of the commissioner; and a representative of the Division of
46 Youth and Family Services.

47 b. The council shall develop a program implementation plan
48 for the county which shall ensure that training and education

1 services provided by the program in that county reflect local
2 needs and resources and that supportive services provided to
3 program participants utilize existing local arrangements
4 wherever possible. The plan shall also designate a county agency
5 to coordinate services provided by the program and to report to
6 the commissioner on program implementation and effectiveness.
7 according to criteria and standards established by the
8 commissioner.

9 12. (New section) The commissioner shall reimburse a county
10 for 100% of the reasonable costs associated with administration
11 of the program and program services which are not reimbursed by
12 the federal government.

13 13. Section 8 of P.L.1947, c.156 (C.44:8-114) is amended to
14 read as follows:

15 8. The State shall provide, through each municipality, public
16 assistance to the persons eligible therefor, residing therein or
17 otherwise when so provided by law, which assistance shall be fully
18 funded by the State and administered by a local assistance board
19 according to law and in accordance with this act and with such
20 rules and regulations as may be promulgated by the commissioner.

21 [As hereinafter provided, employable persons] An employable
22 person who is receiving public assistance shall be required, except
23 when good cause exists, to [perform such public work as shall be
24 assigned to them by the Division of Employment Services in the
25 Department of Labor or, in the manner described herein, by the
26 director of welfare of the municipality providing public
27 assistance.

28 The division shall provide for the establishment of public work
29 programs for the assignment of employable persons in receipt of
30 public assistance. Public work may include the performance of
31 work for the municipality providing public assistance, or the
32 performance of work in the operation of or in an activity of a
33 nonprofit agency or institution pursuant to a contract with the
34 municipality. Public work projects to which employable persons
35 are assigned by the division may include work for other levels of
36 government besides the municipality, and shall be approved by
37 the Commissioner of Labor. If a recipient is injured while
38 performing work assigned by the division or a municipal welfare
39 director pursuant to this act, liability for such injury shall be
40 assumed by the State, pursuant to the Workers' Compensation
41 Act, R.S.34:15-1 et seq. No State agency, municipality or any
42 governmental or nonprofit agency or institution which has
43 contracted with the division or a municipality pursuant to this
44 act, or its employees, shall be liable in a civil suit for damages
45 for any injury sustained by a recipient while performing work
46 required by this act.

47 The director of welfare in the municipality shall notify the
48 division of persons in receipt of public assistance who, in his

1 judgment, and in accordance with the regulations established by
2 the Commissioner of Human Services, are able to perform work.
3 From the time that he has so notified the division until such time
4 as the division shall assign such persons to a public work project,
5 the director of welfare shall assign such employable persons to
6 perform public work if such work is available, and shall notify the
7 division. The division may approve any such employment assigned
8 by the director of welfare without further need for assignment or
9 reassignment or may make another assignment. In assigning
10 public work, the director of welfare or the division, as the case
11 may be, shall be satisfied that such employable persons will not
12 be used to replace any regular employees of any department or
13 unit of such municipality.

14 In assigning persons to public work in a nonprofit agency or
15 institution, the division or the director of welfare, as the case
16 may be, shall also be satisfied that such assignment will not
17 result in the displacement of regular employees of the agency or
18 institution.

19 The Commissioner of Labor shall establish regulations
20 concerning the appropriateness of work-site assignments.

21 Persons performing such work assigned by the division or the
22 director of welfare shall work only the number of hours equal to
23 the amount of their grant divided by an hourly wage rate
24 commensurate with beginning regular employees similarly
25 employed. Performance of such work shall result in payment to
26 the person of his public assistance grant] enroll and actively
27 participate in the Family Development Initiative established
28 pursuant to P.L..... c..... (C.....) (now pending before the
29 Legislature as this bill).

30 Each person receiving public assistance who is required to
31 participate in the Family Development Initiative shall receive a
32 health-related, social, educational and vocational assessment and
33 those services, as appropriate, which are provided to other
34 participants in that program pursuant to P.L..... c.....
35 (C.....) (now pending before the Legislature as this bill).

36 . Any person who without good cause fails or refuses to [report
37 for or to perform work to which he has been assigned by the
38 director of welfare or the division] enroll and actively participate
39 in the Family Development Initiative, which includes failure to
40 attend or make satisfactory academic progress in educational or
41 vocational training classes under the program, according to rules
42 and regulations adopted by the commissioner, shall thereupon, as
43 determined by the commissioner, be subject to a reduction in
44 benefits of at least 20%, or shall become ineligible for public
45 assistance for a period of at least 90 days, which shall commence
46 at the end of the current benefit period and at the end of which
47 the person shall again become eligible for public assistance;
48 provided that he [reports for and performs work to which he has

1 been assigned] complies with all requirements of the Family
2 Development Initiative as determined by the commissioner or
3 shows his willingness to do so. For a subsequent failure or refusal
4 to enroll and actively participate in the program without good
5 cause, the person may be subject to a termination of benefits.

6 [Good cause for failure or refusal to report for or to perform
7 work shall include, but shall not be limited to: working conditions
8 which are a substantial risk to health and safety; physical
9 inability to engage in a particular type of work; or lack of a
10 reasonable means of transportation.

11 Willingness to report for or to perform work shall be
12 demonstrated by maintaining a current registration with the
13 division; by reporting to a division office upon request and
14 providing all required information; by reporting for employment
15 interviews as scheduled by the division; by accepting employment
16 or better employment when offered, whether or not the offer is
17 made through or referred by the division; by accepting training
18 for employment as offered when the person is unemployed; and by
19 continuing in employment training, unless the person has good
20 cause to fail or refuse to report for or to perform the work to
21 which the person has been assigned.]

22 (cf: P.L.1990, c.66, s.17)

23 14. Section 11 of P.L.1987, c.282 is amended to read as follows:

24 11. This act shall take effect immediately[, but shall remain
25 inoperative until the enactment into law of Senate Bill No. 2047
26 or Assembly Bill No. 4182 of 1986-1987 or a similar bill; and
27 sections 1 through 8, inclusive, and section 10 shall remain
28 inoperative until the submission by the commissioner to the
29 Senate Revenue, Finance and Appropriations Committee and the
30 General Assembly Appropriations Committee, or their successor
31 committees, of the REACH program implementation report
32 required pursuant to subsection a. of section 9 of this act] and
33 shall expire three years after the effective date of P.L.....
34 c..... (C.....) (now pending before the Legislature as this
35 bill).

36 (cf: P.L.1987, c.282, s.11)

37 15. Section 1 of P.L.1987, c.283 (C.30:4D-6b) is amended to
38 read as follows:

39 1. The Legislature finds and declares that: the protection
40 afforded recipients of aid to families with dependent children
41 (AFDC) pursuant to P.L.1959, c.86 (C.44:10-1 et seq.), through
42 the provision of health care coverage under the Medicaid
43 program, established pursuant to P.L.1968, c.413 (C.30:4D-1 et
44 seq.), is a major disincentive to public assistance recipients who
45 are considering employment; and while the federal government
46 has recognized the relationship between medical coverage and
47 successful employment initiatives through its policy of allowing
48 limited extensions of Medicaid to former AFDC recipients who

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1 lose eligibility for both programs as a result of employment, only
2 12% of those entering employment receive Medicaid extensions
3 for more than four months because of the strict income eligibility
4 requirements.

5 The Legislature further finds and declares that: New Jersey's
6 welfare reform program[. known as REACH.] aims to transform
7 the present AFDC program, which is a payment system, into an
8 employment and training program the goal of which is to assist
9 New Jersey's welfare families to realize self-sufficiency; and,
10 therefore, it is necessary to extend Medicaid coverage for a
11 period of up to 12 months to those AFDC recipients who lose
12 eligibility for AFDC and Medicaid as a result of employment
13 obtained through the welfare program.

14 (cf: P.L.1987, c.283, s.1)

15 16. (New section) The commissioner, in consultation with the
16 Commissioners of Health, Labor, Education, and Commerce and
17 Economic Development, and the Chancellor of Higher Education,
18 shall report to the Governor and the Legislature no later than
19 three years after the effective date of this act, and annually
20 thereafter, on the effectiveness of the program in meeting its
21 objectives, accompanying that report with any recommendations
22 for changes in the law or regulations governing the program that
23 the commissioner deems necessary.

24 17. There is transferred \$10,000,000 from the Grants-In-Aid
25 account, for the Realizing Economic Achievement (REACH)
26 Program within the General Fund to provide the funds necessary
27 to implement the Family Development Initiative.

28 18. The commissioner, pursuant to the "Administrative
29 Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), shall adopt
30 rules and regulations to carry out the provisions of this act.

31 19. This act shall take effect on the 90th day after the
32 effective date of this act, except that the commissioner may
33 take such actions prior to the effective date as are necessary to
34 effectuate the purposes of this act.

STATEMENT

35
36
37
38
39 This bill establishes the "Family Development Initiative" in the
40 Department of Human Services. The Commissioner of Human
41 Services shall initially establish the program in the three counties
42 with the largest numbers of aid to families with dependent
43 children (AFDC) recipients during the first year of the program's
44 operation. The other counties will be phased in during a
45 subsequent two-year period. The REACH program established
46 pursuant to P.L.1987, c.282 (C.44:10-9 et seq.) is to be phased out
47 on a county-by-county basis as the Family Development
48 Initiative is implemented in that county, with the fiscal and

1 personnel resources of public agencies which are being utilized by
2 the REACH program transferred to the Family Development
3 Initiative. The bill provides for the expiration of P.L.1987, c.282
4 three years after the effective date of the bill.

5 The REACH program has failed to provide a viable
6 programmatic approach to the increasing problem of welfare
7 dependency in New Jersey, with its attendant features of broken
8 families and wasted lives. A new more comprehensive approach
9 to addressing the needs and responsibilities of public assistance
10 recipients is required, with an emphasis on strengthening
11 families, remedying basic deficiencies in educational skills,
12 developing real private sector job opportunities with a future, and
13 providing meaningful penalties for noncompliance.

14 The Family Development Initiative created under this bill will
15 expand the range and intensity of services available to
16 participants in the existing REACH program and enlarge the
17 programmatic focus to include the entire family and its
18 health-related, social, educational and vocational needs, while
19 emphasizing the role of private sector employers in the job
20 creation and training components of the program. In addition,
21 the new program will expand the mandate of the REACH program
22 to include recipients of general public assistance administered by
23 the municipalities as program participants. The bill stipulates
24 those penalties to be imposed on AFDC and general public
25 assistance recipients who fail to comply with program
26 requirements without good cause, as determined by the
27 Commissioner of Human Services.

28 The Family Development Initiative will be designed to ensure
29 that each participant and member of the participant's family, as
30 age appropriate, has attained the equivalent of a high school
31 degree, before assigning that person to a vocational-related
32 activity under the program.

33 The program will be required to assign one or more persons in
34 each county which is participating in the program to be
35 responsible, on a full-time basis, for job development for persons
36 who have completed their educational or training activities under
37 the program, with an emphasis on finding and creating permanent
38 full-time unsubsidized jobs, preferably in the private sector,
39 which offer wages and benefits that are adequate to support
40 participants and their families.

41 The bill directs the Commissioner of Human Services, in
42 consultation with the Commissioner of the Department of
43 Commerce, Energy and Economic Development, to seek to
44 recruit private sector employers in each county to offer
45 employment to persons who have completed their educational or
46 training activities under the program.

47 The bill transfers \$10 million from the budget for the REACH
48 program to cover the costs of implementing the Family

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1 Development initiative.

2 Finally, the bill requires that the Commissioner of Human
3 Services, in consultation with the Commissioners of Health,
4 Labor, Education, and Commerce and Economic Development,
5 and the Chancellor of Higher Education, report to the Governor
6 and the Legislature no later than three years after the effective
7 date of the bill, and annually thereafter, on the effectiveness of
8 the Family Development Initiative.

9

10

11 HUMAN SERVICES

12

13

Designated the "Family Development Act."

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

INTRODUCED APRIL 15, 1991

By Assemblyman BRYANT

1 AN ACT establishing a comprehensive social services information
2 hotline in the Department of Human Services and
3 supplementing Title 30 of the Revised Statutes.

4

5 BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the*
6 *State of New Jersey:*

7 1. a. The Commissioner of Human Services, in consultation
8 with the Commissioners of Community Affairs, Health and Labor,
9 shall establish and maintain on a 24-hour daily basis a
10 comprehensive social services information toll-free telephone
11 hotline service, operating through one of the existing telephone
12 hotline services of the department. The hotline service shall use
13 a computerized Statewide social services data bank to be
14 developed by the Department of Human Services. The hotline
15 service shall receive and respond to calls from persons seeking
16 information and referrals concerning agencies and programs
17 which provide various social services, including but not limited
18 to: child care, child abuse emergency response, job skills
19 training, services for victims of domestic violence, alcohol and
20 drug abuse, home health care, senior citizen programs, rental
21 assistance, services for persons with developmental disabilities,
22 mental health programs and services for the deaf, as well as
23 information about public assistance, Medicaid, Pharmaceutical
24 Assistance to the Aged and Disabled, Lifeline, Hearing Aid
25 Assistance for the Aged and Disabled, food stamps and home
26 energy assistance.

27 b. The Commissioner of Human Services, in conjunction with
28 the Commissioners of Community Affairs, Health and Labor,
29 shall take such actions as are necessary to consolidate existing
30 State telephone hotline services into the comprehensive social
31 services information toll-free telephone hotline service, and
32 thereby eliminate duplicative telephone hotline services.

33 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

37

38 This bill establishes a 24-hour social services information
39 hotline in the Department of Human Services to serve as a
40 comprehensive information and referral source for social service
41 programs and agencies throughout the State. This new hotline
42 will serve to consolidate and expand the information and

1 referral resources that are currently available through a number
2 of telephone hotlines being provided by the State, and thereby
3 offer greater convenience to persons who may have multiple
4 social service needs and are seeking information and assistance
5 about one or more different kinds of agencies or programs.

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HUMAN SERVICES

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10 Establishes comprehensive social services information hotline in
11 the Department of Human Services.

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

INTRODUCED APRIL 15, 1991

By Assemblyman BRYANT

1 AN ACT concerning benefits under the program of aid to
2 families with dependent children and supplementing P.L.1959.
3 c.86 (C.44:10-1 et seq.).
4

5 BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the
6 State of New Jersey:

7 1. As used in this act:

8 "Benefits" means benefits provided under the program of aid to
9 families with dependent children established pursuant to
10 P.L.1959, c.86 (C.44:10-1 et seq.).

11 "Eligible parent" means a person who is or would be eligible for
12 benefits based upon the income of that person and the person's
13 natural children.

14 2. a. The Commissioner of Human Services shall, no later than
15 the 90th day after the effective date of this act, revise the
16 schedule of benefits in accordance with the provisions of
17 subsection b. of this section.

18 b. An eligible parent who is married to a person who is not the
19 parent of one or more of the eligible parent's children shall not
20 be eligible for benefits if the household income exceeds the State
21 eligibility standard for benefits; however, the eligible parent's
22 natural children shall be eligible for benefits according to a
23 sliding income scale established by the commissioner which does
24 not take into account the income of the eligible parent's spouse,
25 if the total annual household income does not exceed 150% of the
26 official poverty level, adjusted for family size, established
27 pursuant to section 673 (2) of Subtitle B, the "Community
28 Services Block Grant Act," of Pub.L.97-35 (42 U.S.C. § 9902 (2)).
29 The spouse of the eligible parent and the spouse's natural child,
30 if any, who is not the eligible parent's natural child, who is living
31 with the family shall not be eligible for benefits.

32 3. The Commissioner of Human Services, pursuant to the
33 "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et
34 seq.), shall adopt rules and regulations to implement the
35 provisions of this act.

36 4 This act shall take effect immediately.
37

STATEMENT

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39
40 This bill directs the Commissioner of Human Services to revise
41 the rules and regulations governing the program of Aid to
42 Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) for a family, in which

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1 the income of one parent and that parent's natural children does
2 not exceed the State eligibility standard for the program.

3 The bill provides, for example, that if an AFDC-eligible
4 mother (based upon her income and that of her natural children)
5 is married to a person who is not the parent of one or more of the
6 mother's children, the mother shall not be eligible for AFDC
7 benefits if the household income exceeds the State eligibility
8 standard for benefits; however, the mother's natural children
9 shall be eligible for benefits according to a sliding income scale
10 established by the commissioner which does not take into account
11 the income of the mother's husband, if the total annual household
12 income does not exceed 150% of the official poverty level. The
13 mother's husband and his natural child, if any, who is not the
14 mother's natural child, who is living with the family would not be
15 eligible for benefits.

