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# *Public Meeting*

of

## ASSEMBLY ADVISORY COUNCIL ON WOMEN

*“Testimony concerning State/federal programs designed  
to provide assistance to women single-family headed households”*

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**LOCATION:** Committee Room 11  
State House Annex  
Trenton, New Jersey

**DATE:** March 11, 1999  
2:00 p.m.

### **MEMBERS OF COUNCIL PRESENT:**

Assemblywoman Rose Marie Heck, Chairwoman  
Assemblyman E. Scott Garrett  
Assemblywoman Carol J. Murphy

### **ALSO PRESENT:**

Miriam Bavati  
*Office of Legislative Services*  
*Council Aide*

Deborah K. Smarth  
Tasha M. Kersey  
*Assembly Majority*  
*Council Aides*



***Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by***  
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,  
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, PO 068, Trenton, New Jersey

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**ASSEMBLYWOMAN ROSE MARIE HECK (Chairwoman):**

We will begin this meeting. We have a number of people with colds. We were told that there will be no one replacing the other side of the aisle today. Carol Murphy is coming. She has a very bad cold, so she may not stay for the entire meeting, but Scott and I -- we stay to the end.

Everything you say will have an impact on us. I think this is an important issue, and I think this is going to give you the opportunity to voice your opinions and also tell us what you think we should be doing.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: You might also--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: --want to add that we do get-- The meetings are transcribed, and we do take all the notes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: All the notes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: It's easier for me, since I don't have to read them now, but the rest will be able to do that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: The other members will be able to view them and take them into consideration.

Our first speakers will be Carol Clark, the Executive Director of the Urban Women's Center, and Charles Thomas, the Director of Cumberland-Salem Job Training Consortium.

You are here, aren't you?

**C A R O L C L A R K:** I'm Carol Clark.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I was told that you have time constraints, and you wanted to go first.

MS. CLARK: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: So if you would come forward.

Okay, so, Carol, you have the floor. And press that button until it turns red. (referring to PA microphone) When it's red, then you are on microphone.

MS. CLARK: Good afternoon. My name is Carol Clark. I'm the Executive Director of the Urban Women's Center here in Trenton, and we're funded by the Division on Women in the Department of Community Affairs. And I've been there for nine years.

And my speech is entitled today "How Do You Get a Woman from Poverty to Self-sufficiency?" You give her the tools and resources she'll need to break the chains of poverty. Poor women need alternatives to traditional resources that are available. They need training and skills which will meet their needs and give them empowerment for a lifetime.

A nontraditional approach to help these women is micro credit, which is helping some of the world's poorest people out of poverty. This could work in New Jersey by establishing a pilot program to provide training, support, and mini business loans to women at the poverty level, especially women coming off welfare. These women have no assets or small-business training. What they do have is the will to work hard and to achieve the American dream, going from rags to riches.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Carol, just as a point of information. Deb Smarth, who is one of our directors, said that there is a bill already moving--

MS. CLARK: I was going to mention that. Yeah, I know.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Okay. It is over in the Senate now.

MS. CLARK: Yes, I know.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Okay.

MS. CLARK: I've been working with them on that bill.

I'd like to clarify when I said from rags to riches. I mean from going below poverty level to above poverty level.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Oh, certainly.

MS. CLARK: A few years ago, we did an informal survey with our participants, and the No. 1 thing they wanted was a house, and they wanted a good job to take care of their children and a car. And to them, that was being rich. They didn't want to move--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: It was to me, too. (laughter)

MS. CLARK: It wasn't that they wanted to move to Princeton--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Sure.

MS. CLARK: And this is why I say the term from rags to riches. I just mean that they wanted a better life for themselves and for their family.

Training would be mandatory, a business plan would be required in order to receive a loan, and aftercare would include ongoing technical assistance.

And now I get to say that, currently, there is a bill, which you know about. This bill would give deserving women not only the tools, but a place in their local economy by providing the training and support that they need to start a successful home business. Under the bill, women with little or no business experience and an income of less than 125 percent of the poverty level could borrow money to start and operate their own enterprises. The

borrowers can work from home, which is ideal for mothers with small children. That would basically take care of, for a time being, their day care needs.

Administration of the program will be by 10 nonprofit community development corporations with experience in delivering services to this target population. They will be awarded \$75,000 each, which would include loan capital as well as funds to administer programs, manage the loans, and provide training. The bill stipulates that a minimum of seven counties would be represented among the 10 grantees for this program.

The Aspen Institute, which is a supporter and promoter of micro credit in the U.S., conducted a study of micro entrepreneurs a few years ago and comparing results from poverty populations and more affluent populations. The five-year study included micro credit programs in Arkansas, Iowa, North Carolina, Chicago, Minnesota, and California. The conclusions are striking. Poor participants experienced strong gains in household income; 72 percent had increased personal earnings, over the five-year period, with the average increase being nearly \$9000; reliance on public assistance declined; participants receiving public assistance dropped from 24 percent to 17 percent; and benefits dropped from \$1460 to \$939. Worldwide default rates for micro loan programs are lower than conventional business loans.

You may be wondering what is micro credit and how did it get started. In the 1970s, Mohammed Yunus was a professor of economics at Chittagong University in southern Bangladesh. He watched men and women work 16 hours a day only to exist on the edge of starvation. He realized that the classic economic theories that he was teaching were irrelevant to these people. He concluded that the poor people were not lazy. They just lacked

access to what everyone else had, credit. His theory evolved after he spoke to a woman from Jobra. This woman made and sold stools. She told Yunnus that after borrowing money from a local trader, to whom she also sold stools, she was left with 2 cents a day in profits on which she must feed her entire family. This woman had six children.

Yunnus lent her a dollar. And with this money, her daily profits eventually went from 2 cents a day to \$1.25, and his loan made it possible for her to bypass this loan shark who charged very high interest rates. This marked the birth of the Grameen Bank which targeted the destitute and the outcasts. More than 1.6 million people have participated in the loan program with the average loan being \$75. The vast majority of the loans are made to women. They have a 97 percent repayment rate. There are now lending programs in Latin America, Africa, and some parts of the United States.

In New Jersey, there is no concerted effort to reach the poor with micro enterprise opportunities. There are lots of talented women who need loans, not handouts, to get them on the road to self-sufficiency.

You probably are wondering how a loan of \$500 can change a person's life. It can help a woman buy baking or cooking utensils and supplies to start a catering business. It could help a woman buy a used computer to start a medical billing business. It could help a woman buy a sewing machine. Another can buy merchandise from a wholesaler to resell. The list goes on.

The Women's Enterprise -- Micro-Business Credit Act will bring opportunities to motivated, hardworking women who will take control of their lives by becoming taxpayers and positive role models for their families and

peers. And as entrepreneurs, they will stimulate their local economies by adding revenue to their communities.

And I would like to take this time to say that we do, do training at our center. We would, of course, like this bill to go through because we deal with those women. We say, "With \$500, what can you do?" and they tell us, "Well, I can buy a sewing machine." And some of the women are very talented and they make-- One woman makes teddy bears. She dresses them up for all kinds of occasions. They even have mink coats. She buys them from thrift shops, cuts the fur coats up, and puts them on the bears. Another woman did buy baking supplies so she could do her catering. Another woman did buy a used computer to do her medical business. It started out small and slow with one doctor, and it's building up. So that \$500 is not much to a lot of people, but to them it is a lot.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I would say that this particular Council is very supportive of that. It already went through our House -- that bill.

MS. CLARK: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: So we understand the need. To me, the amounts may be small, but they are large as far as these people are concerned.

MS. CLARK: Yes, to them it is a large amount.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: And I think that's--

MS. CLARK: And they would take it. It is based on the pure lending principle, which a lot of you are probably familiar with. It steps from \$500 to \$1000 to \$1500, and then, eventually they'll get to a level where

they've built up a repayment schedule, they've built up some credit history because a lot of times they have either no credit or they're not credit worthy. With that and with the support from the group that is helping them, they can go to a more traditional institution.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Where is your urban center?

MS. CLARK: Urban Women's Center is on Fowler Street. It's in Carver Y. They can go there and then try to get more traditional loans and mainstream. In fact, I know Summit Bank has now expanded their lending department to minorities and women, which is good for the communities.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Absolutely.

MS. CLARK: They're becoming very user-friendly.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: It has a positive effect.

Did you want to say anything, Scott?

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Just a couple quick -- so I can understand who you are a little better. Can you just, in a nutshell, tell me, first of all, who your clients are? Why are they coming to you?

MS. CLARK: Okay. We deal with women.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Right.

MS. CLARK: And most of our women are on welfare, and they are affected by the welfare reform. We do have working poor, we have women working a minimum wage with five to six children, we have women on public assistance, and we have women who we have undocumented income.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Are they-- Age wise?

MS. CLARK: Pardon?

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Age wise, what are we talking about?

MS. CLARK: Most of our women are in their 20s. We do deal with a few 18-year-olds, but they don't come to the program because they're sick and tired of doing what they're doing to make their lives better. But we do feel that by the time they are 22 or 23 years old, they are more receptive to us, and they do participate.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Married or single?

MS. CLARK: Most of our women are single, female heads of household.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Are any of them -- I don't know how they could be-- Are any of them compelled to be there under programs, or are they just people who want to be there?

MS. CLARK: Well, both. Some people just want to be there: they're sick and tired of whatever they were doing in their lifestyles, they want to change, they want to better themselves. A lot of them are motivated by their children, they want to give their children a life better than what they've had, and then some of them come there because we have mandatory training from, you know, the county welfare or city welfare.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Okay, and how long have -- has there been the Urban Women's Center?

MS. CLARK: The Urban Women's Center in Trenton has been in existence since 1986, and I've been there since 1990.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Okay, and is there some sort of a tracking program to follow your women from the day they come in--

MS. CLARK: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: --to the day they go through the program, and then to say a year or two or five years down the road how their all doing?

MS. CLARK: Yes, that's required by our grant from DOW. We have to keep track -- documentation of all the services we deliver to our clients.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: And is it aftercare -- is it after they leave you, too, do you track them?

MS. CLARK: Aftercare we do. We do, do a 30, 60, 90 day -- and then we do an annual-- We send them a letter saying, "Hi, how are you doing? What are you doing? Call us or respond to our questionnaire." Some people respond, some people don't. Everyone eventually comes back to our center.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Why?

MS. CLARK: For some service or another. They may have taken care of getting the job. They might need information about housing, there might have been something else that happened, they might need it for a friend or a relative.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Is that a big report? Would that be hard to get a copy of that? I don't want to burden you if it is hard. I'm just curious of how those long-term study things work.

MS. CLARK: Probably-- We're only three people.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Oh, okay. I don't want to trouble you then.

MS. CLARK: And right now, we're in the process-- This is our grant-writing season.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Okay.

MS. CLARK: So that would be a burden for us.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: You might be able to get a copy of a grant application or backing -- backup from the Division on Women.

MS. CLARK: Yes. We do a final, end-of-the-year report, and they probably would have it.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Well, maybe somebody here can track that down. I'm just curious how that all works.

Thanks a lot for your information.

MS. CLARK: Okay, you're welcome.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you.

MS. CLARK: Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Charles Thomas, Director of Cumberland-Salem Job Training Consortium.

**CHARLES THOMAS:** Thank you, Madam. It is a privilege to be here today.

My name is Charles Thomas, and I'm the Employment and Training Director for the County of Cumberland. I have been that for the past 25 years, initiating the first job-training program in our county called CETA. We have had extensive experience in training and placing women into jobs. I would say that probably during my tenure as an employment and training director, we have placed in the neighborhood of -- gee, let me see -- 6000 or 7000 women from our county into employment. So when I speak to about the

experiences that we've had, I think it comes with a lot of experience of working with the women in our county.

Our county is a very rural county. It is probably the most southern county -- one of the most southern counties in New Jersey. It has many, many problems. The unemployment rate in our county is twice as high as it is in the rest of the state. There is a lack of transportation. We probably have one of the lowest per capita incomes in the state. The educational levels -- dropout rate is very, very high. There is a high teenage pregnancy rate. So the things that I'm saying to you is that the people that we have to deal with have many, many problems, and it's compounded by a lot of the lack of transportation and things like this in our county. But in spite of--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: May I interrupt you for just one second?

MR. THOMAS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Is there any mass transportation in your general area?

MR. THOMAS: We have one transportation system that was initiated approximately eight years ago by former Assemblyman Jim Hurley. He is now the Chairman of the Casino Control Commission. We fought very hard with New Jersey Transit to have them start a route from Bridge Street into Atlantic City casinos. That route was started about eight years ago, and now it is the fastest-growing, most used route in the whole State of New Jersey. But that is basically the only mass transportation that we have in our county.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Do you have any suggested needs of mass transportation or even shuttles that would benefit--

MR. THOMAS: Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: --an area?

MR. THOMAS: We are now involved in some unique projects that will take place over the next year or so that will greatly, I think, help as far as transportation. Our county was just designated as one of the 15 empowerment zones in the United States, and with that we are going to be receiving probably somewhere over \$250 million in the next 10 years through loans and grants to do a number of things, and one of the things that we've targeted is transportation. So I think that what will happen will be that we will have the opportunity to bring shuttle buses, vans from some of the rural areas where there is no transportation now to connect with the major cities like Bridgetown, Millville, and Vineland which should have a positive effect. Atlantic City casinos are our main object as far as employment is concerned.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Sure.

MR. THOMAS: And you know that Steve Wynn has made a commitment to Governor Whitman to hire a minimum of 2500 welfare recipients over the next three years, once that casino is built. That was part of the agreement as far as the tunnel and things of that sort are concerned.

So Cumberland County, being right next to Atlantic County, is only natural that we would probably benefit tremendously from the employment opportunities there because Atlantic County-- There is no way that they could come up with the numbers of welfare recipients -- 2500 -- to handle the commitment that Steve Wynn has. So we look to our county to fill the gap of some of the jobs.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Have you contacted New Jersey Transit to see if they have any programs you might wish to access like training of jitney operators, etc., because of the potential need?

MR. THOMAS: No, we haven't done that, and that's an idea. Do they have training programs?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Well, if they don't, let's find out, and maybe we can--

MR. THOMAS: That's something--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: --give them that inspiration.

MR. THOMAS: Sure, because I could very easily see our welfare population going into a business--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Absolutely.

MR. THOMAS: --that they would be -- shuttle or jitney or vans into the major cities. And that would be an entrepreneurship that--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Absolutely.

MR. THOMAS: --they could handle. So I agree with you 100 percent.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Okay.

MR. THOMAS: I say these things in spite of the fact that in the last six years we've been able to reduce our welfare caseloads from around 6000 to -- we have somewhere now around 1100, in spite of the fact that unemployment rate being so high.

Now, you know yourself that if the unemployment rate is 4 percent, the competition for jobs is not very high, but if the unemployment is 11 percent or 12 percent, the competition for jobs is keen. So consequently,

our county-- We've constantly had to battle other client groups who are not welfare recipients and not women. So what we had to do is to develop a program that we could turn out exceptional clients. I think that most people-- We have David Heins here today, from the Division of Family Development, who will agree that our program is one of the model programs in New Jersey. As a matter of fact, we've been highlighted in some publications that the Department of Labor -- with some of the things that we do.

So I will just briefly give you an idea of how we serve the women who come through our program and maybe a couple of ideas that I have on things that could be done to improve the (indiscernible) program and the Work First Program that Governor Whitman has initiated.

I have a handout, and it is *Cumberland County's Work First Customer Service Plan*. It starts with clients who are referred to our office from the County Board of Social Services and come for orientation, and then, they are scheduled to go into what we have -- a job search assistance program. And we emphasize to them the importance of attitude, the importance of attendance.

We try to install -- to point out to them exactly what they're getting into and the environment that they're in, our staff, our commitment to them, the things that we believe in, the things that we expect of them. This is all part of the orientation.

On the third page, we have some keys to motivation:

self-interest, this is important to me;

confidence, I believe it can happen;

some taste of success, I managed something like this before, and this worked in a positive reference point;

attributions, it's up to me to make this thing work;

challenge, it's tough, but I can do it. We have posters, in our lunch room and in our break room for the participants, of success stories of other welfare recipients that-- It says that, "They did it and you can do it, too." It is very inspiring and gives them some motivation. At least it shows that other people have been through the same move that they're going through, and they can do it;

accepting failure, it didn't work this time, maybe next time;

hearing and believing praise. We have a lot of stroking that we do and give to the individual to let them know that we care about them and they're successful.

Our program is probably modeled after what the private sector wants. Now, a lot of programs are not modeled that way, and they model the program after what they think the private sector wants. We've conducted a lot of workshops and interviewed a lot of employees, and we say, "Okay, what are you looking for in an employee?" And they will tell you, "Number one, we're looking for somebody with good work ethic and attitude. Somebody that's going to be at work on time. Somebody that's going to report out when they're not coming to work. Somebody that's going to get along with the current employees. Somebody that's going to listen and be cooperative. Second, we need somebody that can do some reading, writing, and arithmetic, that are educationally competent. That's the second thing that we're looking for. The third thing is vocational skills, but we're not that much concerned about the third part of it because, if you give us somebody with a good attitude who can do mathematics and reading, we can train them, most of the time, in a

vocational skill.” So in our program, we put heavy emphasis on work attitudes, and we also--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I’m going to excuse myself for a minute to get some water.

MR. THOMAS: Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: But you can continue.

MR. THOMAS: Okay.

And we also put heavy emphasis on the three R's, reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic, and we also give the individuals the opportunity to go into vocational schools because you know that there are some jobs where, at least, the entry-level vocational skills are necessary.

Job search assistance is our first enrollment component, and all participants are required to go through job search assistance. That is what Work First is about. They have to first make an attempt to get a job before they are considered for other components in our program.

It is a four-week program. In the first two weeks, we actually give them a lot of classroom training -- how to do resumes and search and look for jobs, prepare an application, and things of that sort -- interview skills. The second two weeks consist of contacting at least five employers a year -- excuse me, a week. And if at the end of the four weeks they are not successful, then we would move them into an AWEP program, which is a combination of a classroom training activity and a work experience activity. The type of program that they would go into would depend on their individual service plan that has been prepared for them prior to them coming into our job search component.

We try to put as many people as we possibly can into our classroom training activity. We're allowed 20 percent of our eligible population to be in classroom training, and we try to give as many people as possible an opportunity to go into classroom training because most of you know that the more skills that you have the -- probably the higher the salary is that you're going to command.

We have some requirements for going into classroom training. They must at least have a high school diploma, GED, or at least within the two levels of the needed educational requirements that that training program requires. So, for instance, if they were going into the office tech program, that program might have tenth grade as far as the (indiscernible) is concerned for reading, maybe tenth grade for math, maybe tenth grade for arithmetic, so consequently, they have to be within two grades of that, as far as their educational level, to get into the program because we don't want to have people fail because of lack of education in any classroom training program that they go into. And they must not have been trained in previous JTPA programs or welfare reform programs. And we'll give them an opportunity to go through classroom training.

We do have some criteria for people who are not selected for classroom training, and most of those people would go into some type of a work site where they would receive some training on some -- working at a job that they mutually agreed with along with them and their counselor and also a work activity where they would be out searching for jobs from the workplace.

In our county, we have some limited-English speaking-- There, we have a referral system to the Vineland Adult Education Center where the

Hispanic limited-speaking can go and receive instruction in any second language. This is a six-week program, and it includes classroom training, and it also has five weeks of individual documented job search. And again these individuals in the Work First also are required to go to Work First.

We also have a community work experience program. Basically that program is for two-parent families, and they are required to work 35 hours a week in order for them to continue to receive their assistance.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: If I may interrupt there--

MR. THOMAS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Why is there a distinction between the -- or is there a distinction -- you seem to be drawing one -- between the two-parent family and the other?

MR. THOMAS: Well, that's a Federal regulation -- rule and regulation. The Federal regulation requires a member of a two-parent family to be enrolled in an activity -- work activity for 35 hours a week. That's a Federal requirement, and the State has also made that requirement onto us.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: So-- Forgive me. Do both people have to be in the program?

MR. THOMAS: They-- One person has to be in the family--

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Okay.

MR. THOMAS: One person in the family has to be in the program, but eventually both people will have to participate. If one gets a job, then that would mean that the next person then would have to come and participate in the employment training programs so that eventually both people could go off of welfare. If you didn't have it that way and you say that

both people don't have to participate, you'd have one person working and the other one on welfare. Our goal is to get both off of welfare.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: And what are the hour requirements-- That's applying to a family situation where there is a child, right?

MR. THOMAS: Right, that's the two-parent family.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Two-parent family.

What about if it is a single parent?

MR. THOMAS: Single parent-- They are required the 35 hours. And the 35 hours-- It has to be 25 hours of work activity, and 10 hours can be on a job search or another activity.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Oh, so it is still 35 hours.

MR. THOMAS: Thirty-five hours is required in order for the State to meet their participation rate. The State has a participation rate that-- The Federal government requires that so many of the participants who are on the -- there is a percentage that has to be met. I think it's 50 percent. It could be a little bit higher. David would know. Unless you get 50 percent-- The State is in the process-- They could lose some money because their participation rate is low. The participation rate means so many-- If there was 100,000 caseloads in New Jersey and the participation rate was 50 percent, what it says is that 50,000 people who are on welfare must be in an activity -- into a work activity in order for the State to meet their requirement as far as the Federal government is concerned.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Thank you.

MR. THOMAS: Basically, just to recap-- The way our system works is that the person would be referred from the welfare office to our office for orientation at which time we would place them in the job search assistance. If they were job-ready, they would immediately get a job at a job search assistance -- go into employment. And then once they got into employment, we would have job coaches who would follow-up with these individuals for approximately one year. If they didn't get a job out of job search assistance, they would go into basic skills remediation, then they would go to job skills training, and then if there was not a job out of occupational training, they would go to CWEP until such time that our job developers could get them a job out of our CWEP, Community Work Experience Program.