16 This bill is intended to encourage marriage and family stability
17 among AFDC recipients, by enabling the natural child of a
18 recipient to receive benefits after the recipient marries, provided
19 that the father's income does not exceed 150% of the poverty
20 level, while ensuring that fathers meet the financial
21 responsibilities of supporting their spouses and their natural
22 children. The promotion of two-parent families among AFDC
23 recipients should enable more recipients to become economically
24 self-sufficient.

25

26

27 HUMAN SERVICES

28

29 Provides for AFDC eligibility for certain family members.

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

INTRODUCED APRIL 15, 1991

By Assemblyman BRYANT

1 AN ACT revising benefits under the program of aid to families
2 with dependent children and supplementing P.L.1959, c.86
3 (C.44:10-1 et seq.).
4

5 BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the
6 State of New Jersey:

7 1. The Commissioner of Human Services shall, no later than
8 the 180th day after the effective date of this act, revise the
9 schedule of benefits to be paid to a recipient family under the
10 program of aid to families with dependent children (AFDC)
11 established pursuant to P.L.1959, c.86 (C.44:10-1 et seq.), by
12 eliminating the increment in benefits under the program for
13 which that family would otherwise be eligible as a result of the
14 birth of a child during the period in which the family is eligible
15 for AFDC benefits, or during a temporary period in which the
16 mother or family is ineligible for AFDC benefits pursuant to a
17 penalty imposed by the commissioner for failure to comply with
18 benefit eligibility requirements, subsequent to which the family is
19 again eligible for benefits. The commissioner shall provide
20 instead that a recipient family in which the mother gives birth to
21 an additional child during the period of her eligibility for AFDC
22 benefits, or during a temporary penalty period of ineligibility for
23 benefits, may receive additional benefits only pursuant to section
24 2 of this act, except in the case of a general increase in the
25 amount of AFDC benefits which is provided to all program
26 recipients.

27 2. In the case of an AFDC recipient family in which the
28 mother gives birth to an additional child during the period in
29 which the family is eligible for AFDC benefits, or during a
30 temporary penalty period of ineligibility for benefits subsequent
31 to which the family or mother again becomes eligible for
32 benefits, the Commissioner of Human Services, subject to federal
33 approval, shall provide that in computing the amount of financial
34 assistance which is eligible for federal reimbursement to be
35 granted to that family, the following shall be deducted from the
36 monthly earned income of each employed person in the family:

37 a. those earned income disregards provided for under federal
38 law as set forth at N.J.A.C.10:82-4.4; and

39 b. an additional amount earned by each employed person
40 which, at a maximum, is equal to the difference between the
41 amount of subsection a. of this section and 25% of the monthly

1 payment of financial assistance, adjusted for family size.

2 3. The Commissioner of Human Services, pursuant to the
3 "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et
4 seq.), shall adopt rules and regulations to implement the
5 provisions of this act.

6 4. This act shall take effect immediately.
7

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9 STATEMENT

10
11 This bill directs the Commissioner of Human Services to revise
12 the schedule of benefits to be paid to a recipient family under the
13 program of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).
14 The bill would eliminate the increment in AFDC benefits for
15 which a family would otherwise be eligible as a result of the birth
16 of a child during the period in which the family is eligible for
17 AFDC benefits, or during a temporary period in which the family
18 is ineligible for AFDC benefits pursuant to a penalty imposed by
19 the commissioner for failure to comply with benefit eligibility
20 requirements, subsequent to which the family again becomes
21 eligible for benefits, and provide instead that a recipient family
22 in which the mother gives birth to an additional child during the
23 period in which the family is AFDC-eligible, or during the
24 penalty period, may receive additional benefits only through an
25 increased earned income disregard. The family would still be
26 entitled to receive additional benefits as a result of any general
27 increase in the amount of the monthly grant for all AFDC
28 recipients.

29 The bill would increase the earned income disregard for
30 employed AFDC recipients to an amount up to 25% of the
31 monthly AFDC grant, adjusted for family size.

32 This bill is intended to discourage AFDC recipients from having
33 additional children during the period of their welfare dependence,
34 while at the same time giving an incentive to work to those
35 families that do have additional children by allowing them to earn
36 up to 25% of their monthly grant and still retain their eligibility
37 for AFDC benefits.
38

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40 HUMAN SERVICES

41
42 Directs Commissioner of Human Services to revise schedule of
43 AFDC benefit amounts.

ASSEMBLY, No. 4704
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STATE OF NEW JERSEY

INTRODUCED APRIL 15, 1991

By Assemblyman BRYANT

1 AN ACT concerning benefits to certain families under the
2 program of aid to families with dependent children and
3 supplementing P.L.1959, c.86 (C.44:10-1 et seq.).
4

5 BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the
6 State of New Jersey:

7 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

8 a. This State has established welfare reform as one of the
9 major priorities of State government, with the intended goal of
10 achieving a substantial reduction in the number of residents of
11 this State who are enrolled in the program of aid to families with
12 dependent children (AFDC) established pursuant to P.L.1959, c.86
13 (C.44:10-1 et seq.).

14 b. The primary obligation to support children enrolled in the
15 AFDC program rests with the family and not the State; however,
16 the welfare system as it currently operates in this State
17 undermines family unity by reducing AFDC benefits for families
18 which have able-bodied fathers of AFDC-enrolled children living
19 in the home, even if the family's income, including the father's
20 earnings from full or part-time employment, falls below the
21 State AFDC eligibility standard.

22 c. The welfare system in this State should be designed to
23 promote family stability among AFDC recipients by eliminating
24 the incentive to break up families created by AFDC program
25 regulations, which undermines the ability of AFDC-enrolled
26 mothers to achieve economic self-sufficiency and thereby
27 perpetuates their dependence, and that of their children, on
28 welfare.

29 2. The Commissioner of Human Services shall, no later than
30 the 180th day after the effective date of this act, revise the rules
31 and regulations governing the AFDC program to permit the
32 program to provide full benefits to a family, whose income does
33 not exceed the State eligibility standard, in which the parents are
34 married and reside in the same household, without placing
35 restrictions on the employment of either parent.

36 3. The Commissioner of Human Services, pursuant to the
37 "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et
38 seq.), shall adopt rules and regulations to implement the
39 provisions of this act.

40 4. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

This bill directs the Commissioner of Human Services to revise the rules and regulations governing the program of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) to allow full AFDC benefits to be paid to families, whose incomes do not exceed the State AFDC eligibility standard, in which both parents are married and reside in the same house, without placing restrictions on the employment of either parent. Currently, these families suffer a reduction in their AFDC benefits, which serves as a disincentive to maintaining family unity and, by promoting the breakup of family units, makes it more difficult for them to achieve economic self-sufficiency and thereby work their way off the AFDC rolls.

HUMAN SERVICES

Directs Commissioner of Human Services to allow full benefits for two-parent families in AFDC program.

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

INTRODUCED APRIL 15, 1991

By Assemblyman BRYANT

1 AN ACT establishing the Council on Community Restoration and
2 supplementing Title 52 of the Revised Statutes.

3

4 BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the
5 State of New Jersey:

6 1. a. There is established in the Department of Community
7 Affairs the Council on Community Restoration.

8 b. The council shall be composed of:

9 1) a director, to be appointed by and to serve at the pleasure
10 of the Governor;

11 2) the Commissioner of Community Affairs, or his designee, ex
12 officio;

13 3) the Commissioner of Human Services, or his designee, ex
14 officio;

15 4) the Commissioner of Commerce, Energy and Economic
16 Development, or his designee, ex officio;

17 5) the Commissioner of Labor, or his designee, ex officio;

18 6) the Attorney General, or his designee, ex officio;

19 7) the Commissioner of Transportation, or his designee, ex
20 officio;

21 8) the Commissioner of Health, or his designee, ex officio;

22 9) the Commissioner of Education, or his designee, ex officio;

23 10) a representative from and designated by the Economic
24 Development Authority;

25 11) a representative from and designated by the Health Care
26 Finance Authority;

27 12) a representative from and designated by the Housing and
28 Mortgage Finance Authority; and

29 13) five members from the private sector representing
30 nonprofit organizations and professional service providers,
31 appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the
32 Senate, to serve staggered three-year terms. Of the members
33 first to be appointed three shall be appointed for a term of one
34 year each, one for a term of two years, and one for a term of
35 three years. The successors of the members first appointed shall
36 be appointed for three-year terms. Vacancies other than by
37 expiration of terms shall be filled for the unexpired term. Any
38 member may be reappointed.

39 c. The director shall employ a person to serve as secretary to
40 the council. The secretary shall not be a member of the council.

41 d. All members of the council shall serve without
42 compensation but shall be reimbursed for their actual expenses in
43 attending the meetings of the council and in the performance of
44 their other duties.

1 2. a. It shall be the duty of the council to consult with and
2 advise the Governor with respect to the allocation, coordination
3 and prioritization of resources for community restoration
4 projects. The council shall target neighborhoods as
5 demonstration projects for new community development. The
6 targeted projects shall include infrastructure improvement and
7 expansion, facility rehabilitation and renovation, economic
8 development, and neighborhood revitalization.

9 b. The council shall meet at least once annually at the call of
10 the director and at such other times as the council shall
11 determine, the time and place of such other meetings to be fixed
12 by resolution of the council.

13 3. It shall be the responsibility of the Department of
14 Community Affairs to furnish such equipment and staff as are
15 necessary to implement the work of the council within the limits
16 of appropriations for the purpose.

17 4. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

21

22 This bill establishes the Council on Community Restoration to
23 advise the Governor with respect to the allocation, coordination
24 and prioritization of resources for community restoration
25 projects. The council would be composed of the following
26 17 members: the Commissioners of Education, Human Services,
27 Community Affairs, Commerce, Energy and Economic
28 Development, Labor, Health, and Transportation, the Attorney
29 General; a representative of the Economic Development
30 Authority; a representative from the Health Care Finance
31 Authority; a representative from the Housing and Mortgage
32 Finance Authority; five members from the private sector
33 representing nonprofit organizations and professional service
34 providers, appointed by the Governor, with the advice and
35 consent of the Senate, to serve staggered three-year terms; and a
36 director, to be appointed by and to serve at the pleasure of the
37 Governor.

38 Specifically, the council would target certain neighborhoods as
39 demonstration projects for new community development. These
40 demonstration projects would include infrastructure improvement
41 and expansion, facility rehabilitation and renovation, economic
42 development, and neighborhood revitalization.

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45

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

46

47

Establishes Council on Community Restoration.

ASSEMBLYMAN GEORGE J. OTLOWSKI (Chairman): We're ready to go into the public hearing on the Majority Leader's bills, but before we do that, I would just like to make a statement for the record. Mr. Ganges (Majority staff aide) tells me that copies of it will be made available to anybody who wants a copy. After I conclude my statement I'm pretty sure that the Majority Leader will want to make a statement, and then we'll go into the hearing.

As a matter of fact, I just want to tell this to Assemblyman Watson, who has been so gracious to be a part of this Committee this morning, that when he feels that he no longer can stay, it will be all right for him to leave, because we won't need a quorum for the hearing. All right?

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Let me just say this, at this point: I'm calling the public hearing to order, and we'll start in a moment. This hearing serves as the second in a series of hearings devoted to the subject of welfare reform, and the package of bills introduced by Assembly Majority Leader, Wayne Bryant.

I am pleased that the Majority Leader is again able to join the Committee this morning. The six-bill package is the subject of a deliberative and full-scale review by this Committee. We are carefully considering the various proposals and the recommendations which will improve the bills, and therein, the welfare system as we know it in New Jersey.

As stated at the first meeting, the issue of welfare reform is of critical importance because public assistance is responsible for the care of more than 380,000 persons, many of whom are children. Our first hearing was held in the Stella Wright Homes, the only resident-managed facility in the City of Newark; that is, of public housing.

Today, the State House serves as the setting for our second hearing. We have scheduled a third hearing for August,

in Atlantic City. It is my intent to provide ample time for all concerned parties to offer comments if they so desire.

I want to again publicly commend the Majority Leader, Wayne Bryant, for his diligence and willingness to participate in this process, his commitment to the concept of self-help and government efficiency, and frankly -- in my opinion -- it's one of the great things, and it is important that the Majority Leader has undertaken to give this his leadership. It was amazing at the first hearing: his willingness to hear anybody and to talk to anybody who had an idea that would improve upon his original idea. That's the kind of flexibility that has been a part of this whole process, and a part of the Assembly Majority Leader's approach to this.

Several persons have requested the opportunity to speak on the bills today. Prior to calling the persons forward to offer testimony, I want each person to keep their remarks brief, and hopefully, they will have written statements. The written statements, of course, will become a part of the record. It would be redundant, of course, to comment, or rather, to read the statement after it is submitted. If it's submitted, then of course, I hope that the people who are testifying would just summarize the written statements.

I want to caution everyone that we will accept testimony as it relates just to the six-bill package, only.

To begin the testimony, I want to recognize the sponsor of the bill, who represents the 5th Legislative District, and as a matter of fact, my very, very dear friend for many, many years, the Majority Leader, Wayne Bryant; after which we will hear from the Committee members.

With that, I would want to call upon my very dear friend, and the distinguished Majority Leader, and the man with the broad vision at the moment, Assemblyman Wayne Bryant.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman -- Chairman Otlowski -- members of the Committee, and all those

who are present. You have been very gracious in terms of your remarks.

My Family Development Program -- and I say this very kindly -- is really centered around the concept of family; that in America we have at least projected that the basic unit upon which this country is built is the family, meaning an intact family -- nuclear family. Yet, when we deal with those who are less fortunate, we have come up with a system that basically is designed to destroy the family. It gives less money when the husband stays at home. We must reverse those kinds of concepts. We must start to practice in policy, what it is that we preach in everyday life as a community.

Secondly, I think that no one can deny that the welfare system as it is known in New Jersey and throughout this nation is broke. It's a failure, not only for the recipients, but it's a failure for society.

I think thirdly, we understand quite clearly that to take people from poverty and to assimilate them into working-class America, you need to be educated. Therefore, any system must be based on education first. You must make sure that those who are receiving funds and are able -- body and mind -- are educated.

What has been the advocates' role in terms of those who have represented the poor, tends to talk in terms of penalties. Yet as I analyze the American system for the working-class Americans in which we say we want the poor to assimilate to, Mr. Chairman, maybe we have a penalty system, and therefore, we ought to have a penalty system that deals with those we want to assimilate to.

Let me explain why: All those who advocate that we should not have penalties for poor people, work in a system where if they don't come to work, they don't get paid. You can either call that responsibility or penalty. I tend to think of it as a responsibility. If you come constantly late to work,

you get less money. Now, one can term that as a penalty, or one could say that that is a responsible way that a person believes that you should be involved, in terms of any work situation.

So therefore, we somewhat get mixed up in the terminology, and it is quite ironic to me that the advocates call it a penalty, and I call it responsibility. Therefore it appears to me, that if you are going to have a system that is going to work, and you want people to assimilate into what I call mainstream America, then you must provide their system as closely parallel so they can learn the lessons of where they are going to assimilate to. Therefore, by having any system that is going to have responsibility, it's something that is proven on the part of the recipient.

I think the third charge is that children-- I am deeply disturbed that in this State, we would use children as a shield for adults. The second argument mostly heard is that children ought to be the shield for the irresponsibility of their parents. That is not what is done in all the rest of middle-class America -- working-class New Jerseyans -- and therefore, should not be done for the poor. We should not be setting up false systems that will not be reality, if, in fact, they are to become self-sufficient.

Therefore, as I developed the Family Development Program, Mr. Chairman, I looked at what we do and what we expect, and tried to see, "Why?" and asked the question, "Why not?" Why can it not be applied in the system that we have for the poor? Therefore, I don't consider it any genius as to what has been developed. I consider it just looking at what it is, where we want them to be, and placing it within their system so that that is part of their transitional system.

I see the programs that would be developed under the Family Development Act as a transitional system. There are many who see a permanent poverty system because it has fueled

the economy of those who have for so long, sought to advocate for them. I challenge all those to come and tell me how, in fact, they would do it differently to make it successful.

Let me be clear: We are not talking about the infirm; in other words, those who are mentally incapable of performing, because I think America and New Jerseyans are compassionate, that those who can be actually proven not to be able to do for themselves, we will step to the plate. Those who are physically disabled, we will step to the plate. But for those who have the mental capability, I think we must develop a system where they have responsibility to act. A failure to do otherwise would not only be a disservice to themselves, but a disservice to society.

There is no constitutional right to welfare, nor any public assistance. Today, if a person who would qualify economically does not decide to apply, there is no penalty system to make them apply. Therefore, as we develop a system that we know can take a person from dependency to self-sufficiency, there will be those who will opt out, as they do today. And that's not a crime. That is part of the spirit of America, that you have choices to make. All I'm trying to do is make the choices with responsibility, both on the part of the State and the part of the recipient.

Mr. Chairman, I do appreciate your holding this second hearing so that we can get more information, so that we can tend to make and add to this package to make things better. But I would ask those who are going to speak to tell me not only, "Why not?" but, "How we can," make it a better system so that we have more people matriculate into the mainstream of New Jersey and society, and not those who are left, tragically, behind, locked into many urban areas, and into what I call a system of, basically, slavery.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you very, very much.

Now I would like to call upon Assemblywoman Ann Mullen for any comment that she would like to make.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: The only thing that I would like to add, Mr. Chairman, is, you know, as young parents we run out and buy all the baby health books that we can find, and they consistently tell us that we have to teach our children that they pay for the consequences of their actions. I would concur with Assemblyman Bryant. I think we must teach people, whether they are children or adults, that you pay for the consequences of your actions. If you do good, you get rewarded. We teach our children if they do their chores, we give them a little allowance. We all expect that. As he said, we work to get a pay envelope, and we get rewarded.

I think that we must instill that in people, and show them there is a way to get rewarded for their actions and to get the help they need. I'm very much interested in hearing what our folks out here have to say in regard to these bills, but I certainly am supportive of this concept.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you very much.

Assemblyman John Watson?

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I don't have too much to say this morning; I'm here to listen. But I must say that once again, the Majority Leader is showing leadership here in this State. These are bold, courageous moves that this Majority Leader of ours is putting forth this morning, and has put forth before. I stand behind him 1000% because I know that whatever this Majority Leader does, it is a well-thought-out situation, but he is willing to compromise in many ways to make sure that whatever is done here, legislatively, is done with all the people in mind, and to try to at least take care of the kind of problems that we face day by day, but with the most honest and fair way of doing it.

I, once again, would like to commend the Majority Leader for his outstanding leadership here in this State.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you very, very much, Assemblyman Watson.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Now we are ready to go to the agenda here, and I want to call first upon the Commissioner of the Department of the Public Advocate, Mr. Caraballo, please.

PUBLIC ADV. WILFREDO CARABALLO: Good morning.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Good morning.

PUBLIC ADVOCATE CARABALLO: I have with me David Sciarra, who is the Director of the Public Interest Advocacy Division of my Department.

I want to thank all of you for giving me this opportunity to be here. I will try to follow the admonition of the Chair, and not read my statement. I am passing out my statement.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you very much.

PUBLIC ADVOCATE CARABALLO: I am going to try to summarize my statement, as opposed to reading it to you.

I am truly, truly happy to be here. I believe that what you have before you is, in fact, a courageous attempt at trying to deal with an issue that goes to the very core of the poor in this country. I have lived, personally, in situations where I have seen what the welfare system has done to those of us who have come to this country seeking a better life -- seeking to improve ourselves -- and instead, have been met with a system which rather than encouraging us to be the productive people that we want to be, has encouraged us to, in fact, live out some of the myths that others would, in fact, state about us. This is a courageous attempt, Assemblyman Bryant. I truly am honored that you, as an African-American, represent us in the attempt to overhaul this system.

Let me get to two basic issues: You know, the issue that Assemblyman Bryant spoke to a few a seconds ago, is one of the important items in the overall package, but I would like to emphasize something. It is only one of the elements of the package, and I would hope that the rest of the package doesn't get lost or diluted by a very narrow discussion on one point.

Here we have an attempt to strengthen and expand job training. Here we have an attempt to increase payments to two-parent households. Here we have an attempt to have mothers who remarry allow their husbands to be home, while at the same time getting their benefits, allowing for earned income. We have an attempt to do what we have been told that America is all about, and that is to strengthen the family unit, however that unit is defined. We don't need to limit that concept.

I wish that I could tell you that I agree with everything in this package; I don't. And, Assemblyman Bryant, I listened to your words. I accept your challenge. I would like to think that there are many of us who would accept your challenge. My problem with that piece of legislation that would take away the benefits to children born when their mother is an AFDC recipient is that, in fact, I can't see any other way to look at it, but as a punishment to those children.

I agree with you with the issue of responsibility. The problem I have, is that before we can ask those who have been taught -- and I think that is one of your premises -- to be irresponsible in a very real way, we need to teach responsibility. Once we teach responsibility, once we have safeguards to feel satisfied that, in fact, we've done our best to get people to the point where they can assume responsibility, then perhaps it is time to speak to the issue of thrusting responsibility upon them.

I don't think we're there. I think your bill is a tremendous first step at teaching responsibility, but it's not the final step to ensuring that responsibility can be assumed

by these people -- by our people. And, in fact, what I think will happen is that we will be throwing children into a situation where no one is ready to deal with the consequences of having these children not receive benefits.

I accept your challenge. I can't tell you that I sit here today with the answer to that particular problem. I understand the problem that you are raising, and I would offer my services and the services of my entire Department; to work on any group that you choose to in fact, work out and look for alternatives so that we might get to the point where we can ask people to assume responsibility.

I want to emphasize one other point, and that is this: That while I endorse your goals, I really hope that, in fact, this is but a first step. Welfare reform is a very complicated process. There are a lot of very critical issues. We need to overhaul, completely, our entire welfare system, in order to break the cycle of despair, the cycle of disenfranchisement, and the homelessness that affect so many families who are forced to rely on public assistance.

I hope that that reform has as its driving force the notion that we will provide all families, however that structure is defined, with the basic supports that they need to live in a safe, decent, and healthful manner.

I do not propose that we simply raise benefit levels. That's not the answer. While some increase in those levels is absolutely needed, we must begin to fill the gap in ways that strengthen the family life and encourage recipients to work. If you work, you are, basically, ineligible for AFDC. If you are not on AFDC, you can't receive Medicaid. If you become homeless and you are not on AFDC, you are ineligible for emergency housing assistance. We cannot keep building up catch-22s for our poor. In short, we need to integrate welfare and work.

I know this reform is not an easy task. It will be a long battle against those who say it can't be done. I know those who head this battle, such as Assemblyman Bryant, will be vilified in the process, will be called terms that they are not comfortable with, but I want you to know that the Public Advocate -- and I know others -- is here to tell you that we will work with you in this very important effort.

I want to thank the Committee for this opportunity to present this testimony.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you very, very much. I'm sure that the Majority Leader would have some questions that he would like to ask you. As a matter of fact, he may even want to comment on some of the things that you have indicated.

PUBLIC ADVOCATE CARABALLO: Sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: The Majority Leader, please.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT: Commissioner, let me first say thank you for your offer, and I will take you up on it in terms of working with regards to strengthening this package.

Let me ask two questions: The first question is, what seems to be on most people's minds is that when you don't allow for additional income if, in fact, you have another child when you are going through the transition on some type of public assistance-- But I pose the question as this: Part of the package tries to do two things in that regard. Number one is that if one assumes -- at least in my mind -- that people cannot make enlightened decisions, who are adults, then one believes that we must take care of all of what it is that they do.

We, as responsible adults, every day make decisions whether we enlarge our families. So, that's an empowerment. To me that's not a penalty; that's an empowerment. What we did was -- or what I attempted to do was -- allow for income disregards, so that you can support that child. No one has been able to tell me why that is a bad system.

To tell a person, we will support-- Say you had three kids and you want to have a fourth one: that you can't go and work to support the fourth kid if you decide to do that, and why that is some way a penalty or negative, when where you are trying to move people is into a societal or assimilation system where that is the rule. I mean, that is constantly the rule in our society; that if you decide to have another child, you will work for that child.

When I know that it is only \$64 for the new child, I don't believe money is the issue. So, when people tell me that, you know, "Isn't that really difficult on that person?" I say to myself, "Well, hold it. If you work for a minimum job at McDonalds, 20 hours a month, you would make more than \$64."

I have already conceded that you need Medicaid for that additional child, so I would do that. But why can't you work for them? What is the burning issue, that you can't work to help support that child, if you decide on your own to have a child?

I mean, I don't see that as a concept that is so difficult, and why for some reason with poor people we decide that, "No, they can't make that empowerment decision." It's not like a rational decision to me. I don't understand where advocates come from when they tell me, and yet all the rest of us are doing it everyday.

PUBLIC ADVOCATE CARABALLO: Well, the fact of the matter is, Assemblyman, that I think by definition we have a little bit of a problem. On the one hand, if we simply state that we are to now treat everyone as an enlightened person, and that that should be the goal: How can I argue with that? The problem is that each of us, I think, can bring to the table a definition of what "enlightened" means, given what has been done -- and I'll take what you said before, a form of slavery -- what has been done to people in the process of reaching that enlightened stage.

And to the extent that we have that debate, what I think we will find is that we are going to come out defining enlightened people very differently. And to the extent that we have that difference in definition, we need to ensure ourselves that as we seek to reach a common definition, all of the pieces are there. They are not there now. They are not going to be there in a year, or two years. So that the focus on the parent is one thing. The focus on the child is really something very different.

The fact remains that when we speak of doing something to people in this society, we speak in terms of the actions of the individual. A child gets born. He or she had no say in that process. And you are right, the children of the middle class-- Some of us have decided we can't afford more than two, three, four children. Children of the middle class started off with parents who made that decision, hopefully, in some senses, okay? The children of the poor start off as children of the poor, and are now being told, "Listen, child of the poor, something over which you had nothing to do is now going to be held" -- and there is no way of getting around this -- "against you." That child-- That, I think, is punishing the child.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT: Well, why don't we talk about responsibility, then, as an adult? Would you advocate that if that parent decided to have a child, and did not want to work -- because we give them an opportunity to work -- that they should be penalized?

PUBLIC ADVOCATE CARABALLO: The problem I have is that we have different systems. For example, the middle class. If middle-class parents make the wrong decision, okay, then what happens to that child? Is it that the child winds up suffering all the degradation that the children of the poor suffer? I mean, it is a very different level of life-style that we are dealing with. So that if middle-class adults make a difficult decision, the consequences aren't as grave.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT: Well, how do you-- What I'm trying to balance is empowerment and responsibility.

PUBLIC ADVOCATE CARABALLO: And I'm with you on both of those.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT: If I'm trying to balance that, I don't see, as long as we keep a system alive that constantly says that if you are either not responsible or you don't want to make empowered decisions, you constantly can take from the system, which is not something they are going to assimilate to at some point in time-- There are no penalties. There is nothing. You just continue to do it. I don't see how that really helps the individual. I don't see where we are moving that individual toward a reality system. It is sort of like creating a false environment for them to live in.

PUBLIC ADVOCATE CARABALLO: Perhaps I am a little naive, but I actually think some of the things you have in your bills, and some of the things that some of us have been talking about for a long time, okay-- I mean, the fact is, you have taken a very bold step, but you know that a lot of people have been talking about some of these things for a long time. They just haven't had the guts to come forward, okay?

Perhaps I'm naive, but I truly believe that some of these other things will help in that empowerment, will help in that assumption of that responsibility, so that the problem that you are trying to address in that last piece is not going to be as grave.

And perhaps -- and maybe this is also simplistic-- Perhaps, if those other pieces work well enough, the problem of that last piece is one that we might be willing to accept, because that's the cost of doing business.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT: Let me ask one other question, because I think that also comes up -- the stepparent piece of legislation, and a lot of folks think that's unequal-- But, let me-- At least when you analyze it, that you analyze it from where I came from.

The stepparent is taken right from our judiciary system, today. It has exactly what we do in middle-class America, today. The stepparent does not pay the total cost for the stepchild. All that bill basically does is take our current judiciary system-- It says, if, in fact, a person does marry, that person who becomes either the husband or the wife -- because it could be either way -- does not have the sole responsibility for taking care of that child, and what we try to do is build in some type of a sliding scale.

Folks think that that is somewhat unequal to the natural, so I guess, really, the point I was making was, you are responsible for your natural children. When you become a stepparent, our judiciary system today does not make you responsible for your stepkids. So therefore, that's how I came up with that concept.

So, I'm saying I just took, really, models that we do today, and just applied them to the system.

PUBLIC ADVOCATE CARABALLO: Assemblyman, I'm supportive of that. Let me tell you something: I think the idea of trying to equate the natural and the step is -- borders on the ridiculous. And I guess I'm speaking from some personal experience here where I have known-- I mean, here you have an opportunity for perhaps a parent to be able to get a loving spouse who is willing to tie the knot formally, legally, the whole bit, and we're saying, "You can't do it because our system says there is a penalty." I totally support you in that.

I mean, the fact that it is not the natural parent is completely irrelevant to me. I used the term "family structure" before -- okay? -- and that's the key. The key is to focus on a family structure. And family, to me, means the ones whom you grow up to love, because they are supportive of you. It that's a stepfather, or stepmother, or grandmother, or grandfather -- as many of us had -- so be it. So, I have no qualms, no criticisms, with that piece of the legislation.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT: Mr. Chairman, I have no other questions.

I look forward to working with you. (addressing witness)

PUBLIC ADVOCATE CARABALLO: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT: Thank you very much.

PUBLIC ADVOCATE CARABALLO: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Commissioner, would you just remain there for a minute, because I want to ask you--

First of all, I just want to make this observation. I think the discussion that took place between you and the Majority Leader was a very, very healthy one. As a matter of fact, this is probably not the end, because I think he has invited you-- He has invited you, of course, to be of help to him in this whole process.

So, frankly, probably, this is just, you know, the door opener to this particular thing that you have a problem with. But in any event, I think the discussion here was very, very healthy, and as a matter of fact, very frank.

Truly, as you yourself said, this is the first time that anybody has been as open on this subject; not only as open, but as Assemblyman Watson said, as bold, and as daring. You know, we're in an area, of course, that has been left unseen and unsaid. We're opening a lot of doors here, and as a matter of fact, I think it's really healthy.

With that, Assemblywoman Mullen, do you have any questions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: No, I don't, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Assemblyman Watson?

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: No, I don't at this particular time, Mr. Chairman. But I must say that the Advocate raised some very valid points, and I think that there was a great discussion, as you said, and it helps us to make up our minds to many, many things.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you. Thank you very, very much.

PUBLIC ADVOCATE CARABALLO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you very much.

May we have Pamela Lackey, the representative of the Department of Health and Welfare, the City of Trenton? Is she here? (affirmative response)

P A M E L A L A C K E Y: I will be reading mine, because I speak it on behalf of the Director of Health and Human Services, Gwendolyn Long, who is out on vacation.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Excuse me? Oh, you're reading it for him?

MS. LACKEY: Her.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Oh, for her.

MS. LACKEY: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: All right.

MS. LACKEY: It's five to six minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Do you want to start reading it? Good.

MS. LACKEY: Hello. I am Pamela Lackey, Director of Social Work Services for the City of Trenton, and speaking in the place of the Director of our Department of Health and Human Services, Gwendolyn Long, who is on vacation.

The City of Trenton is pleased to present testimony on this family development initiative. It represents a significant effort on the part of government to understand that real welfare reform must be about family empowerment.

By including the general assistance population which is largely male in the initiative along with the AFDC population which is largely female, we now have before us a model with real possibilities. You have recognized that there may be a relationship between these men and these women with children. That relationship is family.

As well-meaning as the REACH effort is, because of its exclusion of the general assistance population it does not functionally recognize that it is difficult to empower the distaff within a family while offering nothing to the male. It places the woman at odds with herself, and it invites the male to sabotage the effort.

Trenton has the highest high school dropout rate in the State. Some 20% of our population is on some form of assistance. Although we represent less than 1% of the State's population we represent 6% of the State's general assistance population, as of April 1991, second only to Newark. We need and embrace a State policy that will enable us to improve the economic status of our poorest citizens, while relying upon traditional family values.

We are encouraged that this approach backs up its concern for the educational, vocational, and other needs of public assistance families with the assignment of responsibilities beyond the Department of Human Services to other areas, such as: Health, Labor, Education, Commerce and Economic Development, and Higher Education. If their respective roles and responsibilities can be strengthened further, we would favor that.

We all know that in spite of all the planning and contracting that may occur within or at the behest of the Department of Human Services, it is the Departments of Commerce and Economic Development, and Labor, that must influence the employment environment if this initiative is to be successful. Those Departments must be directly challenged to do so.

Related to this point, we are perplexed by the establishment of the Council on Community Restoration. It seems to be an incomplete thought. We would suggest two modifications to this concept. They are as follows:

- 1) A targeted dollar amount, or percentage, to be placed on each department, to kick into the pot, so to speak,

from within the department's ongoing activities. Although new money is always helpful, such a target would clearly articulate the message that this effort will require all departments to coordinate and sensitize their regular activities in every county. This will develop in a manner that will complement the activities of family development, along with community development as an ongoing activity, as opposed to a special project type activity.