So as you can see, we have a very client-oriented -- client flow where they receive a lot of counseling, a lot of support while they are in our program. I think that one of the things about the Work First Program -- one of the weaknesses of the Work First Program is that there is too much of an emphasis on a lot of our clients that we're dealing with now, especially the clients who are 60 months or more on welfare, to place them into any job without any type of counseling or assistance.

I think that there is an old proverb that goes something like, "Give a hungry man a fish, he will eat a meal. If you teach him how to fish, he eats a lifetime." In my county and under my direction, our policy is that we're going to try to teach them how to fish because we don't want them to have to come back through the system again. I'm just afraid that right now the economy is pretty well booming and there is a lot of jobs and these people are in jobs that basically, once the economy goes down a little bit, they're going to

be the first one laid off. And without any skills, what chance do they have of going to another job? It's almost like they'd be right back on welfare. But what we want to do is give them, while they're in here this time, all the skills they need as far as job search assistance, resume writing, educational skills. Then if they did happen to lose the job that they're presently in, they could go to another job and get another job without having to worry about coming back on welfare.

Our retention rate has been outstanding. Last year-- Last June we started to do one-year follow-ups on our welfare recipients. And for the first four months in the year, the follow-up retention was over 80 percent.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: That's wonderful.

MR. THOMAS: Over 80 percent of our clients are still working on a job that they were placed in during the year prior to that. I think that the numbers of people that are on welfare now are reflected because if it is dropping from 6000 to 1100 in six years, they can't be coming back on welfare. They have to be staying off of welfare. So I think some of the things that we're doing has a lot to do with the retention.

One of the things that I think we do, do that helps is that we're now involved with a lot of the 60-month-plus welfare recipients. These are long term, and they need a lot of support services. I mean, you need the counseling, you need the training, you need the education. Drug problems, alcohol problems-- And anybody that's in the employment training business who does not have these resources available to them cannot do justice to the people they have to serve. I mean, you have to have the services for the people because we made them a promise that we were going to see that they get self-

sufficient, and they only have two years to participate -- get into an activity -- and five years total.

So I think that it is up to the people who are running the program to make sure that they have the best services available for the individuals who are coming. One of the suggestions I would have-- Senator Bryant has a bill in the Legislature -- in the Senate that would provide transportation services to the clients for two years along with child care and along with the medical benefits. I think that that should be added to the Work First Program because transportation in most of the areas in New Jersey is a problem, and it really costs a lot of money. If you like -- say was going to Atlantic City constantly -- every day, it would be \$75 or \$100 a month for transportation. So I think that just like they give medical care and child care, transportation should be a subsidy that's given to the women.

If I look at my program and compare it to some of the other programs around the state that may not be as successful as my program is, I would say probably one of the reasons is that there is too much fragmentation of the employment training programs in that county. JTPA should be a part of the welfare reform program, the Work First New Jersey Program, the WDP program. It should be one employment training program that serves many, many different types of people. And I think that if you did have that, what you would have would be the same services that a dislocated worker would get -- welfare recipient gets. It is the same counselor who counsels a dislocated worker program -- would counsel a welfare program. So there is no difference of the quality of services that the women -- I'm basically talking about women in welfare -- would get. And it would be more fair, but in a lot of areas, that

welfare reform program is not part of the main employment and training program that is operated in most counties. It's separate and apart, and there might be four or five different agencies that are running the program. And those agencies do not have the resources that the JTPA Program would have as far as being able to provide services to clients.

So I think that they are the things that I think that might help. If there was more of a consolidation and make Work First, which basically serves mostly women, a part of the regular employment training program in the county.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Very good. Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Just one question.

MR. THOMAS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: How long have you been doing this?

MR. THOMAS: Twenty-five years.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: As a layman to this topic, it seems as though there is always talk every few years, by whatever administration is in, that we have to streamline the program -- it doesn't just mean this program, it's like any program. It is always that we have to streamline this, we've got to coordinate it and what have you. It sounds like you've done that with your program from your 25-year experience of looking at what is going around elsewhere. Aren't there always pushes to streamline and coordinate and bring everybody together? And doesn't that happen -- over the last decades?

MR. THOMAS: It is supposed to happen, and it is supposed to happen more so now with the new legislation for JTPA, the Work First

Investment Act, that requires one-stop career centers and things of that sort. That one-stop concept is supposed to bring people together, but what is happening in a lot of counties in spite of that -- they're not together. So it is supposed to bring them together, but what is supposed to happen and what actually does happen in a lot of areas is two different things, maybe for a number of different reasons. But we've been able to bring things together. We have an excellent relationship with the Department of Human Services, the child care, the Department of Labor. So it depends, I guess, on the circumstance -- the environment by which you operate. But I can assure you that if everybody had the model program that I just demonstrated, you would not see, in some of these areas, the problems that you see now in moving welfare recipients from welfare to work.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Now that you say that, I remember when I served on Labor with Pat Roma. That's when we first, I guess, did Work First -- Work First Development Act. And now it is sort of coming back to me that we have the same testimony, and that was part of the goal of the Work First Development Act. This was all going to pull it together, and you would have one place you'd go, and you get trained for this, that, and the other thing, and it was all going to-- It was going to solve all of our problems.

MR. THOMAS: It doesn't work that way. For instance, referral from the Board of Social Services-- In my opinion, the referral should go to one location -- everybody, but in many, many areas they could go to 10 different locations. So the question is, how do you coordinate, how do you know where people are, how do you move people where they're supposed to be? There should be a referral from here to there, and then from there an

assessment is done, and then a decision is made -- where best this person should go. But when you've got them to 10 different places that they're going to, then there is a lot more difficulty in sending them. There's no coordination.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: And a lot of discouragement.

MR. THOMAS: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Well, then, why didn't that work when we did that -- when we mandated that under the Work First Development Act? That was all supposed to happen.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Well, it probably has worked in a number of areas, Scott. I don't think he is going to know the entire state.

MR. THOMAS: No, I'm not talking about-- There's only--

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Yeah, I know. I'm just asking this out loud sort of here.

MR. THOMAS: There are probably some areas in the state where it's not happening, and I think that the success or the failure of a program can be, probably, attributed to the fact that there is too much -- there's not enough coordination.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Okay. Thanks a lot for your information.

MR. THOMAS: Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you. Good luck with the \$250 million.

David Heins, Director of Family Development, Division of Family Development, Department of Youth and Family Services (*sic*).

**DAVID C. HEINS:** Good afternoon.

I have a few handouts coming your way of my testimony, as well as some visuals on Work First, as well as our new child support brochure that was introduced yesterday by the Governor.

I'm very pleased to appear before the Assembly Advisory Committee on Women (*sic*) today. I'm David Heins. I'm the Director of the Division of Family Development in the New Jersey Department of Human Services. I'm pleased to be here today to bring you up to date on how New Jersey's welfare program Work First is making a positive impact on the lives of needy people. We believe that the program is particularly beneficial to single mothers who are raising children on their own, managing a household, and trying to become financially secure by getting and keeping good jobs.

Welfare has changed dramatically across the nation and here in New Jersey. In just two years, since the inception of Work First New Jersey in April of 1997, all indications are that we've made considerable progress. There has been a 33 percent reduction in the number of families receiving welfare in New Jersey from 96,500 in April of 1997 to 64,700 in December of 1998. Today it is actually 61,400. Nearly 45,000 welfare recipients have become employed since April of 1997. Former welfare recipients who are now employed are earning an average of \$7 to \$8 per hour on a job.

How have we been able to accomplish these changes? Work First is specifically designed to promote personal responsibility and self-sufficiency on the part of people in need. It provides a helping hand on a temporary basis and requires recipients to play a stronger role in obtaining meaningful

employment and moving quickly from public assistance to economic independence.

Unlike former welfare programs, Work First applies limits. Cash assistance is limited to a lifetime maximum of five years. Within two years of receiving cash assistance, participants must be working, looking for work, or actively involved in employment-related activities.

Those participants who do not meet the basic requirements may be sanctioned. Individuals and families may lose their cash benefits for a period of time or have them discontinued altogether. Exemptions and temporary deferrals are provided in certain situations.

Work First relies on a strong collaboration among many partners to be successful in providing needed services to our clients. Along with our sister State agencies such as the Departments of Labor, Health, Community Affairs, and Transportation, our provider network includes county welfare and employment and training agencies and many private, community-based organizations. Representatives of several community organizations are here today to share information with you about their efforts to assist needy families.

Work First New Jersey/TANF is the fundamental program that provides temporary financial assistance to needy children and eligible caretakers. The program also provides essential supports such as child care and transportation services to help ease the transition from welfare to work. At the end of 1998, there were approximately 64,700 families receiving Work First assistance, representing a 21 percent decline from more than 82,000 cases in January of 1998.

In order to break the cycle of welfare, Work First emphasizes work and job preparation as the means to a brighter future. However, not all clients have the same needs or the same backgrounds. Some may already have sufficient skills to get into a job fairly quickly, others need more preparation and training before they can move into work. That's why Work First offers participants a number of options.

We have an Early Employment Initiative. This is an up-front support offered to people who are newly unemployed but are job-ready. Our Early Employment Initiative provides them with short-term, intensive job search and job placement assistance. Our goal is to redirect them into the workforce and help them avoid getting on public assistance altogether. Assistance is coordinated with the Department of Labor, which helps match candidates with available positions through its employment services.

Work activities. Work First New Jersey participants who are not employed or who are working part-time must participate in a variety of work-directed activities. These activities are varied and include job search, community work experience, alternative work experience, on the job training, educational activities, and occupational training. At the end of December of 1998, more than 20,000 Work First participants were actively engaged in a job search or participating in a work-centered activity.

I'd like to describe in a little more detail some of the major support available to Work First participants that I mentioned a moment ago.

Child care. In addition to providing child care to Work First recipients who are actively participating in an employment-directed activity, we also provide up to two years of child care after their case closes due to

employment. At the end of December, more than 6200 active participants were receiving child care services. Nearly 5700 clients who have left the program for unsubsidized employment were receiving post-welfare child care benefits.

In 1998, major financial investments were made to assist Work First participants in meeting their need for child care services. Among these were a \$1 million appropriation to establish a Revolving Loan Program to fund renovation costs associated with creating new or expanding licensed child care centers. The Revolving Loan Fund is jointly administered by the Division of Family Development and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority; funding to the State's Unified Child Care Agencies, the UCCAs, to provide for 1000 new child care slots. The UCCAs, created in 1997, administered child care subsidies and coordinate the provision of various child care services throughout the 21 counties; the provision of \$400,000 for a parent consumer education campaign to increase awareness on child care issues. The campaign focused on helping parents understand child care options and how to select quality child care services and facilities.