2) The community development projects should be directly linked with the family development initiatives in each county through such measures as training opportunities, housing, and jobs. We are recommending that these community development generated measures be set aside for the participants and/or graduates of the family development initiative.

We have other specific suggestions regarding particular parts of the bills. Although there is discussion about a family plan which addresses the needs, and we would presume, the responsibilities of each family member, the legislation holds the primary recipient responsible as the sole indicator for the total family failure to comply. We are recommending a built-in mechanism to make each family member accountable relative to sanctions being taken for failure to comply.

We applaud your provision of an option to reduce 20% of benefits, or a 90-day ineligibility period. This provides the welfare agency with some latitude in enforcing sanctions without creating a state of family disruption and/or homelessness, which we will then have to address at a later point, at the expense of the taxpayer.

We would suggest incorporating a work-study program for those participants who have not attained the equivalent of a high school diploma, rather than requiring the degree before assigning work related activities. This would help to better

integrate the overall experience for each participant, and to keep the focus on becoming economically self-sufficient. We do, however, very strongly endorse the requirement that each participant attain the equivalent of a high school diploma.

In the area of supportive services, particularly day care, the City of Trenton is concerned that the administration of the program not have an adverse effect on not-for-profit, day-care centers. The REACH program has paid for day care for the actual time that a parent participates in educational or training programs. While this may sound prudent, depending on the configuration of the time, it can end up creating havoc on a not-for-profit's program schedule and cash flow. These blocks of time must have some established minimal level to assure continuity in the child's enrichment, and financial viability for the center.

With respect to health insurance coverage as a support service, we strongly encourage you to work with your colleagues in both Houses to establish some form of universal health insurance. Without it, we seriously jeopardize the success of graduates of the family development initiative.

We are very concerned about the composition of the planning councils in each county. They must include a representative from the municipality with the highest percentage of AFDC families. Both city services and the respective boards of education will more than likely be responsible for programs that will impact upon the lives of members of the participant family. We are told that 85% of Mercer County's AFDC population live in the City of Trenton. We have a stake in the success of this venture, and want to be at the table to contribute to, and to monitor its success.

And finally, we appreciate the intent of bill number A-4703. We would encourage you to at least ensure that there are Medicaid benefits extended to the child born in this

circumstance. We would, nevertheless, like to go on record indicating that we do not support children being penalized for their parents' actions.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on the family initiative bill, and we look forward to its implementation as the State of New Jersey makes a real attempt to empower the families.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you very, very much.

Majority Leader, do you have any questions?

ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT: No. I would like to thank you for your testimony. You have given us some food for thought, and I imagine some of it will eventually be in our legislation, as well as -- I can tell you -- some of the things you have suggested, staff is already working on. We will probably be back in touch with you in terms of some of your ideas. I especially like the thoughts about the municipalities that have the heaviest caseloads being involved. We also want to make sure that even recipients are involved, I mean, because we think they have something to offer.

So, many of the suggestions that you put in there, I mean, I think we will be taking a look at and will help refine because we do realize that we need to do some refining and be more explicit in terms of what the intent is.

I appreciate your testimony and your thoughtfulness.

MS. LACKEY: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Would you-- You're not leaving? Just a minute. (addressing witness) We're not going to let you get off that easy. (laughter)

Assemblywoman Mullen?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: No. Just that I was very impressed with your testimony. I certainly agree with Assemblyman Bryant about participation of the community that has the largest rolls. I think it's a great idea.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Assemblyman Watson?

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to say that I was very impressed by your testimony this morning. It was well-thought-out, and I'm just happy to see someone from my county here testifying this morning.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you very, very much. We really appreciate it. And I'm glad you didn't read the statement.

Thank you very, very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT: Tell the Mayor we said hello.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: I'm going to deviate from the protocol here that has been imposed upon me. I'm going to call on Pastor Ronald Bagnall of the Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church of Trenton. Is he here?

Pastor, if you are short, you can make your appointment. Do you have written statements?

REVEREND RONALD BAGNALL: I write summary statements.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Do you have copies?

REVEREND BAGNALL: Yes, I do.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: May we have them? (witness complies)

I hope you are going to summarize this, Pastor? Are you going to summarize your written statement, rather than reading it, because I want to give everybody an opportunity to be heard, and if we keep reading these statements, we are going to prolong the hearing? If the statements are here, they will be part of the record. Could you do us the kindness to summarize the statement?

REVEREND BAGNALL: I will do my best.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Oh, the statement is-- I didn't see the statement. I understand the statement is very-- Oh, I'm terribly sorry.

REVEREND BAGNALL: It is a summary statement.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: I'm terribly sorry. I never liked "Gone With the Wind." (laughter) But in any event, the statement is short. Go ahead, read it. I'm sorry.

REVEREND BAGNALL: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the proposed legislation known as the Family Development Act. First, I intend to raise my concerns about three specific areas of the Act, and then secondly, the reasons for my testimony which come out of a centuries-old tradition of social concern and action in the Lutheran churches.

In Section 5.a. of A-4700, it is stated that, "A recipient whose youngest child is two years of age or older shall participate in education, vocational assessment and training, or employment activities, or a combination thereof, under the program." This makes the program mandatory, and I ask: What right does the State have to mandate that a certain segment of the adult population with children of a certain age -- namely the poor and needy -- must participate in education and employment activities in order to receive subsistence aid so that they and their children might survive, while other segments of the adult population enjoy better and more subsidized education, employment, transportation, and housing under the guise of a free market economy?

In Section 7.g. and 8 of A-4700, it is stated that, "The program shall provide supportive services to a program participant as a last resort when no other source is available." However, in my reading of the Act, there is no provision made for housing. In my 26 years as a pastor in the South Bronx, in Wyandanch, Long Island, in Camden, and now in Trenton, I have noted that following requests for food and clothing, the most often request of poor and needy families has been for housing. A decent place to live and raise a family should be seen as a right as much as food and clothing. These are the basic needs which the State should guarantee.

In Section 1 of A-4703, it is stated that, "The Commissioner of Human Services shall...revise the schedule of benefits to be paid to a recipient family under the program of...AFDC..., by eliminating the increment in benefits under the program for which that family would otherwise be eligible as a result of the birth of a child during the period in which the family is eligible for AFDC benefits." This is, in effect, birth control. I ask: What right does the State have to determine the size of certain families -- namely the poor and needy -- while other families who also receive benefits from the State are allowed to determine the size of their family?

Now for the reason behind my testimony, which comes out of my centuries-old Lutheran tradition of concern and action on behalf of poor and needy persons. I might add that I want to state that before this body, because the Lutheran Church is not a large or well-known church in the State of New Jersey-- It has a very rich heritage and history that you ought to be aware of.

Because his words are so pertinent today, I will close with three points from a treatise by Martin Luther, in which he makes specific suggestions for establishing the first community chest as a way of providing home relief for the poor and needy of his day, almost 500 years ago.

I want to point out that what is said here is said as a Christian, and in no way is meant to cause offense at all to any who are not Christian.

First of all, no distinction should be made between those persons who are deemed deserving and those who are presumed not: "For the gospel teaches us to do good even to the unworthy, just as the heavenly Father sends rain and sunshine upon the good and the evil alike."

Second, the greatest act a person can do is to help and be of service to those who are in need: "Now there is no

greater service of God than Christian love which helps and services the needy, as Christ himself will judge and testify at the last day."

Third, no one is to be reduced to a level at which they find themselves having to beg for the basic needs of food, clothing, housing, and health care: "So that their lives and health may be preserved from further deterioration, enfeeblement, and foreshortening through lack of shelter, clothing, nourishment, and care, no impoverished person in our community need ever publicly cry out, lament, or beg for such items of daily necessity."

It is my contention that if the Assembly and Senate took these three points to heart and applied them to the proposed legislation, the three issues which I raised earlier concerning the mandatory nature of the program, the lack of housing assistance, and implicit birth control, would be changed, and the Family Development Act would be improved.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you very much.

Pastor, let me just say this: You said, of course, that you felt that many people weren't acquainted with the total work of the Lutheran Church, particularly in New Jersey. That may be true, but I just want to tell you this: There are many of us who appreciate the great work that the Lutheran Church has done, particularly in the area of the aged, with their great efforts in establishing congregate living, nursing homes, rest homes, housing for the elderly at very reasonable cost; and as a matter of fact, the general dedication of the Lutheran Church to that kind of work.

I just want to say this: That with the basic tenets that are espoused in your statement, I think that there is total agreement with that. But when it comes down to the basics and to the approach and to the mechanics of any program, there is where the wide differences occur. I think that we are in total agreement with the basic philosophy that you espouse

in this statement, and frankly, I just want to commend you for reminding us that we are -- that all of us should, of course, adhere to that basic philosophy. And I think that all of us do. I think that all of us do.

The difficulty, of course, is looking for the social, political, and economic mechanics to meet some of the horrendous problems that we, not only we in this country, but the whole world, are faced with. As a matter of fact, I'm very happy that we have been able to hear your testimony, and I'm sure that the sponsor -- the Majority Leader -- would want to make a comment.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I do appreciate your testimony. We probably do disagree in some areas. The Lutheran Church, even in Camden, has done a lot of housing, and I appreciate it.

What I do disagree with, and I should be very pointed about it-- You tend to -- at least from my reading of your statement -- believe that those who are in the rest of society have no responsibility, as I call it, and therefore, to place responsibility, as you term it, as to require certain things of other people. But I can tell you that, as a working person in the middle class, if I don't go to work, I don't get paid. So, therefore, I have to be responsible to go to work.

To make a requirement by someone who is poor, who is receiving assistance, to me is not asking too much to make them responsible. So, we have divergence there.

Why, I guess, I approach the system to where we know how to get people off of welfare and into meaningful jobs, Father, is this: As much as what you say might be nice, to spread false hope in America that we will take care of a person from cradle to grave, and they will not have to have any work ethic -- and we're not talking about the handicapped or the emotionally disturbed; I've taken them out -- folks who have capabilities, I think, is a false promise.

I think I am elected not to give people false promises that in society we are going to make them live as well as a person who is productive in our society. That is not America. Therefore, I have a responsibility, as an elected official, to try to get folks to be part of what America is. That was my attempt, as humble as it might be. But I will not--

I have never seen America step to the plate to make sure and guarantee everybody that they will live a life of prosperity, and not be part of a working work force. It has not been its history, and I don't see it in its future. That is why I have developed a program to get people to be part of what America is, as opposed to creating a different society, which I see now is basically destructive and is not productive for the individuals or the children in that society.

REVEREND BAGNALL: May I respond to the Assemblyman?

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Yes, Pastor.

REVEREND BAGNALL: Thank you. The problem, as I see it, is that there are distinctions that are already made in this society. We are assuming that somehow there is responsibility on the part of the middle class. We are assuming that somehow there is irresponsibility on the part of certain segments of the poor and needy.

I would want to state that that simply is not the case. That is not the reality of middle-class America. Let me provide one example: When the irresponsible children of middle-class America pack up and leave home and runs off to our cities, they become burdens on those who provide social services. But simply because they have been irresponsible, or perhaps parents have been irresponsible in raising them in middle-class America, those of us who do provide social services for those children receive them and care for them willingly. In fact, we seek them out and try to get them off the streets of our cities.

I say that only to point out that we should not somehow assume that growing up in middle-class America means automatic entree into responsibility. There is something more--

ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT: But, Father--

REVEREND BAGNALL: --and we should not assume that somehow mandatory participation in this program will bring about responsibility or the relief of poverty.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Pastor, excuse me. I don't think anybody is saying that. I don't think the sponsor is saying that. I think what the sponsor is trying to do here -- if I may just say this in his behalf and, of course, he is able to speak for himself-- What he is trying to do, as I indicated in the statement after you finished-- He is trying to find a device, a means of dealing with the political, social, and economic problem that this very situation presents. He is not here to tell you that he is going to solve all of the problems, you know, that are a part of our social structure. And, excuse me, the church has been trying for 2000 years, and they are having their problems. But, in any event--

REVEREND BAGNALL: Probably because the State has tended to take over those services that the church itself started.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: What I want to point out is the fact that you've got to keep this in focus. Now, you may have differences. You may have differences, you know, with the basic philosophical approach, but I am not going to get into that. I think what is trying to be done here, of course -- what the sponsor is trying to do-- He is basically trying to find a device to buttress family life. That is what he is trying to do. Of course the middle class have that problem. Nobody is going to argue about that and, as a matter of fact, the very wealthy have that problem. But, what he is trying to do here is define this kind of device. Frankly, I think, you

know, you've made your point, and we have your written testimony. We are going to leave it at that. All right?

Thank you very, very much.

REVEREND BAGNALL: I thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: May we have Mr. Lloyd J. Oxford, President, Black United Fund of New Jersey?

L L O Y D J. O X F O R D: Good morning, or I should say, good afternoon. My name is Lloyd Oxford.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Do you have a written statement? Do you have copies of it?

MR. OXFORD: None that is presentable at this particular point.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Oh, you don't have any-- Oh, all right.

MR. OXFORD: We will be forwarding our written testimony to the appropriate office.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Would you do us the kindness, so it can be made part of the record?

MR. OXFORD: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you.

MR. OXFORD: Again, my name is Lloyd Oxford, President of the Black United Fund of New Jersey, which is the leading black philanthropic organization in the State of New Jersey. The Black United Fund of New Jersey interfaces with grass-roots community-based organizations whose clients and/or constituents are public assistance recipients. The Black United Fund of New Jersey has funded over 500 human service providers statewide in fulfillment of its mission to perpetuate self-help and self-sufficiency in New Jersey's black community.

The Black United Fund is committed and responsive to strengthening the black family, and has established funding priorities in the areas of substance abuse and prevention, teen pregnancy, youth education, literacy, and health, among others. We believe that Aid to Families with Dependent

Children and other forms of public assistance represent a form of genocide that perpetuates a poverty culture in the black community. By design, the system is one that neither adequately prepares or equips recipients for social and economic survival after public assistance. In many cases, recipients only learn to be dependent on the system -- on this system, from generation to generation.

The Black United Fund of New Jersey certainly commends Assemblyman Bryant for initiating this far-reaching legislation, which could potentially place the recipients on the road to self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, I must address some elements of these bills.

National statistics suggest that only 15% of AFDC recipients stay on welfare for long periods of time. Further, that the average length of time is only 18 months. I hope that the necessary research and studies were conducted to obtain a profile and ascertain the state of the 300,000 individuals on public assistance in New Jersey. If this was done, what were the findings, and how do they relate to the provisions of this package of bills? Were the actual public assistance recipients allowed input to determine how their lives might be affected? For too long, elected officials and other State bureaucrats have made pronouncements and promulgated legislation without input from those affected.

In most environments in which I am familiar, the target market is tested for feasibility. I believe that the existing data system on AFDC and public assistance recipients should be improved by developing standardized methodologies for collecting, coding, and panalizing this information, based on race and ethnicity. A central repository of all reports should be established for increased assessability, in order to ensure that the optimum human services are provided and received that would ultimately reserve the integrity of the black family in the State of New Jersey.

BUF recommends the establishment of a commission on the black family. While the introduction of family net is a step in the right direction, a commission must be created that brings together the resources and collective wisdom of grass-roots service providers, government, and public assistance recipients to respond to the growing crisis in the black family in New Jersey. The commission would make recommendations for action and implementation on innovative programmatic strategies for enhancing and improving the quality of life of the total black family unit, especially those on public assistance.

The New Jersey State Legislature, in particular the Assembly Health and Human Services Committee, should play an integral role in initiating dialogue with the Governor to ensure that such a commission is established.

After careful review of Assemblyman Bryant's package of bills, I offer the following recommendations for the Committee's consideration:

First, under the Family Development Act, A-4700, section 5a., I recommend that we bring the services closer to the recipient. That is to say that we subcontract with nonprofit day-care centers in the community, especially training locations for those recipients with young children. This will allow the parent to be fully attentive during training, meetings, and/or counseling sessions.

As it relates to section 6 of the same Act, I recommend that recipients should not be subject to punitive action for failing to comply with, or participating in, described programs across-the-board. Close monitoring of the program will reveal that abusers should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

In section 7a. of the same Act, I recommend that the existing case managers should be adequately trained to be able to assess all of the problems that are facing the client and to

adequately prepare and help to execute family development plans and contracts that are realistic in meeting the client's family needs. The contracts should be written in simple terms for easy comprehension by the clients.

In section 7c. of the same bill, I recommend that in addition to a community college, GED courses should also be brought closer to the community, and that those services be subcontracted to qualified community-based organizations which provide supplementary and/or tutorial programs.

And finally, under that same bill under section 9, I recommend that these family resource centers should be staffed by trained case managers, and can be contracted out to community-based organizations, such as day-care centers.

As it relates to Assembly Bill No. A-4703, I support this legislation. Education and counseling services in planned parenthood and birth control should be provided and reinforced to discourage and prevent family expansion when it is not economically feasible for both the parents and their teenaged siblings.

As it relates to Assembly Bill No. A-4704, I support this bill because it is consistent with the Black United Fund's mission of preserving the integrity of the black family. It has been proven that families with the presence of both parents in the home are more viable, nurturing, and progressive. The provisions of this bill will serve to deter the perpetuation of AFDC dependency.

And then finally, Assembly Bill No. 4705. This bill appears to be similar to the Community Development Block Grant Program that I am familiar with, in which moneys allocated specifically to blighted urban centers seldom reach the indigenous community. Instead, local government officials use these funds for individual restoration projects in downtown or inner-city areas. If the restoration project is to be seriously considered, I would suggest that block associations,

housing coalitions, tenant councils, and community-based organizations be given monitoring responsibility in prioritizing and targeting these funds.

In closing, let me state that I support the overall objectives of the legislation because they are consistent with those of the Black United Fund. We must work together in achieving the ultimate goal of strengthening and empowering the black family in New Jersey.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Mr. Oxford, thank you very, very much for dealing with so many specifics. I think you have been very, very helpful, and I am sure that the sponsor has some comments he would want to make.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT: I think, Mr. Oxford, it was very instructive, and we will take those views into consideration as we finally come out with some legislation.

I just wanted to comment, because you posed a couple of questions. Number one is that the Chairman has decided to have at least another public hearing. You were asking whether there would be input. That will give us input from all sectors of the community.

We also made an attempt in this bill to send out to over 250 organizations -- from grass-roots organizations to statewide organizations to national organizations -- all the bills -- something that is never done -- and asked folks for comments back. So when you ask, "Did we solicit information from other people?" Yes. I mean, we did not just take the public hearing route. We actually went and tried to identify every group that we could possibly think of that had any advocacy with the poor, or groups that came from grass-roots organizations locally, so that they could have an opportunity. And we are receiving written information from them. So we want to take all of that into consideration, because we want a broad spectrum of information and ideas so that we will end up having a final package that makes sense, not only to those who are

going to pass the laws, but to those who are actually going to be the recipients of this.

Training is a big component. That is something that will be more detailed as we develop this, too, for those who will be delivering services.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: One other thing: Mr. Oxford, you know, your remarks, of course, were taken verbatim, and they are going to be transcribed. But frankly, it would also be helpful if you would give us some copies of your statement, after you have developed it, because there are any number of people on the Committee who would want to take a good look at some of the specifics that you have mentioned. All right?

MR. OXFORD: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you very, very much. Ann, excuse me.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: It's perfectly all right. I agree. Well said.

MR. OXFORD: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Ann, thank you very much.

Am I pronouncing this name correctly -- Sandra Persichetti? Is that correct? Is that correct, Sandra?

S A N D R A P E R S I C H E T T I: It's Persichetti. (corrects pronunciation)

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: How?

MS. PERSICHETTI: Persichetti, but it's close enough.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: You're representing the--

MS. PERSICHETTI: The "I Have a Dream Foundation."

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Oh, and this other person is a part of that? Come on up; come on up. Do you have a--

MS. PERSICHETTI: My Project Coordinator, Cynt Lewis-Johnson also would like to--

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Do you want him to sit with you?

MS. PERSICHETTI: She.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Or, she?

MS. PERSICHETTI: Certainly. We will speak separately, but she can come up at this point.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Let her come up then, please.

MS. PERSICHETTI: Great. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Do you have written statements?

MS. PERSICHETTI: No, we do not. I just have some notes.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Good; all right. I just want you to feel comfortable, to know that what you are saying, of course, is being taken verbatim, and will be part of the record.

MS. PERSICHETTI: Thank you; thank you. My name is Sandra Persichetti. I am the sponsor of the I Have a Dream Program in Trenton.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: How did that originate?

MS. PERSICHETTI: Well, I'll give you a brief background: A gentleman in New York by the name of Eugene Lang, in 1981, offered a class of sixth-grade graduates in Harlem that he would pay their tuition if they stayed in school and were accepted to college. You may have heard about it or seen it on "60 Minutes."

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Yes.

MS. PERSICHETTI: The program has multiplied across the country. There are now 140 sponsors across the United States, serving about 10,000 children. In June of 1988, I sponsored a class from the Stokes Elementary School in Trenton. Our children are currently-- They will be entering 10th grade, so we have been working with them for three years. I am happy to say that they are now at Trenton State College enjoying four solid weeks of remedial work, which is much needed.

But, as a result of my involvement with this program, I have been able to learn a little bit more about the welfare system, which-- I must tell you, I think I represent a majority of probably white middle-class people who knew there

was a welfare system, but did not know the specifics of it. I am embarrassed to be part of an organization, or a group, or a society that has created a system that keeps people so dependent, with no hope of seeing the light and able to gain dependence on their own.

I think what Assemblyman Bryant is proposing is courageous and bold and all the things that have been said today, and also long overdue. What we are learning from working with our children is that though they are poor, and though they are minorities, they are no different from other children. They are like sponges. Their minds are open to learning new things. We just need to provide the vehicle to teach them those things.

I am working a great deal with our parents, and to give you some statistics, when we sponsored the class -- there are 59 children in the class -- only eight of them had fathers living at home. I think the current welfare system is a direct responsibility for that lack of male role models in a home environment.

I think the Family Development Program is excellent. I think we long have needed a collaborative effort. Too often, people who are poor are often illiterate. There are many agencies and many services available, but it is very difficult to go through the menu and find out who to call, where to go, how to get it, constantly filling out the same applications, asking for the same information. In this day of computerization, it would seem to me that one application should suffice, whether you are looking for housing, food, education, social services, whatever.

I am troubled by hearing that people are concerned about the lack of payments for additional children. I have a difficult time treating that as a penalty for having additional children. I think the bills do not take away payments for any existing children. To talk about a penalty to an unborn child,

to me, is an oxymoron. The decision to have that child needs to be made with or without financial aid. I think dangling this carrot of a few dollars -- which we all know is not enough to raise a child -- is enough, however, to turn someone who isn't totally versed in what it takes to raise a child, to say, "The State is helping me. I am getting help. I can have this child."

I think the important part of the bill is that it does continue the payments for those who are currently receiving them. It does not take away payments from any children. A child who is not born is not a child. It's a thought in someone's mind. It is not a child, and I think the continuation of discussions about penalties to unborn children makes no sense in today's world.

To those who would object to this -- and I know I am not allowed to read anything, even though I did bring it along -- I hope that people will--

ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT: You can read.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: You can do anything you want, at this point, because what you are presenting, of course, is very interesting, and you are talking, actually, from actual experience and working at this and, as a matter of fact, with a wonderful open mind. So, you are at liberty to say anything you want, or do anything you want.

MS. PERSICHETTI: Thank you very much. I would like to read this, and, indeed, the experience has taught me a great deal. I mean, I have seen situations where mothers, particularly those on drugs -- which is part of today's environment -- encourage, or see their children for the money, rather than for the child that they are. In an ideal world, that money would go to the child. I am not sure that is happening today.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Incidentally, one guy -- yesterday, I think it was -- sold his child for \$10 so he could help his drug habit.

MS. PERSICHETTI: My point, absolutely. Let me read this. Don't laugh, but it is from "Dear Abby," and it was in yesterday's paper. It deals with the antiabortionists. I think the same thoughts apply:

"Dear Abby: This is a message to those men and women who try to prevent women from entering abortion clinics and carry big signs that say, 'They Kill Babies Here.' Have you signed up to adopt a child? If not, why not? Is it because you don't want one, can't afford one, or don't have the time, patience, or desire to raise a child? What if a woman who was about to enter a family planning clinic saw your sign, then decided not to have an abortion, but chose, instead, to give her baby to you? Would you accept it? What if the mother belonged to a minority group, or was addicted to drugs, or tested positive for AIDS? Why are you spending your time carrying a sign? Why aren't you volunteering to baby-sit a child born to a single mother so she can work? Why haven't you opened your door to a pregnant teenager, whose parents have kicked her out when she took your advice and decided not to have an abortion?

"As for the taxpayers who resent paying for abortions, who do you think pays for foster care, welfare, social workers, and juvenile delinquencies? The taxpayers. Let's talk about something money can't buy -- love. Have you ever visited a home for abused or unwanted children? Have you ever been to a juvenile hall and seen the children who have committed crimes because they were born to mothers who didn't want them?

"I am not thrilled about abortion, but I don't think anyone has the right to tell others not to have one, unless he or she has done the things I have mentioned here. So, to those carrying those signs and trying to prevent women from entering family planning clinics, heed my message: If you must be against abortion, don't be a hypocrite. Make your time and energy count."

I would say this goes equally well for those who are opposing the portion of this bill that precludes additional payments for children who are not yet born.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Does your associate have anything she wants to add?

MS. PERSICHETTI: She certainly does.

C Y N T A. L E W I S - J O H N S O N: Good afternoon, now. I thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is Cynt A. Lewis-Johnson, and I am the Project Coordinator for the I Have a Dream Program, which means that Sandra is the person with all the money, and I get to go to the office every day. But she does a lot of work, as you can see from the statements she has made.

What I would like to say today is that I appreciate the efforts of Assemblyman Bryant in regards to welfare reform. I am sick and tired of doctorates of psychology and economy and sociology and all the other doctors who can't heal themselves, and apparently and obviously have not healed our nation by the extent of what is happening with our children and families today. They have tried to put a Band-Aid on something that needs major surgery, and, Mr. Bryant, I commend you for coming in and saying that you are going to stand on the firing line, because that is exactly what you have done by introducing this legislation.

I live the welfare program every day. When I thought about what it was that I could say to people to convince them that they should be in favor of this legislation, I thought, "There isn't anything I can say to convince people." If you will allow me-- Each day in the life of a child, 17,051 women become pregnant; 2795 of them are teens; 21 children die in poverty; six of those teens commit suicide. This is in each day of the life of a child. Seven-thousand-seven-hundred-and-forty-two teens become sexually active; 211 children are

arrested, and most of those are drug-related crimes. One-thousand-five-hundred-and-twelve of those drop out of school; 1849 children are abused or neglected; and 2556 children are born out of wedlock. This is the direct result of our social welfare system -- the system that gives lip service, really wanting to give the idea that they are promoting family life. Actually, what they perpetuate is an underclass of dependent people; people where the expectations are that you are poor, and that you will never be able to contribute constructively to the major society.

Senator Bryant -- I mean, Assemblyman Bryant does not--
ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: He's happy with that accolation. (laughter)

MS. LEWIS-JOHNSON: Assemblyman Bryant, in my estimation, does not have that expectation. His expectation is that poor people can do and, given the ability to do, will do.

I can tell you that out of the 59 students -- like Ms. Persichetti said -- that over 60% of the families are one-parent households with single women, who have no desire or aspiration whatsoever to become married to someone else, for fear of what will happen to the assistance they have. I won't tell you that of those 60%, there were men in their lives at one time who exited their lives because they saw their families suffering as a result of their being there and not able to get aid.

It's true that there are a lot of things wrong with the welfare system. There are a lot of things that could be made right with it, given the opportunity. I feel this legislation brings back those things that are traditionally a part of the African culture, that is, unity in the family; that we will be self-determined people; that we will work and be responsible; that we will contribute to the economics of society; and that we will have a purpose to our life. Giving this legislation an opportunity gives these people that chance,

and not just African people, because not just African people are on welfare. But I can speak from my own experience.

I'll end by saying, those who control minds have little to fear from bodies. Our social service system was set up to control minds so that they wouldn't have to fear the people. But it backfired, and you are right now living in the result of something that was created that really did not look at what would happen down the line.

It is my hope that those of you who are opposed to Assemblyman Bryant's bill will look at it again and reconsider those things which you feel to be important, and look at the big picture, not just today or tomorrow.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you very, very much. Frankly, I think you have made a wonderful contribution here, particularly by your attitude and by your experience. As a matter of fact, I think that what you have said here is going to be very, very helpful to this Committee.

I would like to ask Assemblyman Bryant if he accepts the nomination. Assemblyman? (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT: I am going to let them sell my bills, Mr. Chairman. They do it better than I do.

But I think they are exactly right: to empower people to give them an opportunity for some self-determination. Both of you are correct. I think for too long we have dealt with the adults almost like they are children in our society, and we have really not given them an opportunity. And we have not dealt with the family, which is very important, as much as we want to escape that. People don't want to talk about it, because it is the ugly side -- what I call the "ugly underbelly" of America; that we have a government-sponsored program that really destroys the family. We don't really want to talk about our dirty laundry, and we know that. I always say this when I go to the suburbs: "If you can imagine going

10 or 12 blocks where there is no legitimate male in the household, think of what your neighborhood would look like. Think of what your community would be." That happens in American inner cities with the youth you are dealing with.

So I am glad that we are also getting testimony from people who are dealing, on an ongoing basis, with that population which is right now dependent on the system, which is not really looking out for their best behalf, but is a sort of maintenance for them through a system that actually rewards nonproductivity. I don't understand why anybody is opposed to people being productive.

MS. PERSICHETTI: I agree.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Assemblywoman Mullen, please?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: I would just like to say, "Thank you," to both of you. I applaud you both.

You brought something very clearly to my mind. I am also the Mayor of my community. I recently had a young mother come in who has six children. Her husband left. She wants to work in the worst way. She wants to make sure that her children can go on to higher education if they desire. They are good students.

Unfortunately, because of her needs, it is almost impossible for her to go to work. She would lose the medical care for her children. She might lose the Section 8 money that helps her to pay her rent. All of the things that she needs-- She would have to find a job that would pay her \$30,000 in order to care for her family properly and keep her home. That's impossible. So therefore, we are keeping her this way, when she wants so much to be independent and stand up and feel good about herself.

So, you know, you made your points beautifully, and you are absolutely right. I also applaud our someday Senator,

if he wants to be. I'm sure he would be if he wanted to be. So, thank you so much for sharing.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you very, very much. Yes?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: Mr. Chairman, if you will forgive me, I must go on. I have a meeting with the Governor in the southern end of the State.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: We are going to miss you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: Well, I look forward to our next hearing. I am learning so much.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you, Ann. Thank you very much for making this meeting.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MULLEN: Well, I'm sorry that I have to leave. It is a commitment I made to the Governor's Office.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you very much.

May we hear from Edward Martone, Executive Director, American Civil Liberties Union?

E D W A R D M A R T O N E: Good afternoon. If I may, I have some written comments, if I may give them to you. (passes out copies of written statement)

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you very much.

MR. MARTONE: Let me just highlight, if I may, Mr. Chairman, just some comments -- make some highlights, rather, of my written testimony, without going through it line by line.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Yes, good.

MR. MARTONE: Let me begin by saying that there is a lot-- I have mixed feelings about the package of six bills. I think there is a lot in the-- I say, in the first paragraph or two, that there is a lot in the proposals which should be commended and should be enforced. It doesn't take away from the thrust, if you will, of the package, the fact that I have a number of very serious concerns about aspects of the bills. But I think there are things that I disagree with, and there are things that I agree with in each of the six bills. So, if

I may, I want to dwell on some of the things that I have some concerns about.

Firstly -- let's go in numerical order, I suppose -- on A-4700, on page 6 the bill talks about an "employable person who is receiving public assistance shall be required, except when good cause exists, to perform such public work as shall be assigned to them." But then it eliminates the section on good cause at the end of page 7. Now, either you don't intend to have any criteria called good cause any longer, which is the effect of deleting that section, or it was simply a mistake in drafting the legislation. I'm sure the latter was the case.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: What you are suggesting is that good cause be developed more specifically?

MR. MARTONE: Well, no. There was a section in there which defined what we mean by "good cause." It has been taken out in its entirety, and it is not replaced with anything. I am just saying, if you intend to keep good cause -- and I imagine you do -- then there needs to be something in there. I don't think it was intended to take the entire section out without replacing it with anything.

Further in that bill on page 3, section 7.c. denies vocational benefits of the Family Development Act to any AFDC recipient or family member who has not attained the equivalent of a high school degree. It would appear that these are the people who most need the vocational training. To penalize welfare recipients because their relatives don't have a high school diploma would seem to me to be a disincentive to the thrust of the bills, which is to bring together people into family units.

I can foresee situations where a mate ends up leaving the household because he or she doesn't get, or can't get a high school degree, because he or she doesn't want the other person to be cut off from AFDC benefits. Moreover, if the participant's family -- the phraseology is changed to "the

participant's household" -- then it creates a liability for that person for something they haven't done, but because of something someone else has done. So in other words, because my wife doesn't get, for one reason or another, a high school diploma, I could lose benefits. And again, it is for something-- I would be penalized for something that someone else did, or failed to do.