Transportation. Two transportation initiatives that are jointly administered by the Division of Family Development and the Department of Transportation are helping reduce expenses for welfare participants traveling to job locations, training, and other work-related activities or to child care facilities. The WorkPass Program: this program enables the county welfare agencies to purchase daily or monthly New Jersey Transit bus and rail passes for active participants at significant cost savings to the program. At the end of December, WorkPass was operational in 10 counties. Get a Job! Get a

Ride! as a supplement to WorkPass, Work First New Jersey participants that obtain employment are eligible to receive a one-time free monthly bus or train pass from New Jersey Transit.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: What does that mean, a one time? How long?

MR. HEINS: One month.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: That's it?

MR. HEINS: New Jersey Transit offers this to our recipients to get a one-month pass once they begin employment.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: That's a little frightening. That's really not much of anything. That's why I wanted to check because I'm saying I wouldn't be bragging about that because it is very difficult to get oneself in financial shape. One month is not much of an assist.

MR. HEINS: I don't, for a moment, pretend that that is sufficient to meet everyone's needs.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I would think-- Not everyone, anyone who is moving in the direction of a job and off welfare. I find that there is something lacking there.

If you could highlight the rest of this, I'd appreciate it because I know you're following all the pages you've given us.

MR. HEINS: Okay.

We also provide two years of extended Medicaid services to folks.

In addition, we are expanding our child support services because once someone leaves cash assistance, they are also the recipient -- direct recipient of the child support collected on behalf of their children. We have

just initiated a major public relations campaign in an effort to try to increase child support activities, which the Governor just announced yesterday, and the handbook that I distributed to you is a part of that.

I would also say that we've initiated the *New Hires Directory*, which was passed in legislation last year. We've seen a substantial number of hits based on new hires where employers must report all new employees within 20 days. And we have seen collections dramatically increase, and that's both for recipients as well as for nonwelfare families, so it helps not just welfare recipients.

We have a pilot for housing assistance that we're doing in concert with Community Affairs where we are providing some subsidies to about 350 households once they leave welfare due to employment, and this is a three-year pilot that we're operating in a number of municipalities.

We also provide emergency assistance for housing crisis for up to 12 months, provide some exemptions and supports for victims of domestic violence. We've initiated -- one of the few states to have an actual substance abuse initiatives for recipients of welfare. We have about an \$18 billion -- \$18 million program this year for services, and we are coordinating with the new Welfare to Work funds to address the needs of the hard to serve or those who've been on assistance for more than five years continuously.

That's a quick run-through. I'm prepared to address any questions you may have.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you.

Carol, do you want to ask this gentleman any questions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Well, we were talking about now-- Excuse us for having had a conversation during this time, but we were so interested in the networking and the case management aspects of a program like this. Of course, case management, for some of us who have been in Human Services over the years-- Case management works where the dollars are not dependant on who owns the clients. If you are my client and I'm counting you in my numbers, then I'm not going to share you with someone else because I want the dollars for the purchase of services to come to my agency. This is how agencies live. To create a new agency that is owned by the State for every program that is already being done is a duplication of services that we wouldn't fund anyone for. And clearly you know that better than we do.

But I'm looking at the WorkPass New Jersey -- Get a Job! Get a Ride! How does that work in counties like Warren, Morris, and Sussex where there is not transportation that takes you to a place where you can get a meaningful job of any sort? What kind of-- There are some buses. I know the bus that goes through my town takes you to the mall, which is fine if that is where you work or you're going to shop, but it doesn't get you to jobs.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Carol, just as a point of clarification, when the other gentleman was here earlier from Cumberland and Salem, we talked about approaching New Jersey Transit and shuttle buses and education to be jitney drivers as well -- as part of it because the transportation needs are great in certain areas of our state, as you were pointing out.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: And jitney driving and that sort of thing is very helpful if, indeed, you have enough people going to a place.

We have found, even in some instances in Morris, that trying to provide jitneys for people who come in from other areas to work in the county is marginally helpful.

But I'm just wondering, what we do to try to encourage people in some way -- or enable people to get to the jobs that we want to have, or is there some way we can get the jobs available in areas where we already provide transportation?

MR. HEINS: Well, actually the block grant that we have now is the first time that we really can consider transportation as an issue. And we have been looking at it, and I don't want to pretend that it is an issue that is easily solved, but we have been looking at it for a few years now. We've brought in experts from all over the country to show us some of their models and how they've addressed some of the transportation issues.

One of the things that we've offered to the county-- Understandably, the transportation issues in some of our rural counties are much broader than our welfare recipients.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: That's true.

MR. HEINS: There are a lot more people that have transportation problems than the folks that we're able to fund under our TANF block grant.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Correct.

MR. HEINS: One of the things that we've offered to the counties is to establish transportation planning committees where they bring together all the transportation resources in the county, which is not just welfare related, it's senior citizens, it's school buses, it's medical services, everyone to come together on a comprehensive plan. We're offering to give them a block grant

to assist them to develop some kind of transportation strategy whether it be feeder lines-- We are offering them, basically, a blank options document that they come back to us and share.

What are some of the alternatives? We do not pretend to have all the solutions here. And what makes sense in Cumberland may not make sense in Morris. You know, there are different strategies that need to apply in different places.

One of the reasons I said that for some people the one-month pass was helpful-- It isn't available to everybody. Public transportation-- Even though we offer it, there is no bus or rail line that they could take, even for the one month. You're absolutely right on that.

So it is an issue that we're addressing. It's one of the issues where we're in constant debate with the Federal government because if we continue to provide some kind of a transportation subsidy, under TANF they would continue to allow the clock to tick on behalf of the recipients. So their five-year lifetime limit would be clicking away every month we gave them a transportation subsidy, even after they got a job. We are trying to negotiate some flexibility there so that there is some way we can invest some dollars and do something because we recognize it is an issue, once folks leave for employment, that transportation issues are very real, and in some areas, unless you own a car, it is very difficult to get around this state.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: It is, indeed, and I'm wondering if we give dollars for carpooling -- dollars for drivers for carpooling and that kind of thing.

MR. HEINS: We don't give dollars especially for carpooling. We will pay-- We can provide a transportation subsidy for somebody while they are in an activity. That could support a car pool. We also have some one-time payments to allow them to make an insurance payment if they have their own car, to make a car repair such as a tune-up to get their car rideable again -- or road ready. So we have some assistance that way.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Scott? (no response)

Thank you.

Betsy Shimberg, Policy Analyst, Mercer Street Friends. And then Sandy Accomando, from Apostle's House, will be next.

**B E T S Y   S H I M B E R G:** Good afternoon. My name is Betsy Shimberg, and I'm a Policy Analyst and Advocate for Mercer Street Friends, which is located in Trenton, New Jersey.

Mercer Street Friends is a nonprofit human services organization. Our goal is to foster dignity and self-respect among the poor, the sick, and the dispossessed of all ages. Mercer Street Friends offers the full spectrum of education, health, and rehabilitative and recreational programs for those with special needs, from child care to youth development to adult day care. We provide a range of direct human care services to thousands of people every year.

In addition, Mercer Street Friends has created and operates an Opportunity Center, which addresses the multiple barriers that keep people from achieving self-sufficiency. The Center provides training in job readiness, interviewing, job placement. We provide job retention services, career training,

and we also offer basic infrastructure support such as transportation, adult education, substance abuse treatment, and affordable on-site child care.

I was pleased to be asked to speak today about mechanisms to help women reach the goal of self-empowerment. I'm going to talk about not only those women who are leaving welfare, but also those who are among the working poor, and I'm going to focus on three areas relating to the efforts by single-women head of households to successfully hold jobs that can support their families. Among them are a need for a living wage, the need for career ladders, and accessing child care.

You don't need me to tell you that self-empowerment comes from a single mother's capacity to support herself and her family successfully. It comes from when she doesn't have to worry about where her son's lunch is coming from or where her daughter's winter coat comes from.

At places like Mercer Street Friends, we can provide women with tools to achieve self-sufficiency, but self-empowerment is going to continually elude women who leave their children in day care, who go to work, and still can't make ends meet.

Advocates in the nonprofit community, led by a group called STEPS, recently used information from New Jersey residents to develop a budget that reflects bare minimum needs. We estimated \$1950 of minimum costs of key household budget items for a family of three, and it is detailed in this testimony. I won't spend your time. But it is \$750 in rent, which is not very much. This budget does not include clothing or loan repayment or savings of any sort. And we figure that the pay rate needed to earn a gross

income to constitute what we call a living wage to support the budget is \$14.57 an hour. Clearly, this figure is higher than current minimum wage.

And in New Jersey, almost adding insult to injury, a woman with two children who works at a minimum wage job earned \$10,712 in 1998. This New Jersey family would pay \$94 in State taxes, but in New York, they would get back an earned income credit of \$751. And I know that there are legislative remedies pending in the Assembly to correct this taxation issue, but I don't believe there is a companion bill yet in the Senate.

Another issue facing single women who head their households is the loss of career ladders. In New Jersey, between 1979 and 1995, the number of manufacturing jobs decreased by 31 percent while lower-paying service jobs and retail jobs increased by 63 percent and 21 percent respectively. Manufacturing jobs pay union wages and offer benefits. Service sector jobs-- The rise of those jobs mean that your work no longer lifts your family out of poverty.

And during Trenton's manufacturing heyday, career ladders were clearly established. Unskilled workers started on the bottom rung, maybe by cleaning the factory, and they worked their way up to become a mechanic, for example. But today, most firms contract out their janitorial services, and these firms only provide cleaning activities. So an unskilled worker employed by a cleaning service is potentially stuck on this bottom rung forever.

Mercer Street Friends is working to build career ladders, and I want to give you an example of one that we've been successful building. Last spring, six of our home health aides, who were previously earning minimum wage or a little above minimum wage, were the first graduates of our program

training home health aides to become licensed practical nurses. The important point here is that the training was made possible by a private grant from Janssen Pharmaceutica, which is a division of Johnson and Johnson. After two years of night school and weekend classes attended after they went to work, the home health aides became LPNs. They not only advanced within their field, but they now have the opportunity to make \$14.50 an hour, which is a living wage.

But women who are able to move up the career ladder and earn a living wage still contend with a number of obstacles just to get to work every day, which we've already discussed a bit about. But I want to talk a little bit about reliable child care.

Those single women with families in New Jersey who are leaving welfare for work can access transitional child care. Yet, a recent study by the Association for the Children of New Jersey found that at least half of the parents eligible for the transitional child care subsidy were not receiving it. The study suggests that people are not accessing the child care because they don't have useful, comprehensible information about it because they're only told about the benefit when they ask about it or because they're told about it at a time when the information isn't meaningful to them, such as when they first applied for welfare. When they end up going off welfare months later, they haven't remembered that they're eligible for this benefit. This is the place where the nonprofit community can step in to start to provide some public education about transitional child care -- by the way, whose lack of use mirrors another very interesting issue happening right now among people leaving

welfare for work, and that is declining food stamp enrollment and declining Medicaid enrollment.

Those accessing child care face another issue, which is transportation. Here in Trenton, women rely on cumbersome public bus routes to solve the spatial mismatch that we have between urban residences and suburban jobs. Dropping your child off at child care and then getting to work on time can provide a daunting scheduling challenge.