I think Assembly Bill No. 4701 is a very valuable service, in that it creates a toll-free, 24-hour information line. We support that unequivocally.

A-4702 is good, inasmuch as it would remove any marriage penalty which is inherent in the existing statutes. The bill, however, goes on to inexplicably remove the natural children of the spouse of the eligible parent from receiving any benefits. In our view, this could only have the effect of driving a wedge between eligible parents and ineligible children.

Further, the statement to the bill places the proposal, I think, on shaky constitutional ground, in that it talks about encouraging marriage and family stability, the promotion of two-parent families. These are choices that are protected in the First Amendment of the Constitution. This is the right of association. They are protected freedoms, and I would argue that they are not within the State's interest in regulating. The State of New Jersey has no right to penalize those who do not exercise their constitutional rights in the manner that the Legislature advocates.

I guess the bill that is getting the most discussion now is A-4703, and I would add my voice to those earlier who suggested that this-- The effect of this would be to punish children for being born, because they are over the limit set by the New Jersey Legislature. The statement says that the bill is intended "to discourage AFDC recipients from having additional children during the period of their welfare

dependency." This really is social engineering, in our view, and again, it is not within the purview of the State government. I agree with Commissioner Caraballo, the Public Advocate, and I agree with Commissioner Alan Gibbs of the Department of Human Services, both of whom opposed this particular aspect of this law. Commissioner Gibbs, in fact, was quoted in the newspapers as saying: "I don't think we ought to punish children. I don't think many mothers become pregnant in order to get \$64 more per month."

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Have you any suggestions on how you would change that to make it more acceptable?

MR. MARTONE: Well, I think overall--

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: In your view.

MR. MARTONE: Sure. I think overall the premise-- One or two at least of the premises that these proposals are based on are in error. It is to suggest that poor people are irresponsible; that poor people need to have the State plan their families for them, plan their lives for them. I think that is incorrect. It reinforces, without intending to, the notion that people have children to get more welfare money. Sixty-four dollars a month is not a welfare bonus, and it is not an incentive for people to have children.

What I think the Legislature ought to be doing is fully funding those programs which will bring people out of poverty. Sixty-four dollars a month keeps people at the poverty, or lower level.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: You are going to bring people out of poverty by just giving them money -- more money?

MR. MARTONE: Well, I think you do a few things. I think you fully fund family planning, for example, so that mothers, or mothers-to-be can do a more responsible job of planning their families, when and whether to give birth. I think you fully fund education so that those children are not left with inadequate educations, destined to get inadequate

salaries so that they remain at the poverty level, even when they do go out into the work world. It seems to me that you fully fund the Public Defender's Office so that people are not sitting in jail, leaving their children at home because they can't afford a lawyer and they can't afford bail.

I think you fully fund the standard of-- The Department of Human Services has been mandated by the State Supreme Court to inform the Legislature as to the standard of need. We are not close to funding welfare at the level of need. I think that is one of the things you do. You fully fund the Medicaid, and you see to it that Medicaid abortions are available throughout the State. I don't know of any place that accepts Medicaid for abortions south of the Raritan River. If you are worried about people having children and not planning their families in a responsible way, I think these are the kinds of programs which can help people do that job, and they are positive steps, rather than negative or punitive steps.

As I say, the decisions about procreation and family relations should be left to the individual, and are not, in my view, within the purview of the government. There is no legitimate State interest in punishing a woman for not delaying childbirth. At the very least, I would suggest that the woman continue to receive the increment if she is pregnant at the time she applied for welfare. Also, I am pleased to hear Assemblyman Bryant say that he agrees that medical benefits should be extended to the child who is born to a woman on welfare.

In addition to being unnecessarily punitive, I think the Act also contains unlawful gender distinctions, in that it continuously refers to a mother who gives birth, as opposed to a man who might father a child. Existing AFDC statutes talk about recipients, talk about participants. They don't talk about men, women, husbands, wives, mothers, fathers. One of the reasons for that, I am told by a welfare director in one of

the counties in New Jersey, is that Federal regulations restrict that, and prohibit gender-based standards. I don't think we ought to be violating the Constitution or the Federal standards in this regard.

I also don't think this proposal, A-4703, could pass constitutional muster, as the State really can't convince a court, in my view, that the reasons for excluding some persons from AFDC, as opposed to others, have been carefully scrutinized. It is also not based on a need, or necessitated by the magnitude of administering the AFDC. I don't believe poor people should be denied civil liberties because of their economic dependence on government.

Moving to A-4704, the bill attempts to eliminate any marriage penalty currently inherent in the AFDC system. This, as I said before, is a worthwhile goal. However, there is language in the bill, specifically in sections b. and c., which I think enforces an archaic notion of family. It is a premise that I have a problem with that goes through, I think, all of these bills. But the notion that welfare mothers are to stay home and take care of Junior, and welfare fathers, able-bodied, are supposed to be chased off to work-- It just reinforces that notion that nurturing of the children is exclusively a female function.

A-4705 would create a Council on Community Restoration.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Would you insist that both the mother and the father go to work--

MR. MARTONE: Well, I think the situation ought to--

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: --so they would have equal rights? Is that what you are insisting?

MR. MARTONE: I think it ought to be treated without gender distinctions. I think if it is an able-bodied woman who has child care and is capable of going out and working, then she ought to go out and work. I don't think the distinctions about whether you raise-- And the child could be left at home

with the father. I think we ought to get away from these prejudices, if you will, that put women in a certain role and put men in a certain role. I think it is bad for both men and women. The notion that-- The societal myth that men aren't responsible for raising families is one of the problems I think we are seeing in men fathering children and then taking off.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Excuse me. If I may speak for the Majority Leader, I think that what he has been trying to say -- and what he is trying to do -- is that it is the responsibility of both the mother and father; that there is a joint responsibility. Again, he is trying to bring a device that would bring that about. That is the effort he is trying to make. He is not saying that there isn't -- you know, that the mother has the responsibility. He is saying, you know, that there is a partnership that has to be established here -- an effective partnership -- with both of them working toward the same goal. That is what he is trying to say.

MR. MARTONE: I know that is what Assemblyman Bryant has been saying, and I believe in his sincerity, but that is not what the bill says. The bill says that mothers are to be cut off from benefits. It doesn't say, for example, that a father who sires more natural children is cut off. It says that the mother is cut off, and she is cut off because she is the mother of the child. What I am suggesting, I suppose, is that we ought to take what Assemblyman Bryant has been saying about the bills and put it in the bills, because the bills, themselves, don't always jibe with what Assemblyman Bryant is using as words to describe the bills.

Finally, if I may, Assembly Bill No. 4705 creates a Council on Community Restoration. I think this proposal merits support. The only thing that concerns me about it is that of the 17 members to be appointed by the Council, no one is designated to be on the committee from any of the communities being restored. So I think if you want to avoid the whole

notion of big, bad State government coming in and telling neighborhoods and communities how to rule their lives, then there ought to be people-- There ought to be neighborhood leaders designated to sit as part of that 17-member commission.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you very, very much.
Thank you.

May we hear from Edward O'Connor, Director of the National Association of Social Workers, Inc. - New Jersey? Thank you for-- You have a written statement, good. Thank you.
E D W A R D P. O' C O N N O R: Mr. Chairman, the title Social Worker is often given the pejorative prefix "bleeding heart," and similar kinds of appellations, and we might be thought by some to be wringing our hands over this legislation, but I want to be real clear that, by and large, we are very supportive of it.

We congratulate the Majority Leader for the courage to put this forth, and for the far-reaching benefits which we think that it can have, not only for New Jersey but for the nation as well: Then comes the "but." I think it's unfortunate that there are a couple of lightning rods in it that stir up a lot of controversy that I think might not, necessarily, be important to the whole concept of the bill.

I think that many of the programs that are recommended in this legislation might obviate the need for, perhaps, the compulsive and what are characterized as punitive aspects of it. Specifically, we would favor a voluntary work program for AFDC recipients. And we believe that underlying voluntary work efforts is the assumption that participants in these programs share a value system with the larger population, and will strive to improve their circumstances and their children's future.

We think that if the opportunity is really there and it's a program that can really work, that people will want to

be a part of it; that no one chooses the life of welfare because it's such a wonderful way of life.

NASW opposes the imposition of any compulsory work requirement for AFDC recipients which includes punitive measures for nonparticipation. We take the position that a voluntary program will attract participants through the use of positive incentives such as grant increases or bonuses which would go into effect with the successful completion of each phase of the program leading to full employment.

We're concerned about the development of another planning council. Without having a whole lot of documentation to back it up, we wonder if the program could not be administered under the auspices of the existing Human Services Advisory Council that exists in each county, and by the same token, we don't see the hot line as practical or cost-effective.

We applaud the provision which provides for special services, such as individual and family counseling, substance abuse counseling, and parental skill training. However, NASW strongly believes that such services, as well as case management, can be adequately delivered only through the use of professionally trained social workers. So we feel that we want to play a role in this. We feel that we have something to offer as a profession, both at the master's level and at the bachelor's level.

We want to be part of the ongoing development of the program, and we think that our people who are trained in our profession should be in positions to be a part of it. We're not saying that everybody has to be a social worker. We're not trying to eliminate many good people from other areas, but we're just saying that the social work profession should be playing a role in the administration of the program.

With respect to the issue of cutting off the grant as the number of children that a parent comes into the program with: Historically, the AFDC program intent is based on the

need of the child, not the behavior of the parent. To fix the grant level at the number of children in the family at the time of intake is to ignore what we know about the many different reasons why people have babies, and denies basic-- Let me just touch on that issue.

Very often it's characterized as a decision that people-- The one factor in people making a decision about whether to have a baby is: Can I afford it, or can I not afford it? We know that there are a myriad of psychosocial reasons why people choose to have a baby or don't, and that has to be considered in this. It's not a one factor issue, with respect to finances. And very often, in today's society, it's something which is out of the control of the individual who brings a child in.

Concern is that this would deny basic sustenance not only to the newborn but to all children in the family, which must stretch scarce resources to feed and clothe the newcomer. We feel we have to take a position on that, but at the same time don't want to get so bogged down in opposition to those particular parts of the program that we don't see a real value to the overall revamping of a system that hasn't worked.

We agree with Assemblyman Bryant, in terms of empowering people and in terms of encouraging client self-determination. We're not here to tell people how they should live their lives. We're here to offer incentives for, and opportunities for them to seek their own aspirations, and not to get in the way of those, as we so often have in the past. We think that we would like to be a part of the ongoing decision around this, and, perhaps, in small working groups that can help to add light to this, rather than heat.

As members of NASW in New Jersey, we look forward to the opportunity to work with Assemblyman Bryant in shaping the welfare reform program, which can be seen as a model for the rest of the country, and one which can provide lasting

opportunities for the citizens it serves, and cost-effective results for those of us who enjoy the privilege of working and paying taxes. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: You know, I just wanted to ask you this about that hot line. Of course, the telephone is getting more and more difficult to deal with. I called the gas company today. I just wanted to ask a simple question. I wanted to find out their address. I got one of those mechanical devices, you know, that told me everything but what I wanted to know. It told me the touch -- numbers I had to touch, and not to use a circular phone.

In any event I finally hung up, you know. I'll wait until they send a collector over, to pay my bill. But in any event, the telephone, of course, can be a very important instrument, particularly to people who are looking for help, if it's properly manned.

A hot line, if it's properly manned, can be a very, very important thing and particularly if it doesn't refer you to the touch tone -- if it tells you to stay away from the circular phone and puts you on another mechanical device. I think that the hot line, if it's properly handled, can be of great help. I just wouldn't want to just dismiss that by saying that you're opposed to it because I think that, frankly, it's important for you to make an issue of that hot line, because it can become an ineffective device if it's not properly done. I think that's very important.

I'm happy to hear, too, that the social workers look at this bill as something, of course, that has great potential and great possibilities. Is there anything else you want to add?

MR. O'CONNOR: No, sir. That's all for now.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you very, very much. As a matter of fact, you've probably noticed that we're going to have more hearings. As a matter of fact, if this continues as

it does with some of the very valuable stuff that we're getting here, I may even extend the hearings if it warrants it, because we're not just going to jump into this.

I think that Wayne Bryant, at this point, has been listening very, very intently. He, himself, has said, you know, that he's going to be making any number of changes as a result of these hearings. And he's encouraged, you know, even more hearings.

I just want you to know that we're not just rushing into this whole business, and everything that's said, of course, has a value that we're attaching to it. Thank you very, very much for your contribution.

MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: May we hear from Regina Purcell, the Associate Director of the Department of Social Concerns of the New Jersey Catholic Conference? (witness gives Chairman copies of statement) Thank you very much.

R E G I N A P U R C E L L: You're welcome. Good afternoon. I'm pleased to be here to speak on behalf of the New Jersey Catholic Conference -- which represents the Catholic Bishops of the State of New Jersey -- and to comment on the package of bills introduced by Assemblyman Bryant.

I'm going to, in the interest of time, just skip over a number of sections and highlight a few. The Catholic Conference supports the objectives of the family development initiative contained in A-4700, which is: "To enable recipients of AFDC to secure permanent full-time jobs with wages and benefits that are adequate to support their families."

As the U.S. Bishops stated in their "Pastoral Letter on the Economy": "Increasing active participation in economic life by those who are presently excluded or vulnerable is a high social priority. The human dignity of all is realized when people gain the power to work together to improve their lives, strengthen their families, and contribute to society."

A-4700 can contribute to the well-being of families. The family is the most basic form of human community. As such, the long-range future of this nation is intimately connected with the strength and stability of family life. Our social programs should be scrutinized in light of how well they ensure both individual dignity and family integrity.

Two other bills, A-4702 and A-4704, provide for increased eligibility for AFDC. These bills are intended to promote two-parent families and family stability. The Catholic Conference supports the goals of these bills, which could work toward strengthening the family.

The Catholic Conference is adamantly opposed, however, to A-4703, which unlike the above named bills, has the potential of destroying the family. The bill disallows benefits for additional children of an AFDC recipient.

I'd like to quote Marion Wright Edelman from the Children's Defense Fund in Washington, D.C., who wrote in her recent book, "Families in Peril": "The most prevalent myth about welfare mothers, and sex, and babies probably was that mothers had more babies to get higher welfare grants. Sometimes reality overcomes myths." The average AFDC family size in New Jersey is two children per family, which is essentially the same size as the average American family.

And as Edelman correctly points out, if another child is born, almost invariably the additional grant is so small that it cannot support that child, much less improve the mother's standard of living.

Taking this additional money away -- however meager an amount it is -- does mean the difference between being able to care for a new baby or not. In a worst case scenario, a mother could be put in the position of determining whether to abort her baby rather than attempting to spread her already meager resources to support another child. Clearly, this is an

unacceptable position in which to place a woman or her children. The Catholic Conference urges that A-4703 be withdrawn from consideration.

Lastly, the Conference asks that public assistance levels be increased as part of the package of bills under consideration, so that those who are attempting to live on this assistance may do so with some measure of human dignity. Dealing with poverty is not a luxury which our State can attend to when it finds the time and resources. Justice, not charity, demands an immediate response to the needs of the poor. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you very, very much.

MS. PURCELL: You're welcome.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you. Did we get everybody? (brief conversation with staff members) Is there anyone else that wants to be heard, because our records show that we had everybody who wanted to testify -- that we've heard everybody, unless somebody hasn't made that indication? We're ready to hear them now if such a person has a desire to testify? (no response) If not, we stand adjourned until we have the hearing August 23, in Atlantic City. Where is that hearing going to be in Atlantic City?

MR. GANGES: The Institute for Human Development.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: The Institute for Human Development.

MR. GANGES: On Pacific Avenue.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: On Pacific Avenue. That's not a casino, incidentally, is it?

MR. GANGES: No, it's not. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Thank you.

MR. GANGES: It's not a casino.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Institute of what?

MR. GANGES: Institute for Human Development.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Do you have a date for it?

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: August 23. What time?

MR. PRICE (Committee Aide): Friday.

MR. GANGES: Eleven o'clock.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTLOWSKI: Eleven a.m. Thank you very much. This hearing is concluded.

(HEARING CONCLUDED)

APPENDIX

TESTIMONY OF
THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE
BEFORE THE
ASSEMBLY HEALTH AND HUMAN
SERVICES COMMITTEE
ON
THE FAMILY DEVELOPMENT ACT
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY
JULY 30, 1991

CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE :

THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU TODAY TO DISCUSS AN ISSUE OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO ALL CITIZENS OF OUR STATE: THE STRUCTURE OF OUR AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN , OR AFDC, PROGRAM. IN PARTICULAR, I AM HERE TO OFFER MY VIEWS ON A LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE SPONSORED BY ASSEMBLYMAN WAYNE BRYANT, A PACKAGE INTENDED TO REFORM THOSE ASPECTS OF OUR AFDC PROGRAM WHICH DISRUPT FAMILY UNITY AND DISCOURAGE RECIPIENTS TO WORK.

THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE BRYANT PACKAGE WOULD:

-- STRENGTHEN AND EXPAND OUR JOB TRAINING PROGRAM FOR AFDC RECIPIENTS.

-- INCREASE PAYMENTS MADE TO 2-PARENT HOUSEHOLDS ON AFDC TO A LEVEL THAT IS EQUAL TO THOSE RECIEVED BY SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES.

-- ALLOW CHILDREN WHOSE MOTHER MARRIES TO RETAIN AFDC BENEFITS EVEN THOUGH HER HUSBAND HAS EARNED INCOME.

-- DISALLOW BENEFITS TO CHILDREN BORN WHEN THEIR MOTHER IS AN AFDC RECIPIENT.

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AT THE OUTSET, I WANT TO COMMEND ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT FOR HIS BOLD LEADERSHIP IN SPONSORING THIS PACKAGE. THE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE AFDC PROGRAM TOUCH UPON THE MOST VOLITILE AND THORNY ISSUES OF OUR DAY: POVERTY, FAMILY LIFE, COMMITMENT, MARRIAGE, RACE, WORK ETHIC AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY. THESE ISSUES, AT WHICH GOVERNMENT POLICY AND PERSONAL BEHAVIOR INTERSECT, HAVE LED MANY OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES TO THROW UP THEIR HANDS IN FRUSTRATION AND WALK AWAY IN DEFEAT. WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF THIS LEGISLATION, ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT HAS DEMONSTRATED HIS COURAGE TO TACKLE PROBLEMS THAT OFFER LITTLE IN THE WAY OF SHORT-TERM POLITICAL BENEFIT BUT MUCH IN THE WAY OF LONG-TERM POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE LIVES OF OUR STATE'S MOST IMPOVERISHED CITIZENS. I URGE THE ASSEMBLYMAN TO CONTINUE TO PRESS FOR HIS PROGRAM AND KNOW THAT THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE AND OTHERS WILL BE WITH YOU EVERY STEP OF THE WAY.

THIS LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE ALSO REPRESENTS AN IMPORTANT "FIRST STEP" TOWARDS REFORMING OUR AFDC PROGRAM. I WHOLEHEARTEDLY ENDORSE ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT'S PROPOSALS TO RESTRUCTURE OUR JOB TRAINING PROGRAM, TO INCREASE BENEFITS TO 2-PARENT FAMILIES AND TO INCREASE AFDC PAYMENTS TO HOUSEHOLDS WHERE A STEP-FATHER IS PRESENT. I URGE THIS COMMITTEE TO MOVE THESE PROPOSALS WITHOUT DELAY.

I CANNOT, HOWEVER, ENDORSE THAT COMPONENT OF THIS PACKAGE WHICH DENIES BENEFITS TO CHILDREN BORN INTO FAMILIES THAT ARE CURRENTLY ON PUBLIC ASSISTANCE. I SHARE ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT'S GOAL OF DISCOURAGING WOMEN FROM HAVING CHILDREN UNTIL A FAMILY STRUCTURE IS IN PLACE THAT CAN ADEQUATELY CARE FOR THE CHILD. HOWEVER, I STRONGLY OPPOSE THE USE OF MEASURES WHICH PUNISH CHILDREN. AND THIS IS PRECISELY WHAT THIS PROPOSAL WOULD DO. DENYING ADDITIONAL BENEFITS WILL ONLY HARM INNOCENT CHILDREN BY DEPRIVING THOSE CHILDREN OF THE ASSISTANCE NEEDED FOR PROPER FOOD, CLOTHING, SHELTER AND MEDICAL CARE. FURTHER, THIS PROPOSAL, BY PROVIDING DIFFERING LEVELS OF BENEFITS TO FAMILIES OF THE SAME SIZE CONTINGENT ON WHETHER CHILDREN WERE BORN WHILE THE FAMILY WAS ON PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, WOULD, IF ENACTED, CLEARLY VIOLATE THE STATE AND FEDERAL LAWS GOVERNING THE AFDC PROGRAM.

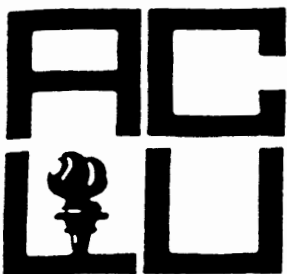
WHILE I ENDORSE MOST OF THE BRYANT PACKAGE, I WANT TO STRONGLY URGE THIS COMMITTEE, ASSEMBLYMAN BRYANT AND ALL OF THOSE CONCERNED WITH THIS ISSUE TO VIEW THESE BILLS AS SIMPLY THE BEGINNING OF A MORE COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM OF REFORM. QUITE CANDIDLY, WE NEED EVEN MORE THAN THIS PACKAGE OFFERS. WE NEED A COMPLETE OVERHAUL OF OUR AFDC PROGRAM IN ORDER TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF DESPAIR, DISENFRANCHISEMENT AND HOPELESSNESS THAT AFFECTS SO MANY FAMILIES WHICH ARE FORCED TO RELY ON PUBLIC ASSISTANCE.

THE COMPREHENSIVE REFORM THAT I ENVISION HAS, AS ITS DRIVING FORCE, THE NOTION THAT WE WILL PROVIDE ALL FAMILIES, REGARDLESS OF THEIR MAKE-UP, WITH THE BASIC SUPPORTS THEY NEED TO LIVE IN A SAFE, DECENT AND HEALTHFUL MANNER. TO DO THIS, WE MUST "FILL IN THE GAP" THAT CURRENTLY EXISTS BETWEEN CURRENT LEVELS OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AND THE AMOUNT DEEMED NECESSARY TO PROCURE THE BASIC NECESSITIES OF DAILY LIVING. THE STANDARD OF NEED RECENTLY PUBLISHED BY THE DHS CLEARLY ILLUSTRATES HOW FAR WE HAVE TO GO: AFDC RECIPIENTS PRESENTLY RECEIVE LESS THAN 60% OF WHAT IT COSTS TO PURCHASE FOOD, CLOTHING AND SHELTER IN NEW JERSEY AT A MINIMUM LEVEL.

I DO NOT PROPOSE, HOWEVER, THAT WE SIMPLY RAISE BENEFIT LEVELS. WHILE SOME INCREASE IN THOSE LEVELS IS NEEDED, WE MUST BEGIN TO FILL THE GAP IN WAYS THAT STRENGTHEN FAMILY LIFE AND ENCOURAGE RECIPIENTS TO WORK. CURRENT RULES MAKE AFDC AN "ALL OR NOTHING" PROPOSITION. IF YOU WORK, YOU ARE INELIGIBLE FOR AFDC. IF YOU ARE NOT ON AFDC, YOU CAN'T RECEIVE MEDICAID. IF YOU BECOME HOMELESS AND YOU ARE NOT ON AFDC, YOU ARE INELIGIBLE FOR EMERGENCY HOUSING ASSISTANCE. THESE UNBENDING "CATCH-22'S" FORCE COUNTLESS NUMBERS OF PARENTS TO GIVE UP ON THE EFFORT TO BE PRODUCTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY. THEY SIMPLY CANNOT RISK BEING WITHOUT THE MEDICAL COVERAGE AND OTHER MINIMUM SUPPORTS AVAILABLE FROM PUBLIC ASSISTANCE.

IN SHORT, WE HAVE TO INTEGRATE WELFARE AND WORK. A SYSTEM MUST BE CREATED THAT ALLOWS FAMILIES TO RETAIN EARNINGS FROM EMPLOYMENT IN ORDER TO MAKE UP THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CURRENT BENEFIT LEVELS AND THE STANDARD OF NEED. THIS SYSTEM MUST BE FLEXIBLE SO THAT PARENTS CAN GO TO WORK AND STILL RETAIN ELEGIBILITY FOR SUCH CRITICAL NEEDS AS MEDICAID AND EMERGENCY HOUSING BENEFITS. AND THIS SYSTEM MUST NOT DISCRIMINATE AGAINST FAMILIES WHERE BOTH PARENTS ARE PRESENT, AS THE CURRENT RULES DO.

SUCH REFORM IS NO EASY TASK. IT WILL BE A LONG BATTLE AGAINST THOSE WHO SAY IT CAN'T BE DONE AND THOSE WITH A VESTED INTEREST IN MAINTAINING THE STATUS QUO. I AM COMMITTED TO THIS EFFORT NOT SIMPLY BECAUSE COMPASSION AND JUSTICE REQUIRE IT, WHICH IT DOES. NO, I AM COMMITTED BECAUSE I AM CONVINCED THAT THOSE WHO HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO RELY ON PUBLIC ASSISTANCE WANT TO WORK AND BECOME PRODUCTIVE, HEALTHY MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY. ALL WE NEED TO DO IS GET OUT OF THE WAY.



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Edward Martone
Executive Director

Deborah A. Ellis
Legal Director

Annamay Sheppard
President

July 30, 1991

Hon. George J. Otlowski, Chair
Assembly Health and Human Resources Committee
CN 068 State House Annex
West State Street
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Assemblyman Otlowski:

Thank you for the opportunity to address my organization's concerns about a series of proposals, authored by Assemblyman Wayne Bryant, and currently pending review by the Assembly Health and Human Resources Committee. While there is much to be praised in Assembly Bills 4700 through 4705, there are areas which need further consideration.

A.4700. This legislation recognizes the futility of encouraging AFDC recipients to participate in various work or training programs without providing the predicate services, i.e., child care, income subsidy, and health benefits which permit people on welfare to sign up for the vocational and educational programs offered. The bill provides these services and the subsequent job development and placement which must be the culmination of any worthwhile training program. The proposal rightly emphasizes "...permanent full-time unsubsidized jobs, preferably in the private sector, which offer wages and benefits that are adequate to support recipients and their families." Some of the drawbacks of this bill, however, are these:

The bill (on page six) mandates that "...An employable person who is receiving public assistance shall be required, except when good cause exists, to perform such public work as shall be assigned to them..." However, the description (at the end of page seven) of what constitutes "good cause" has been deleted and no new definition substituted.

Further, (on page 3) - Section 7c denies any of the vocational benefits of the Family Development Act to any AFDC recipient or family member who has not attained the equivalent of a high school degree. It would appear that these are the people who need the vocational training most! Also, to penalize welfare recipients because their family members have not received

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a high school diploma is a disincentive to marriage and adoption and thus negates the purpose of A.4702 and A.4704 which is to encourage the formalizing of familial relationships. For example, if my mate cannot or will not try for a degree, we had better not marry, because if we do, she or he becomes a non-participating family member; thus making me ineligible for benefits under this proposal.

Moreover, if "...member of participant's family," is changed to "member of participant's household," then it creates a vicarious liability in that I will be punished because of what someone else has done or failed to do.

A.4701. This proposal would create a comprehensive social services information toll-free, 24-hour telephone hotline which in the ACLU's view would be an important and valuable service.

A.4702. Inasmuch as this act would remove any marriage penalty inherent in the existing statutes, it is a worthy objective. However, the bill goes on to inexplicably remove the natural children of the spouse of the eligible parent from receiving any benefits. This could only have the effect of driving a wedge between eligible parents and ineligible children.

Further, the statement to the bill places the proposal on shaky constitutional ground. It sets forth the legislation's intent to "encourage marriage and family stability among AFDC recipients,..." and "the promotion of two-parent families..." These choices about an individual's right to association are protected freedoms and are not within the state's interest in regulating. The State of New Jersey has no right to penalize those who do not exercise their rights in the manner that the Legislature advocates.

A.4703. This bill would eliminate any increment in welfare benefits as a result of the birth of a child during the time that a parent is on AFDC.

The proposal's statement says that, "this bill is intended to discourage AFDC recipients from having additional children during the period of their welfare dependence,..." This smacks of social engineering at its worst. This proposal is reminiscent of the one-child laws in countries such as Mainland China.

We agree with Commissioner Alan Gibbs of the Department of Human Services, who said of this act, "I'd be reluctant to support that. I don't think we ought to punish children. And I don't think many mothers become pregnant in order to get \$64 more." Bergen Record 5/21/91. In our view, Commissioner Gibbs

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is quite correct. Sixty-four dollars is hardly a welfare bonus; it is only enough to maintain a sub-poverty level, not rise above it.

A.4703 is specifically intended to have a direct effect on perhaps the most intimate decision that an individual can make - when and whether to bear a child. Decisions regarding procreation and family relations should be left up to the individual and are not within the purview of the government. There is no legitimate state interest in punishing a woman for not delaying childbirth. At the very least, we would suggest that a woman continue to receive an increment if she was pregnant at the time she applied for welfare. Also, while we don't see a proper government role in dictating family size, we think that medical benefits, if not monetary benefits, ought to be provided to additional children born to parents on welfare.

In addition to being unnecessarily punitive, this act contains unlawful gender distinctions in that it continuously refers to a mother who gives birth as opposed to a man who might father a child.

We do not believe this proposal would pass constitutional muster as the State could not convince a court that the reasons for the exclusion of some persons has been carefully scrutinized. It is not based on need or necessitated by the magnitude of administering the AFDC.

The ACLU believes that poor people should not be denied civil liberties because of their economic dependence on government.

A.4704. This bill attempts to eliminate any marriage penalty currently inherent in the AFDC system. This is a worthwhile goal. However, sections b and c make degrading statements about "mothers" and "fathers" on welfare which reinforce the notion that any children in a family are the sole responsibility of the mother. "Able-bodied" welfare fathers are to leave the home and work to provide for the "AFDC-enrolled mother" who is expected to exclusively nurture junior. Besides being archaic, this premise also fails to acknowledge the growing reality of single-parent families headed by both females and males.

A.4705. This act would create a Council on Community Restoration. This proposal merits support. However, of the seventeen members to be appointed to the Council, no one is to be

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designated from any of the communities being restored. Our suggestion is that at least one additional person be provided for who would be a neighborhood leader residing in these areas to be developed.

Respectfully submitted,



Edward Martone
Executive Director

EM/th

cc: Hon. Wayne Bryant
Members of the Assembly Health and Human Resources Committee

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TESTIMONY

*before the
Assembly Health and Welfare Committee
on
Assembly Bills 4700 through 4705*

*Submitted by
Legislative Committee
National Association of Social Workers, NJ Chapter
Joseph Bordo, ACSW, Chair
Edward P. O'Connor, Executive Director
July 30, 1991*

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NASW-NJ representing over five thousand social workers and which advocates for the delivery of quality social services by professionally trained social workers applauds Assemblyman Bryant for this Welfare Reform legislation.

NASW believes that any long-range approach to welfare reform must recognize the need to invest in a broad spectrum of developmental services and protection: early childhood education, day care, improved public schools, access to affordable high-quality health care, safe affordable housing, protection against job discrimination and layoff and worker-retraining services.

Implementing this umbrella of services is vital since there are strong indications that our future economy will be highly dependent on new entrants to the labor force from groups who are growing up in deprived circumstances. Moreover, our cohesiveness as a nation is threatened by the continued growth in the inequality of incomes and the development of an ever growing segment of the population that has lost hope of achieving even the minimum standards of living to which all Americans have historically aspired.

NASW believes that an underlying principle of any welfare reform program is that in order for an individual to become independent of public assistance, work must be a more attractive and more beneficial alternative. Programs for job preparation and placement must not become a substitute for the provision of sufficient support to meet

the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. In short, work must pay.

As social workers we must advocate for major reform of the present AFDC system.

Any reform must include minimum benefits tied to the standard of need. Current grant levels in New Jersey remain woefully below the present standards. The introduction of this legislation should not delay immediate increases to be included in the 1993 budget and which should contain cost of living provisions.

Further NASW believes that any reform program must provide the training and employment opportunities which will facilitate long-term sustained employment at jobs with pay adequate enough to bring a family out of poverty. We feel that the impact of any reform program will be greatest if it includes those individuals whose long-term dependence already is established as well as those able to more quickly out of the system.

NASW-NJ supports the goals Assemblyman Bryant seeks to achieve through this legislation. However we do have some concerns regarding specific aspects contained in these bills.

NASW favors a voluntary work program for AFDC recipients. Underlying voluntary work efforts is the assumption that participants share a value system with the larger

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population and will strive to improve their circumstances and their children's future. Voluntary programs eliminate issues about the ages of the children involved, because participation is self-selected.