Mercer Street Friends operates job shuttles contracted through the Mercer County Office of Training and Employment to try to offer people a transportation solution. But the fact remains that women often need jobs with flexibility that enable them to pick up a sick child at day care or to go to a parent-teacher conference, yet a 1998 Harvard study found that among women who received welfare for two years or less and left welfare for more than a half-time job, 47 percent do not receive paid sick leave, and only 28 percent receive paid vacation time, and these are high figures. Other studies cite much lower figures. So how are these women supposed to manage the dimensions of their lives, let alone worry about their self-empowerment?

As the public sector support for people who need welfare -- it's diminished, nonprofit organizations have come forward to fill the void. But the issues that we're discussing today are shared by both women leaving welfare and by the working poor. Women leaving welfare are more visible because the media is interested in them and because it is an identifiable population that we can think about, but the working poor are also in need. The working poor never have a chance to access the transitional child care or

transitional transportation services that we're talking about here. They don't qualify for job retention counseling, but they need it just as much.

One way that Mercer Street Friends and other nonprofit organizations potentially can help, obviously with some financial help, would be to link the supply and demand side of the labor market. That is, we're willing to train the workforce to help them climb career ladders, to build those ladders, and to educate people about their potential benefits concerning child care or the Federal earned income tax credit, which could really help a family boost its income. But we need to reach out to the demand side of the market the way we did with Janssen Pharmaceutica to get those home health aides training.

Just as we are willing to increase workers' knowledge about benefits, so must we reach out to employers to increase their knowledge about on-the-job training and tax benefits to support hiring. And it will be the nonprofit community that will continue to work to insist that the private sector offers even entry-level workers the medical benefits that they need and flexibility to be good parents and good workers and to gain self-esteem. If we can give single-women heads of households the jobs and the training that they need to prepare themselves and their children for the future, we all benefit, especially, as someone already pointed out, if the future includes an economy that is not as cooperative.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Questions.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Go ahead, Scott.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: You're nonprofit?

MS. SHIMBERG: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: What does that mean? Where do you actually get most of your money?

MS. SHIMBERG: Our money comes from the Federal government, from State government, we get a small amount of money from the city of Trenton, but we also receive money from private sources, from foundations, and individual support.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Is that the bulk of your money?

MS. SHIMBERG: The bulk of our money is from government contracts. We run this very large home health aid division that bills out to Medicaid and Medicare.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: You're a quasi-State agency.

MS. SHIMBERG: That home health division is, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: The previous speaker talked about a \$400,000 budget item for spending for informing the recipients of the child care availability and options. In one of his brochures that he handed out says, "What is your responsibility?" Your responsibility is to provide your caseworker with the most -- with the information and documentation needed.

I'm sure your presentation didn't mean to come across this way. It's just that I'm very cynical when I hear presentations.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: What a surprise.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: I would think that the most important responsibility of the parent is to do everything and anything possible to make sure that their child is being well taken care of. Even if I was told something a year ago by my doctor or by somebody else as to -- since I don't deal with caseworkers, I'm trying to relate it to my life -- as to what my

child may need in the future, my responsibility, as a parent, would be to do anything and everything in my power to track that down and find out what it is and to seek it out in any way, shape, or form possible.

Apparently, your clientele that you deal with does not see that as a responsibility or--

MS. SHIMBERG: No, I wouldn't say that they don't see it as their responsibility. In fact, many of the women we deal with are good parents and want to be good parents, but you're expecting everybody to have the same resources and the same sense of self to ask appropriate questions in order to get the resources that they need. My point was merely that maybe it's a role for the nonprofit community where perhaps there is greater trust than there is with a State caseworker where maybe there is less trust. I'm just trying to increase the number of people who are accessing a resource that's available to them.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: On a different tangent. A year ago, we looked at the issue -- it was a year ago -- of insurance -- the issue of immunization for children. And we were going to try to figure out who should do this and where the money is going to come from. One of the things that we heard from the pharmaceutical industry was that they were willing to actually step up and do a lot of this immunization, but the numbers were showing that you had to, as they put it, track down the parents. Literally, they were going knocking on doors and saying, "The van is right out front. Come and have your child immunized." And the parent had to be dragged down to have their child-- That is overstating a case, but they had to go and actually track them down.

I'm just hearing the same sort of thing as-- With all the centralized effort that we keep on putting in and streamlining and making one-stop calling and all the places that you simply call up-- The first place I would go is the Board of Welfare or DYFS and ask, "What information do you have on helping me out with my kids?" They would be easy to find in the phone book. That's why I'd go there first. New Jersey services -- DYFS is right there and what have you. It is not being done, evidently. These parents are just not making these phone calls.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: May I interject?

MS. SHIMBERG: Sure.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: We're talking about different levels, and assuming that everyone has the same knowledge is not good. We're talking about a lot of people who are concerned about their day-to-day overhead, food, and housing. And to look for everything themselves is not within easy reach. I think what we're looking for happens to be suggestions to make the availability information come to them, rather than them searching it out through a telephone book. I mean, sometimes I look in the telephone book for a department and go wild.

MS. SHIMBERG: Good luck.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: And this press one and press two -- by the time I get to four or five, I hang up.

I think the humanity here is very important. I think the coordination of departments and services is something that we should look at.

Do you find between the county, the agencies, and the State that we have a coordinated process?

MS. SHIMBERG: I just came from a meeting on that very topic actually dealing with transportation: How are we going to coordinate between the nonprofit community and the ministers, particularly in Trenton, and the public agencies? Let's just get the transportation going. We need to be talking to each other. There are pluses and minuses to a decentralized system. Certainly, in Trenton where you have money coming into the county and money also coming into nonprofits to provide services to people leaving welfare for work that coordination becomes more and more important, and we're aware that we need to have that coordination.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: To maximize the dollars--

MS. SHIMBERG: Absolutely.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: --and the outreach.

MS. SHIMBERG: Absolutely.

Just-- Back to the other point just for one minute because I don't want to make excuses for people, and I don't want to come across as making excuses for people.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: And I'm not trying to be critical of people. I'm just trying to understand what our role as a State entity is.

MS. SHIMBERG: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: What the role of nonprofits and what the role of the-- You're the first one-- That little comment should be slipped by. There is a role for decentralized because I believe, and my memory goes back, that was all the rage a few years back.

MS. SHIMBERG: It's like this.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: We're going to have the best system in the world because we're decentralizing everything and we're getting out, and this is where my point goes back to. We're going to get it out into the community as opposed to having some Big Brother telling us how to do it. Now, everybody else is saying, "No, no, no, we'll get to the people if we just have an 800 number and one centralized system."

MS. SHIMBERG: But if you're afraid to call that 800 number, if you're afraid to call DYFS, if you've had a negative experience with an 800 number, you're not going to call it again, and then where are you?

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: I don't know.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Madam Chair.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: We have a--

MR. HEINS: (speaking from audience) Can I just address something since I've been involved in child care for a number of years?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: You'll have to come forward so we can get it on tape. (witness complies)

MR. HEINS: This is not a new issue. When this report came out, I basically commented that I didn't learn anything new here. We started looking at first providing child care once they left welfare in the Atlantic City Casino Initiative under Governor Kean, which I had the good fortune, I guess, to run down in Atlantic City with Cumberland County. And at that time, we basically sent flyers out to the folks who got jobs, and because I only had 12 employers, I knew exactly where they worked, and I had their current address. I would send notices every month with dollar bill pictures on them saying, "I

have child care funding available for you if you would just contact me and indicate you would like it.”

The child care utilization was probably in a range of under 25 percent of the people who got employed. I can tell you now that since we've begun welfare reform, those folks who are active on cash assistance and in activities, the utilization is probably at the range of one-third of all the parents who have children under the age of 13 years old are getting a subsidy from the system. It doesn't mean the children are not in Head Start. They're not in a contracted-- I don't know those things, but they're not getting a subsidy under our program. Once they become employed, it goes back down to under 25 percent.

Now, there's been a lot of concern over the years. Maybe they don't want to come back to the welfare office to apply for child care. Once they get a job and they leave this program, they want to get away from the government. I did a pilot program two years ago, in Ocean County, where I gave all the operation to a child care agency in Ocean County. The utilization rate went down. They did everything after those folks left welfare -- flyers and everything.

I'm not satisfied. I have a new pilot started in four more counties about a month ago to see if there is any way we can increase the utilization once folks leave welfare and begin a job. I don't want them losing the job because child care breaks down or anything. I've told the Federal government, I told child care advocates, “You find somebody who needs child care. They got it if they're eligible under our program.” I don't want to deny it to

anybody who's interested, but it's very hard to chase down somebody with a service that they just don't seem to pursue sometimes.

I'm not saying that they're always informed at the most appropriate time in their processes or anything else, but-- I don't have a solution to this. I think it's an issue that we really are--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Could you let us know, when you do the pilot program in those other counties, what those counties are?

MR. HEINS: We'll give you findings, absolutely.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: And the findings.

MR. HEINS: I'll also share some entrepreneurial stuff we're going to be doing shortly.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Good, good.

MR. HEINS: I forgot to mention that earlier.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Carol -- Assemblywoman Murphy.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Thank you very much, Rose. Betsy, I'm wondering if you could tell me if there are other agencies in the Trenton area that do the same kind of thing you do.

MS. SHIMBERG: In terms of welfare to work?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Yes.

MS. SHIMBERG: Mercer County Vo-Tech, Mercer County Community College-- There is a private job placement firm called Curtis and Associates.

I have to tell you that Mercer Street Friends prides itself on the extent to which we help people because we feel that we can bring in our range of expertise on other issues. You need after-school care for your children.

Well, we run 12 after-school sites in Trenton and Hamilton schools, so we pride ourselves on wanting to provide increased services to people.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: And are these same-- Are you sharing the clients? In other words, do the four agencies work together so that no client has to go to two agencies? The client sees one person, and she is managed through all four of those agencies -- those services are duplicative.

MS. SHIMBERG: MCBOS, Mercer County Board of Social Services, refers people to one of those agencies. Is that what you're asking?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Yeah, I'm wondering if that doesn't create four administrative funding needs instead of one administrative funding need and four agencies who are the same agency with slightly different programs.

MS. SHIMBERG: But then, on the other hand, doesn't that-- Isn't competition a good thing? Isn't that good that we know that our performance is being evaluated quarterly or -- I don't know, off the top of my head, how it is evaluated-- Curtis and Associates -- they're placing 82 percent of their people. Does that spur us on?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: I don't know. From the perspective of having worked in Human Services, as well as the perspective of having funded Human Services, I would say, to some degree, no because in one instance I found that if I made my agency do something a little bit better or a little bit harder or a little bit up, I got a little more money, and so I was in competition with the other three or four agencies who were doing what I was doing. And if I was really good at it, I could get all the money, and they might not be able to do that service at all.

MS. SHIMBERG: Right.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Which, to some degree, was in one sense saying that we only needed one agency to do it, and therefore, I was doing it the best so the other three could go out of business. Unfortunately, when they are located geographically in different places, you need them all, but you pay for four executive directors, four sets of administrators, four sets of everything, and you still get the same service. And each client doesn't go to all of the four -- doesn't have access to all four. They have to enter every one, and they're counted four different times. And it was the counting of the bodies that makes the numbers that generate the dollars: How many clients do I serve, how many units of service do I have, etc., etc.?

So I'm just-- I'm sure it sounds rather cynical, but I became slightly cynical both in justifying my dollars and in funding my dollars on the other side when I moved.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Another cynical person.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Well, it was cynical.

MS. SHIMBERG: It's contagious.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Dollars for a not-for-profit agency, after a while, become very matter of fact. You need the dollars to provide the services. My job was to find the money, not to be the hands-on service person. Two totally different jobs.

I just want-- That's kind of why I asked.

MS. SHIMBERG: I'm not sure why-- I don't know. I can't give you an appropriate answer as to why MCBOS is contracted to numerous

agencies. That was sort of my guess -- would be the competition factor, but that doesn't fully answer your question.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

MS. SHIMBERG: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you very much.

Sandy Accomando, Executive Director of Apostles' House.

**SANDY ACCOMANDO:** Hi, I'm Sandy Accomando, the Executive Director of Apostles' House, a multipurpose social service agency in Newark. I'm also the Chairperson of the New Jersey Alliance for the Homeless.

I do not believe that anyone in the social service community believes in the infinity system of welfare. However, there are grave concerns about the current system and its effectiveness. In the rush to reform welfare, a flawed system has resulted. In graduate school, we learned about the concept of incrementalism. I learned that change made in increments is accomplished most effectively. The wholesale reform of a cumbersome, complex system has resulted in a clock ticking for clients and a dearth of supportive services, which were part of the promises of reform.

When I knew I was coming here, I spoke to several people that I felt were experts in different fields, and I spoke to someone at the Essex County Division of Welfare. I asked them about the support systems available to clients and jokingly said, "Nonexistent, right?" And this person said to me, "I wouldn't have a problem if you used that terminology."

Where the support systems are available, they're difficult to access. Clients wait weeks and even months to get reimbursement for transportation

dollars. Child care is a complex, confusing, and difficult issue. Again I spoke to an expert in the field. Federal legislation does not classify transitional child care as an entitlement, and many times welfare workers do not offer this option. The time constraints often result in a loss of benefits.

Welfare staffs are overwhelmed by new regulations and procedures, high caseloads, and computer systems that are off-line for days at a time, and when they are on-line, they develop problems which make them inefficient.

However, my concerns center around the unknown factors that work in the system. Where have all the sanctioned clients gone? In Essex County, they can only-- Statistics show that only 25 percent are working. A State study shows that 46 percent of the people that have been sanctioned are getting along by depending on family or friends. What is the burden of this dependency on marginal families? Statistics also show an increase in the number of requests for assistance from nonprofit entities. My own food pantry has seen a 40 percent increase in the number of people served over the same period last year.

Where are clients-- Are clients being accurately informed about the services for which they are eligible? Do clients know they can continue to receive food stamps? If so, why are the food stamp rolls going down? Are they informed about child -- transitional child care and transportation services? What is the data on clients who have found work? What salaries are they making? What difficulties are they having in retaining jobs? Is a four-week job search program adequate?

I understand that the State has contracted with the firm of Mathematica to do a long-range study. But once again the clock is ticking, and clients are suffering through frustration and fear.

As the most motivated, capable, and determined clients leave the welfare roll for the workplace, the remaining caseload will become more difficult to work with as a result of multiple barriers of substance abuse, illiteracy, mental or physical health issues. If the most capable can't negotiate the system, what will happen to these lower-functioning clients?

With regard to the working poor. Incomes are not increasing at a rate which meets the cost of living needs in New Jersey, and more and more working poor, single heads of households are required to seek help at food pantries, shelters, and rental assistance programs. About three years ago-- We have a rental assistance program, and about three years ago we had three calls all year for help with mortgage assistance. Last year, I had sixty-eight calls.

A recent study of homeless families in Newark shows that 20 percent of the homeless population was employed during the time they were in the shelter. Ninety-nine percent had been employed at one time with an average time employed of two years.

The unavailability of affordable housing is also a factor in the difficulties faced by a single heads of households. Manufacturing jobs have historically paid very well and for the most part did not require advances, skills, and technical expertise. These were jobs that many of the targeted population could fill and make a livable wage. In recent years, these jobs have been disappearing, many to foreign countries, to be replaced by service and

retail jobs which pay less and make it more difficult for the single heads of households to survive.

I recently read a report which stated that an individual working for minimum wage in New Jersey would need three full-time jobs to be able to afford to live here.

My wish list includes a State subsidy program so that single heads of household who are working but making less than the standard of need should be entitled to a subsidy payment equal to the difference between their net and the standard of need.

I would also like to see a State rental subsidy program to ensure affordable housing to those who are paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing and a focus on grant programs to nonprofit developers so that they can create rental housing for very low income families.

One of my attachments talks about just some statistics. A family of three, woman making minimum wage, would net \$749 a month. The standard of need, as set by the State of New Jersey, for that same family is \$1341. So, yes, people are coming off of welfare, but they're still not coming out of poverty, and they're still not able to make it. And the social service agencies are seeing the increase in the demand for the needs.

I've also included in your packet, a copy of the study done by the Institute for Children in Poverty called *Up the Down Staircase: A Look at Family Homelessness in New Jersey*.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Just a comment to you. You're the second person, now, who raised -- I think the second person who raised -- the

dearth of manufacturing jobs in New Jersey and they were a source of income. Totally outside the realm of the expertise of this Council, but that is something that the Legislature has looked at to try to figure out why that is the case. Off the top of my head-- If you talk to any people in the manufacturing community, you would be told that New Jersey is one of the most overregulated states when it comes to environmental regulations and otherwise. For those reasons, we're simply losing those good-paying jobs, and when you lose those jobs, you're left with nothing left.

MS. ACCOMANDO: And that is really problematic because if you also look at the study, it says that of the people that were in these shelters during the study, 51 percent had lower than a high school education.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Right.

MS. ACCOMANDO: This same agency has done -- did a 10-city study throughout the country. That was the lowest figure of any place in the country.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: So what does that mean?

MS. ACCOMANDO: That means that we're dealing with people with very -- with lower educational levels, and I don't think that you can take someone with a seventh-grade education and give them four weeks of job training -- or job search and say they're ready to go to work.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Well, you know, that was something that they said during -- back during the hearings on Work First development. Someone from the labor unions, I think, made this comment. He said, "You know, with a whole spectrum of people you can do only so much with one group. You can give them training and education and get them into

these new high-tech jobs.” At the time, they were all talking about making these \$20-an-hour high-tech jobs, but the guy said from unions, “You know, there is always going to be a portion of the population that you ain’t going to do a heck of a lot with. You’re not going to train them to be computer programers and all of that.” And so his point was-- He was a union guy, so he said he wanted more construction and that sort of jobs, but we don’t have that.

MS. ACCOMANDO: Someone once equated the third-- They called it the third of the third of the third.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Yeah.

MS. ACCOMANDO: A third of the people are going to get off of welfare without any problem.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Okay.

MS. ACCOMANDO: And those are probably the people that welfare reform was aimed at.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Yeah.

MS. ACCOMANDO: Okay, 30 percent are going to need some help, and 30 percent are never going to get off of dependency. They’re just not. For whatever multiple barriers are in effect, it is not going to happen. Our concern is that there be some services in place for those people.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: You know, of the arguments that we’ve heard as well over the years, with the Advisory Council on Women, is the fact that some of the families who are struggling will say, “We have those same problems, and we want to know when we’re getting our share of all the assistance,” because there are people out there at other levels who are not on

welfare, who don't get any benefits whatsoever, and struggle. And there may be some sitting in this room.

I do not think that we are ready, nationwide, to give subsidies to every level of our population. It is impossible--

MS. ACCOMANDO: That was--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: However, I think-- Again, Deb had mentioned that the percentage of the loss of manufacturing jobs has gone down dramatically.

I would say that about eight years ago we saw a mass exodus of people from the State of New Jersey, as far as manufacturing jobs were concerned. We have tried to make inroads and bring some of those jobs back. We've been successful to a degree, but I think that we have to accept the fact that we are now in a different type of an economy here in New Jersey, and no matter what we do, we will never get that number of manufacturing jobs back. We are now in a telecommunications -- the information highway. We have numerous pharmaceutical jobs. And we have to find training where women can make money. There is no doubt that they can and are able. And I don't care what their level of education is. I think the desire and proper training brings out in people their innate needs and innate knowledge. We had a commissioner of Labor in this State of New Jersey who only went to third grade. So it is not just education in the school system, it's offering people the opportunities to grow and to learn.

MS. ACCOMANDO: I agree 100 percent. My point is that to take this -- maybe the lower third and expect them to find employment with a four-week job search is--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I think those are the people who we're looking at today.

MS. ACCOMANDO: That's--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Because we don't want to see what you said-- The lower functioning clients -- I think it's our obligation to find out who they are so they don't get lost, and that we provide something that's needed there. That's why I think I'm looking to-- I'm sure we're all looking for information that will help us approach and broach that particular problem and give us the wherewithal to say, "We need this, we need that."

MS. ACCOMANDO: We--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: You're dealing with it every day.

MS. ACCOMANDO: We need to identify that lower third because right now they're suffering through the same expectations as the first third and the second third. And those expectations may be unrealistic.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: And it can be very sad.

MS. ACCOMANDO: And it's frightening. They're sanctioned. It may take them a month or two to get back on. During that time they have no income. And then, after the third sanction, they have no income, and they're ending up in my homeless shelter because they're being evicted.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I think now we're going to-- I'm glad that--

I have to congratulate you, David Heins, for staying and listening to all of this, but I think this is one of the messages we have to get back, and perhaps you can meet with me at some future date and we can go over some

of the needs. And we, as legislators, can effectuate a positive result from the information you give us.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Can I--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: I know you want to move along, but there seems like there are two ends of the spectrum on this. What can we do for the people who are here now, and maybe also looking towards the future? The manufacturing being one -- a root cause of the overall problem -- the root cause.

Is there a root cause to the fact that we still see-- And tell me, is there a growing number of single family heads of households? I mean, for somebody who was in the business 25 years ago -- that gentleman earlier-- My question is, did you see so many single family head of household cases 25 years ago? I bet you he would have said, "Not as many," but now we see-- I see some people shaking their heads.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Yeah, I think there were.

MS. ACCOMANDO: I've been in the business for 30 years. I started out with the Essex County Division of Welfare.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARRETT: Okay.

MS. ACCOMANDO: And, yeah, the caseloads were up there. The caseloads were up there, but the clients are becoming more difficult now, I think, because of-- We've creamed a lot of people off, so the people that they're dealing -- that welfare is dealing with are much more difficult. It takes more time--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: All the easy stuff was done.

MS. ACCOMANDO: Pardon?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: All the easy stuff was done.