NASW opposes the imposition of any compulsory work requirement for AFDC recipients which includes punitive measures for non-participation. We take the position that a voluntary program will attract participants through the use of "positive" incentives such as grant increases or "bonuses" which would go into effect with the successful completion of each phase of the program leading to full employment.

We do not agree with the language "as a last resort" when referring to support services such as day care, transportation, and health care coverage. While NASW agrees that participants should be encouraged to develop their own resources, these services must be assured on an adequate level so as not to impede participation.

We do not support the development of another "Planning Council". The program can be administered under the auspices of the existing Human Services Advisory Council in each county.

We applaud the provision which provides for special services such as individual and family counseling, substance abuse counseling and parental skill training. However,

NASW strongly believes that such services as well as case management can be adequately delivered only through the use of professionally trained social workers. The lifelong effects of public welfare decisions demand qualified personnel in administration and direct services. Only individuals who have had professional training should be given the responsibility for such important decision making.

NASW recognizes that effective services to the participants and families in public welfare demand the values, knowledge and skills that are intrinsic to social work education. NASW believes that the participants of any welfare to work program have a right to the same level and quality of services delivered by professional social workers in other fields of practice.

We believe that this legislation must go further to insure the success of program participants by including the following principles:

1. An undergraduate or graduate social work degree be required for the delivery and administration of social services to program participants to ensure that workers possess the necessary skills, knowledge and values to provide high-quality services.

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2. The development and encouragement of professional training is vital to the recruitment and retention of professional social workers in public welfare.

NASW believes this is possible as well as desirable, and cites other states which have mandated that a percentage of the DPW work force possess a bachelor's or master degree in social work. An alternative would be to contract these vital services including case management to community based non-profit agencies with professionally trained social workers.

NASW strongly opposes the idea of penalizing a child for the action of their parents. Historically the AFDC program intent is based on the needs of the child not the behavior of the parent. To fix the grant level at the number of children in the family at the time of intake is to ignore what we know about the many different reasons why women have babies and denies basic sustenance not only to the newborn but to all the children in the family which must stretch scarce resources to feed and clothe the newcomer. The concept that there is an cottage industry among poor women of having babies for the welfare money is factually unfounded. Let us not pander to those who perpetrate this myth.

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Any welfare reform program must include provisions for the ongoing analysis of how people are affected by the change and provide for rapid redress when necessary.

Reform must also be considered in the context of today's society and must not be viewed as the only solution to major economic and social problems.

We believe that an acceptable welfare reform program must provide a full range of appropriate and humane services to maintain compassionately and safely its participants who, temporarily or permanently cannot achieve economic self sufficiency.

NASW feels that social workers should be leaders in discussions that deal creatively with solutions to society's ills.

The members of NASW-NJ look forward to having the opportunity to work with Assemblyman Bryant in shaping a welfare reform program which can seem as a model for the rest of the country and one which can provide lasting opportunities for the citizens it serves, and cost effective results for those of use who enjoy the privilege of working and paying taxes.

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**BLACK
UNITED
FUND**
OF NEW JERSEY, INC.

PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY

FAMILY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM: ASSEMBLY BILLS A-4700 - A-4705

STATE HOUSE ANNEX, TRENTON, N.J.

JULY 30, 1991

Good afternoon! I am Lloyd Oxford, President of the Black United Fund of New Jersey, which is the leading Black philanthropic organization in New Jersey. BUF/NJ interfaces with grassroots, community-based organizations whose clients and/or constituents are public assistance recipients. BUF/NJ has funded over 500 human service providers in fulfillment of its mission to perpetuate self-help and self-sufficiency in New Jersey's Black communities. BUF/NJ is committed and responsive to strengthening the Black family and has established funding priorities in the areas of substance abuse intervention and prevention, teen pregnancy, youth education, literacy, and health, among others.

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An affiliate of the National Black United Fund, Inc.

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BLACK UNITED FUND OF NEW JERSEY PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY/ 2

We believe that Aid To Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and other forms of public assistance represents a form of controlled genocide that perpetuates a poverty culture in the Black community. By design, the system is one that neither adequately prepares nor equips recipients for social or economic survival after public assistance. In many cases, recipients only learn to be dependent on the system from one generation to the next. BUF/NJ certainly commends Assemblyman Bryant for initiating this far-reaching legislation which could potentially place recipients on the road to self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, I must address some elements of these bills.

National statistics suggest that only 15% of AFDC recipients remain for long periods of time and further that the average length of time is 18 months. First of all, I hope that the necessary research was conducted to obtain a profile and ascertain the state of the 300,000 individuals on public assistance in New Jersey. If this was done, what were your findings and how do they relate to the provisions of this package of bills? Were the actual public assistance recipients allowed input to determine how their lives might be affected? For too long elected officials and other state bureaucrats have made pronouncements and promulgated legislation without input from those affected. In most environments with which I am familiar, the target market is tested for feasibility.

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BLACK UNITED FUND OF NEW JERSEY PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY/ 3

I believe that existing data systems on AFDC and public assistance recipients should be improved by developing standardized methodologies for collecting, coding and analyzing this information based on race and ethnicity. A central repository of all reports should be established for increased accessibility.

In order to insure that optimal human services are provided and received that would ultimately preserve the integrity of the Black family, BUF/NJ recommends the establishment of a Commission on the Black Family. While the introduction of Family Net is a step in the right direction, a commission must be created that brings together the resources and collective wisdom of grassroots service providers, government and public assistance recipients, to respond to the growing crisis in Black family life in New Jersey.

The commission would make recommendations for action and implementation of innovative programmatic strategies for enhancing and improving the quality of life for the total Black family unit, especially those on public assistance. The New Jersey State Legislature, in particular the Assembly Health and Human Services Committee, should play an integral role in initiating dialogue with the governor to ensure that such a commission is established.

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BLACK UNITED FUND OF NEW JERSEY FORUM TESTIMONY/ 4

After careful review of Assemblyman Bryant's package of bills, I offer the following recommendations to the Health and Human Services Committee:

Analysis of the Family Development Act (A-4700)

On Page 2 and Section 5a, the Act states, "a recipient whose youngest child is two years of age or older shall participate in education, vocational assessment and training, or employment activities, or a combination thereof, under the program." I recommend that child care be provided to recipients by subcontracting to certified, non-profit day care centers in the community. Day care could also be provided on-site at social service agencies and vocational training locations, especially for those recipients with young children. This will allow the parent to be fully attentive during training, meetings and/or counseling.

On Page 2 and Section 6, the Act states, "a recipient who without good cause fails or refuses to enroll and actively participate in the program which includes failure to attend or make satisfactory academic progress in educational or vocational training classes under the program...shall be subject to a reduction in benefits of a least 20%, or shall become ineligible for benefits for a period of 90 days." I recommend that recipients should not be subject to punitive action for failing to comply with or participate in the described programs across the board. Close monitoring of the programs will reveal the abusers, who should be dealt with on a case by case basis.

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BLACK UNITED FUND OF NEW JERSEY FORUM TESTIMONY/ 5

On Page 2, Section 7a, the Act states " services shall be provided to each participant in the program according to a family plan which includes a written contract. The contract shall be signed by the participant and a program representative who shall act as a case manager, advocate and broker of services for the participants and the participant's family, and shall set forth the specific mutual obligations of the participant and a detailed plan for the participant and the participant's family." I recommend that all existing case managers should be adequately **trained** to assess the problems facing the client. Case managers should also prepare a "family development plan and contract" which is realistic in meeting the needs of clients and their families. The contract should be written in simple terms for easy comprehension by the client.

On page 3, Section 7c states, "The program shall be designed to ensure that each participant and member of the participant's family has attained the equivalent of a high school degree, before assigning that person to a vocational-related activity." I recommend feel that in addition to county colleges, GED courses could also be subcontracted to qualified community-based organizations which provide supplementary and/or tutorial education programs.

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BLACK UNITED FUND OF NEW JERSEY FORUM TESTIMONY/ 6

On Page 4, Section 9, the Act states, " the commissioner shall establish a program office in each of the three counties with the largest number of recipients to be designated as a family resource center. The center shall provide all program enrollment and case management services including counseling and health related, social, educational and vocational assessment services, to program participants and their families..." I recommend that these family resource centers should be staffed by **trained** case managers and can be subcontracted out to community-based organizations, such as day care centers.

Analysis of Assembly Bill A-4703

I support this legislation, in that education and counseling services in planned parenthood and birth control for both parents and their teenagers, should be provided and reinforced to discourage and prevent family expansion when it is not economically feasible.

Analysis of Assembly Bill A-4704

I support this bill because it is consistent with BUF/NJ's mission in preserving the integrity of the Black family. It has been proven that families with the presence of both parents in the home are more viable, nurturing and progressive. The provisions of this bill will serve to deter the perpetuation of AFDC dependency.

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BLACK UNITED FUND OF NEW JERSEY FORUM TESTIMONY/7

Analysis of Assembly Bill A-4705

This bill appears to be similar to the Community Development Block Grant Program, in which money allocated specifically for the blight of urban centers seldom reached the indigenous community. Instead, local government officials used these funds for individual restoration projects in downtown or center-city areas. If a restoration project is to be seriously considered, I would suggest that block associations, housing coalitions, tenant councils and community-based organizations are given the responsibility of targeting these funds.

In closing, let me state that I support the overall objectives of this legislation because they are consistent with those of BUF/NJ. We must work together to achieve our ultimate goal of strengthening and empowering the Black families in New Jersey.

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President

William F. Bolan, Jr., Esq.
Executive Director

STATEMENT OF
NEW JERSEY CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
IN CONNECTION WITH PUBLIC HEARING ON
A-4700 through A-4705

ASSEMBLY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY

July 30, 1991

On behalf of the New Jersey Catholic Conference, the public policy arm of the state's Catholic Bishops, I am pleased to comment on the package of bills introduced by Assemblyman Wayne Bryant (D-Camden). These six bills (A-4700 through A-4705) set forth a number of revisions in our state's welfare system.

The issues discussed in these bills are of deep concern to the Catholic Conference. Our views on the issues are shaped by two perspectives. The first is the principle that human dignity is the fundamental criterion against which public policy must be measured. Second, and more specifically, is the conviction that in a society as rich as ours, there is no excuse for the extremes of deprivation and poverty that leave thousands without even the basic necessities of life. As a result, the Catholic Church has called consistently for an adequate level of public assistance, a comprehensive full-employment strategy, rejection of welfare rules that weaken families, and administration of the welfare program in a manner that supports dignity, equity and self-determination.

The stated objective of The Family Development Initiative contained in A-4700 is

"to enable recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children to secure permanent full-time jobs, preferably in the private sector with wages and benefits that are adequate to support their families..." (Section 4)

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*Representing the Archdiocese of Newark, Diocese of Camden, Diocese of Metuchen,
Diocese of Paterson, Diocese of Trenton and Byzantine Catholic Diocese of Passaic*

The Catholic Conference applauds this objective. As the U.S. Bishops stated in their pastoral letter on the economy, "increasing active participation in economic life by those who are presently excluded or vulnerable is a high social priority. The human dignity of all is realized when people gain the power to work together to improve their lives, strengthen their families, and contribute to society."

A-4700 seeks to address the "needs of the public assistance recipients' family, rather than the recipient alone." (Section 2) The Catholic Conference supports this goal as one which is linked to the well-being of families. The family is the most basic form of human community. As such, the long range future of this nation is intimately connected with the strength and stability of family life. Our social programs should be scrutinized in light of how well they ensure both individual dignity and family integrity.

The Family Development Initiative places needed emphasis on education. According to a 1990 report on employment for AFDC recipients by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities in Washington, D.C., the types of jobs that are filled by people with low levels of basic reading and math skills are expected to grow very slowly or decline in number. Rather, job growth will occur at a faster pace among jobs demanding higher basic skills levels. The Center is a non-profit organization that conducts research and analysis on a range of public policy issues affecting low and moderate income Americans. "Education and basic skill attainment seem to be critical ingredients to finding employment that can enable a family to become economically self-sufficient," according to the Center. AFDC recipients with little education and low basic skills levels will be at a disadvantage in competing for the jobs of the future unless their educational and skills levels are upgraded. The report goes on to document the marked divergence in earnings between those with more education and those with less education. The report states that "among people under age 30 who head families -- the group that includes the majority of AFDC recipients -- the typical (median) earnings of those with a college degree were twice as high as the earnings of those with only a high school diploma and four times as high as the earnings of those who had not completed high school." Clearly, education and jobs skill training are an important component of a public assistance program.

Child care and health benefits included in A-4700 are likewise essential to the success of employment. Mothers who find satisfactory, affordable child care and have private health coverage or Medicaid will have a far greater chance of maintaining employment.

The second of the six-bill package, A-4701, establishes a social services hotline in the Department of Human Services. The need for an improved hotline system was made evident in the Star Ledger story of July 17, 1991 which stated that "working-poor families who are homeless and in need of shelter for the night find it virtually impossible to reach a 24-hour county hotline the state mandates as part of a \$4.5 million emergency response system." The story was the result of a survey done by the Public Advocate which demonstrated that "the performance of the state and the counties in providing this basic hotline service has been abysmal." The Conference cautions, however, whether establishing a single statewide hotline is realistic or whether it would prove to be wholly unwieldy.

Likewise, we question the advisability of A-4705 which establishes a Council on Community Restoration and caution against a duplication of efforts.

A-4702 and A-4704 provide for increased eligibility for AFDC. The bills are intended to promote two-parent families and family stability among AFDC recipients. The Catholic Conference supports the goals of these bills which can work towards strengthening the family. Stringent rules restricting the eligibility of two-parent families -- even though the family income is well below the state AFDC eligibility limit -- have not made sense in the past. Reducing the stringency of these rules for two-parent families will protect and enhance the family unit.

The Catholic Conference is adamantly opposed, however, to A-4703 which unlike the above-named bills, has the potential of destroying the family. The bill disallows benefits for additional children of an AFDC recipient. The bill is "intended to discourage AFDC recipients from having additional children during their period of welfare dependence." As Marion Wright Edelman states in her recent book, Families in Peril, "the most prevalent myth about welfare mothers and sex and babies probably was that the mothers had more babies to get higher welfare grants. Sometimes reality overcomes myths." The average AFDC family size in New Jersey -- 2 children per family -- is essentially the same as the size of the average American family. And, as Edelman correctly points out, if another child is born, almost invariably the additional grant is so small that it cannot support that child, much less improve the mother's standard of living. In New Jersey, a woman receives \$64 per month, or \$2.10 per day, for an additional child.

Taking this additional money away, however meager an amount it is, does mean the difference between being able to take care

of a new baby or not. Without this financial support, a mother is faced with the decision of feeding and clothing her newborn or her other children. A lack of support could contribute to the increased abandonment of babies. As one young mother wrote on a note pinned to her baby left in a trash bin in an inner city, "I don't have the money to take care of my child." In a worst case scenario, a mother could be put in the position of determining whether to abort her baby rather than attempting to spread her already meager resources to support another child. Clearly, this is an unacceptable position in which to place a woman or her children.

In a column in the Star Ledger, Joan Whitlow spoke about the need to support teenage parents. The column addressed billboard ads discouraging teen pregnancy. The arguments put forth, however, have a clear connection with A-4703. Whitlow cited a caller who was incensed about a school program which provided care for teenagers and their babies. "Coddle them by letting them go to school, pamper them with welfare, with extra help, and all you do is encourage them and others to have more babies," cried the caller. Whitlow responds by saying that "there is too much at stake, a generation within a generation, not to help them, not to at least try." The Catholic Conference agrees and believes firmly that support must be given to mothers and their newborn babies.

A-4703 places the family at risk, is punitive and destructive. The Catholic Conference urges that A-4703 be withdrawn.

The Catholic Conference urges that public assistance levels be increased as part of the package of bills under consideration. A family of three in New Jersey must live on an amount of money which is 40% below what the state says is needed for food, shelter, clothing and other essential items.

The effects of New Jersey's current public assistance levels on human lives are staggering. In its 1986 report, the New Jersey Commission on Hunger charged that the "meager benefits provided by the state's social welfare system are an inherent part of the problem of hunger in New Jersey. Families and individuals...are often forced to seek food from family and friends, food pantries, soup kitchens -- or they do without food. Children are especially vulnerable to the effects of living in poverty. Without adequate nutrition and housing, proper growth and health is threatened. According to the Hunger Commission, poverty affects not only the quality of life during childhood, but the potential for full productivity in adulthood."

The Conference urges our state to respond by raising the levels of economic assistance so that those who are attempting to live on this assistance may do so with some measure of human dignity. Dealing with poverty is not a luxury to which our state can attend when it finds the time and resources. Justice, not charity, demands an immediate response to the needs of the poor.

Respectfully submitted,



Regina Purcell
Associate Director
for Social Concerns

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