MS. ACCOMANDO: Right. And it takes more time with each client, you know.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: But it is important that we don't forget about the needs.

MS. ACCOMANDO: We can't because they're going to be the ones that are going to make or break the whole system.

And I thank you for-- I thank this committee (*sic*) for caring enough to invite us down here and to listen to what we have to say.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you. Thank you for the work you do.

We have Carlos Mercado-- I don't see any other men. Okay-- From La Casa de Don Pedro.

Suellen Waters, President, Waters and Sims Employment Services.

Do we have a representative from the Division on Women here?  
(no response) And then we will have Patricia Palmeri.

**S U E L L E N   W A T E R S:** Good afternoon. Thank you for providing us the opportunity to talk about our experiences in placing women who receive public assistance in jobs.

Waters and Sims has been at the forefront of welfare reform in Monmouth and Ocean counties since September 1996, providing supported employment services to more than 350 Work First New Jersey clients. Our company specializes in developing jobs for people with little or no work history

and who need support to find, learn, and keep jobs. Our mission is to give them whatever supports are necessary to enter the job market and succeed.

The barriers to success in the job market, however, are many. Some are personal: the lack of any real job history to put on a resume or on a job application; the lack of role models in their families and neighborhoods who go to work on a regular basis; the lack of education and training; in essence, the pervasive lack of expectations that they were ever going to have to earn a living and support themselves.

Other barriers are part of the larger world in which the women live: the lack of a comprehensive public transportation system that could connect the neighborhoods where they live with the offices and stores in industrial parks where they might find jobs, a public transportation system that is responsive to work schedules of entry-level, low-skill employment; the lack of available child care for evenings or nights or weekends or for sick children or children with special needs; the lack of affordable housing for people who are gaining in income but losing the entitlements, such as cash grant, food stamps, rental assistance, that helped them survive each month.

A critical component of our job development and placement process is to identify these and other barriers and devise strategies to address them. Waters and Sims takes a very individual approach to working with each client. We don't run training classes. We don't run education programs. We use a person-centered planning approach. For every plan that we develop with the client, there should be a backup plan because, as all of you know if you have children of your own, anything that can go wrong will go wrong at a moment's notice. Who will care for the sick three-year-old when the day care

center has a well child only policy? How will mom get to work when the bus breaks down? For us, one obvious support in emergencies is our own mother or sisters or neighbors or friends, but for many of our clients, that support network does not exist. In fact, their networks may exert a strong negative influence. It becomes an issue of identifying new resources that will enhance the client's independence while creating the backup or support she needs to get out of the house each morning and go to work.

Despite the difficulties that our clients face on a personal, individual basis, as well as on a systemic, societal level, they are meeting with remarkable success in entering the world of work. I'd like to tell you about two women in particular who are working despite obstacles that may have defeated someone else, maybe you or me.

Martha has been on welfare for at least 10 years before being referred to our Ocean County office last spring by her Work First New Jersey case manager. Unskilled, with no training, 55 years old, she had a very limited work history, and what few jobs she had held had been of very short duration. She has severe asthma, requiring a lot of medication. Back pains and heart problems restricted her ability to sit or stand for long periods of time. Martha lives in rural, southern Ocean County where public transportation means one bus travels up and down Route 9 and where job opportunities are scarce. When she first came to Waters and Sims, Martha only wanted to do office work. Although she had neither the experience nor the skills to make that a realistic career goal, we worked with her on developing a resume, practicing interviewing skills, and improving her physical appearance and wardrobe. Her

brother, with whom she lives, agreed to let her use his car to get back and forth to work.

The end result? Martha has been with a telemarketing company for almost nine months now, making \$7.50 per hour plus commission, and she has twice surpassed her monthly sales target. As she said recently to our employment specialist, “You know, I can’t tell you how proud I am of myself.”

I just would like to add in response to something that was said earlier. Martha might very well be considered a member of the lower third that we talked about, somebody for whom expectations would be very low, somebody who might have been assumed to not be capable of doing much. I’d like to think that because we believed that she could do it, she found it in herself to share that belief and make it come true. I think the point I’d like to make is that we shouldn’t assume anything.

Hannah, a 21-year-old mother of two children, was referred to us during the summer of 1998 for placement in a secretarial position. Her skills and ability to present herself made that a realistic goal, and she was offered a full-time position as a secretary within a month. But a week later, Hannah became homeless and child care and transportation arrangements changed from day to day as her living arrangements changed. A month after starting her job, Hannah’s children were thrown out of day care for hitting other children. It’s not difficult to understand when you think about what they had been through. We were able to locate another child care provider for her and at the same time refer the entire family for counseling at Catholic Charities. After three months on the job, Hannah was able to obtain permanent housing and then relocated across the county. We arranged transportation while she

worked on regaining her driver's license. When the commute across the county became too much for her, we were able to place her in another position, which she still has, and she continues to work part-time from home for her first employer.

Martha's story, Hannah's story, and the stories of hundreds of other women illustrate the strength of the individual and the courage, I might add, in leaving behind one world and entering another. It's not an easy job for them to take those steps, but the stories also illustrate how adaptation to the new world of Work First New Jersey requirements would be much more possible and probable if comprehensive child care, transportation, housing, health care, and other systems were in place. As we develop strategies for placing welfare clients in employment and as we develop innovative support strategies for job retention--

As a matter of fact, in Ocean County, under a new contract we will begin on April 1, we'll be able to provide follow-up support for 18 months. We must have partners. We can and do address individual barriers. We can not address systems barriers all by ourselves. We can prepare our clients to identify health insurance plans to take over when their Medicaid extension ends, but how will our clients pay for that? We can help our clients locate safe, nearby child care, but they may still need assistance in making arrangements for the summer, holidays, for childhood illnesses, and emergencies. And how will they pay for child care after they've been on the job for two years and their child care entitlement ends?

We can and have helped our clients receive donated cars from organizations like Saint Francis Counseling Center on Long Beach Island, but

who will help them pay for car insurance, which you know takes a huge chunk out of even our household budgets? What kind of budgeting advice is available for women who now have just a little discretionary income, and how do you answer these questions without creating a system that is too intrusive and too overreaching and will lead, in 30 or 40 years, to the misuse that we see now in our current welfare system.

Partnerships between employers, supported employment companies like ours, and public and private agencies can, with innovative approaches in a person-centered philosophical context, enable women to mark milestones on the road from dependence to independence to interdependence.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you.

Carol, any questions or comments?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: I think it is a wonderful service that you provide. I'm wondering how you are paid.

MS. WATERS: We do, too.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: You must.

MS. WATERS: We've been in business since July of 1996, and we currently, with the work we're doing on welfare, receive funding from the Monmouth County Division of Employment and Training, the Work First Investment Board.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Correct.

MS. WATERS: And in Ocean County, our funding comes from the Private Industry Council.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Which is the old Work First Investment Board.

MS. WATERS: The old-- Right, exactly. They haven't changed the name yet. They like it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: I did, too.

There is a program in Morris County run through the Junior League and the United Way called Dress for Success. I don't know whether you are aware of it, but they do get clothing -- good business clothing to give to the women who are going out for job interviews and things like this through the Junior League.

MS. WATERS: A program in Ocean County just got a contract that will go into effect April 1 to do exactly that because that is a huge problem for our clients.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Yes.

MS. WATERS: They either don't have the wardrobe to go on interviews or in the beginning of a job or they have no clue how to dress.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: That's right.

MS. WATERS: One of the services we provide is that we will drive our clients to job interviews because, if they don't have transportation of their own, it is almost impossible to schedule a job interview around the bus schedule. So we will go pick them up, sit in on the interview if necessary. And a lot of times, we are in their houses an hour before the interview helping them try to figure out what they should wear so that they look professional -- look like they're ready for a job.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: The Dress for Success Program is working very well. And the other piece that they have used to-- Sometimes Mary Kay or AVON people have been helpful in conducting makeup kind of classes and done an awful lot with samples, and some of the cosmetic companies will do a lot with their samples. It helps women sometimes to feel that at least they know what people are wearing in an office surrounding as far as makeup or hair things go. So we've begged, borrowed, and stole. I did displaced homemaker for a while. We begged, borrowed, and stole from places like that, too -- for those services just because they are part of the "I feel good about myself" attitude that you can have when you go in for a business interview.

MS. WATERS: Self-esteem is crucial, and we've seen-- It was interesting-- A few years ago, when we first started doing this, we had placed somebody in a job, and she had so many barriers. She was on methadone maintenance which meant that she had to go a half hour each morning, get her dose, and then go to work, and, for lack of a better descriptive phrase, she really looked a mess. And we were able to get her on a job. A month later, we were taking people on the tour of the workplace -- someone from the Office of Policy and Planning-- In that short month, the change in the way she presented herself was remarkable. She looked just like anyone else in the workplace. I think-- We've seen it happen time and time again. People need a chance.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you.

Thank you very much.

Patricia Palmeri. Before you come up-- You wanted to be last.

We have Debbie Myers who said she would like to speak. She is high-tech training -- I think -- school.

The Division on Women person will be coming up, too.

**P A T R I C I A P A L M E R I:** Good afternoon. My name is Patricia Palmeri, and I represent WISE Women's Center of Essex County College. We've been serving our community for 17 years now in many different ways, one of which is with the Displaced Homemaker Program and Urban Women's Center designation, entrepreneurial training, parenting, and currently, a new training for the trades program because I heard construction mentioned before as a very viable career.

I'm going to speak really -- and speaking about construction and related trades -- really to the working poor that I've heard reference to a lot here today -- that is, women who are working and who are not really able to support themselves and their families sufficiently.

Public Law N.J.A.C. 17:27-7.5 is a law that was written and made law to correct the long-standing inequity in construction trades. The law was challenged in 1973. A deputy attorney general rendered an opinion that stated the laws should be upheld because the intent was to correct the inequities that historically existed for women and male minorities. The construction and related occupations field has not improved in any significant way to date for women and or male minorities because the law has not been enforced.

The overarching goal of the State of New Jersey, as implemented through Work First and the Welfare Initiative Act for example, is to encourage

self-sufficiency. Significant and unprecedented collaborations have been established between many departments of State and Federal government to facilitate this goal of Work First.

We're proud to say that Governor Whitman personally has taken a leading role in publicly encouraging and celebrating the work of women in nontraditional construction and related fields, referencing the higher skills, higher wage opportunities in such work, and singling out specific women who are doing this work.

For at least 20 years now, the U.S. Women's Bureau, our own Region 2 Women's Bureau, the Division on Women, the State Employment and Training Commission, the Department of Education, sex equity centers, and other groups and organizations have been supporting the concept of preparing women and minority males for careers in high-range construction and related occupations. In fact, to support this goal and Public Law, the State Treasury Department, through whom this law is initiated, supported their own Affirmative Action Compliance Office. Their role was to appoint and is to appoint and approve training centers in the various counties in the state who will provide hands-on training for underrepresented women and male minorities to enter the workplace and/or union apprenticeship training.

WISE Women's Center is one of the approved training centers for construction and other related occupations. We have just started our program with the funds provided by one-half of 1 percent of the total cost of construction taking place in our county. That is approximately \$60,000, which is designated under the New Jersey A.C. 17:27-7.5. We have recently been told by Susan Roop, an attorney -- Deputy Attorney General, recently

made Assistant Attorney General, that her new opinion of this law states that public agencies letting construction contracts do not have to designate that one-half of 1 percent goes to approved training centers. That the letting contractors and agencies can hire people and train them themselves. We know that that hasn't worked in all this time and probably, or I should say most assumably, will not work here as well.

We were also told by the Deputy Treasurer that the Administrative Code guiding this law sunset it. I haven't heard the use of that word before, so I would like to use a stronger word meaning expired in October of 1998. As of now, it has not yet been renewed. So in effect, there is no law enforceable at this time. And to my knowledge, the Treasury Department has not sanctioned, with fines, those agencies that have not complied with this law. Attention must be paid. The primary purpose and intent of this Public Law has not been supported by the new opinion and neither has the ability to assist--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I'm going to interrupt you because I have been approached on that particular subject, and I've had meetings in my office.

Apparently, there have been some legalese that was not appropriate in that particular opinion. It was my understanding that that would move forward rather quickly. Why I know about it was because of the light-rail Transit project in Hudson-Bergen.

MS. PALMERI: Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: And the training-- You know about that. So my feeling is-- And I'm glad you brought it up because I had

kind of lost track of it because they had assured me that the new wording would be in place, and I will be very happy to follow-up on this.

Leave your names and numbers with me. I may need you for backup information.

MS. PALMERI: Could you please explain what you mean, the new wording? Do you mean the most recent opinion?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: No, not the opinion. The manner of which it was put together was questioned. The way it was put together.

MS. PALMERI: The way it was originally put together?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Yes.

They want to make sure that when they do it again, they don't reach those-- I guess there were loopholes.

MS. PALMERI: Many.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Yes. So that's what they're looking at. But please leave your names and your phone numbers.

MS. PALMERI: See, the point I just want to make is that the intent of the law was to permit women and male minorities to enter the construction trade.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Correct.

MS. PALMERI: That's the intent. And it was based on the historical discrimination that had taken place before that -- prior to that.

And I just want to say that when I was coming in today, there was a -- some kind of a union rally going on downstairs, and I did my own little survey before I got here, and I spoke to about four or five people, and I asked them, "How many women are in your union? How many women are here

today?" They told me that there are about six women. I said, "How many minority males are there here today," because I walked--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Oh, sure.

MS. PALMERI: --through the crowd and made my own observation of that. I said, "How many minority males are involved?" They said, "Well, probably somewhere around 7 percent."

Now, does that tell us that it is working? No, because there aren't training agencies that are preparing a pool of people--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: There are training agencies--

MS. PALMERI: Yes, there are.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: --but they're not getting jobs.

MS. PALMERI: They're not-- No, the training agencies also aren't getting the money to train them.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Well, there is also the problem of training them without getting them jobs.

MS. PALMERI: Well--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: They complete training--

MS. PALMERI: Well, we just--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: --and don't get the jobs.

MS. PALMERI: Well--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I don't mean because they're not able to -- that they're not well trained and not getting them.

This is a larger problem.

MS. PALMERI: It's a very large problem, I agree.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: We have to absolutely work on this very aggressively.

MS. PALMERI: But attention must be paid.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: And some of the women training the women and minorities are saying, "Well, we trained them." And that's not good enough.

MS. PALMERI: Well, the-- Right. You have to make the way for them in the training.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: One of the--  
Carol, you'll enjoy this.

One of our colleagues told me today that in the carpentry and construction area-- He had asked, "Why can't they do woodworking and cabinet making and things like that," and they said, "No, no, no, they must learn it, and if they can't do the heavy construction, they have to go for weight lifting." What I'm saying is that obstacles are created.

**DEBBIE MYERS:** I understand what you are saying. That doesn't--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Obstacles are created.

MS. MYERS: I understand, but that -- logic.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: The logic is that they won't go for weight lifting, and then they don't have to deal with it -- meaning that particular union.

MS. MYERS: My name is Debbie Myers. I am the Director and Founder of High-Tech Training School, the only heavy equipment training school in the State of New Jersey. I, as you can see, am a minority and a woman. I am a single parent. I used to work for JTPA in Union County, so

I understand taking people from self-reliance -- I mean from welfare to self-sufficiency. And this trade is nontraditional.

I've heard people speak of, today, manufacturing jobs leaving. I've heard people speak of service jobs increasing, but people need to know -- I know you, the legislators, know that construction in the next 10 years is the hottest thing going. We have a \$5 billion school bond referendum going across the state. And presently, with this affirmative action law being sunset, single women don't -- will not have the opportunity if they're not eligible through JTPA or Work First development to get this training, which gives them, what I say to my students, handlebar training. You can take it wherever you go, as long as there are roads, as long as there are buildings. This is meaningful, not that all jobs are meaningful, but this is meaningful training. This is something where you can start earning wages at \$14 and \$15.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Absolutely.

MS. MYERS: What disturbs me is that we've allowed this law to sunset, and it's the best kept secret in the State of New Jersey.

So if women who participate in our program-- They don't have to go through eligibility -- JTPA program. They don't have to be on welfare to work. They can be low working income individuals that get benefits from a scholarship from training. And by allowing this law to sunset, you eliminated that opportunity. By the changing, Assembly Chair, of the interpretation of the law which says that now, under the Attorney General's interpretation of the law -- prepared by Susan Roop -- that only individuals who are available for training are those that -- first of all, contractors who are in violations and

only those individuals on the site-- So you've eliminated the whole intent of the program if for financing minority--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Isn't there also a clause in there where they can give money for training?

MS. MYERS: Only if the contractor's in violation and only for those individuals that are on the training site. So that single woman who is trying to empower herself to get off of welfare, if she doesn't have the skills in the beginning to get employed by the contractor, will never have the opportunity to be trained.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Correct.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MURPHY: Okay.

MS. MYERS: So you've created a problem here which changes the intent of the law, and there's no outreach. So when you talk about empowering-- Okay? It's been the best kept secret for 20 years. Now that public agencies like myself -- vocational schools that can access these funds-- Now they want to change the rules to the game, and you can never level the playing field. Construction is going to be hot.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: It is hot.

MS. MYERS: Construction is going to be hot in this nation. Okay? Why can't New Jersey have viable programs which really can give these women empowerment? Okay? The opportunity to, first of all, deal with the law--

I have to commend you, Assemblywoman, because I know for a fact that you've been a leader and very interested in this cause. I've sent you

letters, and I've faxed information to you letting you know that something needs to be done, effective today.

There still in no Administrative Code for affirmative action. And you being women, I know you are benefactors and you're still considered a minority. And there is still, on the laws, nothing. You've basically done it -- Chicago and what we've done in California -- Proposition 209 -- except for we the voters didn't have a say in it, and you the legislators haven't had a decision or (indiscernible) about it. If there is nothing governing it, there is no law. You can't enforce it. And how many women can be benefactors from this affirmative action self-empowerment--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Absolutely.

MS. MYERS: --are not getting it?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Good-paying jobs.

MS. MYERS: Good-paying jobs.

So I'm here today to say to you that it's not a race issue.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: No.

MS. MYERS: This is a gender issue. This is not an issue for that one-third or that second-level third or that third-level third.

If you can find a beam-- If I gave you a hammer, you could find a beam -- you can hang that picture. If I show you how to measure, you can make that cabinet you were speaking of, Assemblywoman. So I'm saying to you-- That's why I'm here today. Maybe this is not the forum, but I've cried out throughout the state.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: It's the forum.

MS. MYERS: I've talked to -- written the Governor. Okay? All right? And sometimes they've asked me, "You know, are you sure you want to do this because they kill messengers." Okay? They don't hear my message, but they kill the messenger.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: They've killed us a few times, but you see, we're still here.

MS. MYERS: Okay, fine. So I'll take your experiences and leave. But it is something that I think we need to deal with, the empowerment of women. I'm glad that the advisory board is having this -- coordination between the Sstate's--

The Treasury Department has no idea what the Department on Labor is doing, it has no idea what the Department of Education-- So when you talk about duplicity of funds, it may exist, but there is no communication. So until we get it out there and let you know that construction is hot, it's going to be hot -- and you can take it wherever you go. We need to make sure that we don't kill programs like ours. We need to make sure that funds that have been -- laws that have been enacted for us to access these funds -- we need to keep the free enterprise system available.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I was at an AFL-CIO meeting about a year or so ago, and at that meeting, I must tell you that there were many women. It was a breakfast meeting. They were empowered, and they felt that they were going to reach out to other women and give them that same opportunity. They are pushing the AFL-CIO -- the organization to make sure that women take positions of rank within the organization to bring more women in because for a while it was closed shop there.

MS. MYERS: And it still is.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: So I was very proud of them for being there, doing that presenting -- kill the messenger kind of thing. Those women received applause galore from the men as well as the women.

MS. MYERS: I have a BA degree, Assemblywoman, in psychology and management, but I can operate every piece of equipment. So if my basement went down or I had a sewer problem, I can dig my own excavation. Okay? And one thing about empowerment is showing women that it's all right to do this kind of work and then go to the beauty parlor and go get your nails done and then go to the bank.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Right.

MS. MYERS: Okay. All right. So I commend you for--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I can tell you that my mom could do anything in the house at all. My father could not.

MS. MYERS: Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: But she could do anything, take anything apart and put it back together. It was fixed.

Even the stove, Carol.

If there's a will, there's a way.

MS. MYERS: So I would just like to thank you for allowing me to come and present this issue, and I ask that you really take a look at the law. It's the best kept secret in the state.

Like I said, the Governor's Chief of Staff-- I don't have a problem with Governor Whitman. I think the Governor has been very forceful about

trying to make -- level the playing field. She has put minorities and women in position. So I don't have a problem with what--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: But I think you can't be distracted again because I thought this was back in place.

MS. MYERS: Oh, no. Oh, no, it's not back in place.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I will make sure that we follow-up on it.

MS. MYERS: And there is nothing, Assemblywoman, on -- for emergency readoption.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: But again make sure I have your names and your phone numbers so we can get back to you.

MS. MYERS: Sure.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: Thank you.

Now, I think Patricia left. I didn't have a name for the representative from the Division on Women, but if you could reach out to these two people, Tasha.

MS. KERSEY: That was Patricia.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: That was Patricia?

MS. PALMERI: Yes, I'm Patricia Palmeri. No, I'm not from the Division on Women.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I didn't realize that.

MS. PALMERI: I'm from WISE Women's Center of Essex County College.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: No, no, no, I know that, but there was a name -- representative of the Division.

MS. PALMERI: Oh, okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: And I was looking for her, and I didn't realize that you were Patricia, but thank you very much.

MS. PALMERI: Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HECK: I think this meeting is adjourned.

Thank you all very much.

Thank you, Carol.

Thank you, Scott.

**(MEETING CONCLUDED)**