



Child Welfare League of America, Inc.

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*FYI - Bruce*

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Director

April 28, 1994

Carol H. Rasco  
Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy  
Domestic Policy Council  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Carol:

I appreciated the opportunity to meet with you last week and to discuss the need for "child-friendly" welfare reform.

I wish to reiterate how much we agree with and support President Clinton's important initiatives that will improve the lives of America's children, including the expanded Earned Income Credit, the new Family Preservation and Family Support program, Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities, the URD efforts, Head Start expansion, and other critical investments.

At the same time, I cannot say more strongly how disappointed I am that the Clinton Administration appears ready to institute welfare reform that will not help poor children and that may do children extensive harm. CWLA and its 750 member agencies across the nation would love to be able to endorse and generate support for the Administration's welfare reform proposal but, so far, we cannot do it.

As the Administration prepares its proposal, I want to re-emphasize several serious concerns and urge the following action:

- **Resist instituting time-limited AFDC.** Evidence indicates that a large majority of recipients leave the AFDC program, without being pushed, within two years. However, they often lack the permanent and stable job, employment training, health benefits, and child care needed to stay off AFDC. Time limits focus on the wrong set of AFDC recipients, the small fraction who remain on the program more than two years. Instead, we should concentrate our limited resources to help families who leave the program stay off by targeting them with intensive case management, training, jobs, health care, and child care (including significant child care support for the working poor).



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- **Reject the "family cap."** Reducing benefits for bearing more than one child is harmful to the children. The benefit increase is not nearly enough to cover the cost of caring for an extra child, so a "family cap" cannot serve as cost-cutting "behavior modification." Instead, we should increase efforts to prevent unwanted pregnancies, especially among teenagers. Poverty prevention efforts and strategies to make fathers accountable, not the "family cap," will reduce the size of poor families and make fewer families poor. A "family cap" merely demeans AFDC families, further endangers poor children, and does nothing to help them escape poverty.

- **Deny restrictive AFDC waivers.** The Administration has approved state waivers for time limits, family caps, behavior requirements, and other harmful experiments that curtail benefits for adults and children. Welfare reform should establish a consistent national policy, while permitting only non-restrictive promising experiments. Punitive designs make inappropriate policy because they hurt children.

- **Guarantee an increased minimum AFDC benefit level.** Most AFDC recipients receive grossly inadequate benefits to ensure the health and well-being of their children. A significantly higher minimum cash benefit level, constant across the nation, is essential to ensure that recipient families are able to care for their needs.

- **Institute policies that value and enhance parenting.** Earlier this month, a Carnegie Corporation report concluded that "responsible parenthood" is crucial to improve the prospects for young children. Reducing violent crime and drug addiction depends on parents being equipped and at home to care for their children during the crucial early childhood years. Parenting is hard work. Welfare reform must encourage excellent parenting, the most vital means to help children grow up healthy. Toward that goal, AFDC heads of household, including young mothers, should not be forced prematurely into the workplace. These parents should be encouraged to care for their children and pursue an education or part-time work, and they should be provided with appropriate job exposure and training, and parenting education and support. The President's plan should not only highlight the value of work but should speak much more strongly of the importance of parenting.

Last month, I delineated a "child-friendly" vision for welfare reform in testimony before the House Government Operations Subcommittee on Human Resources and Intergovernmental Relations. Enclosed is a copy of my testimony.



Carol H. Rasco  
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I hope that President Clinton's welfare reform proposal will incorporate the above approaches. We can only permit welfare reform that protects and helps children. I look forward to continuing to work with you on this issue.

Sincerely,

David S. Liederman  
Executive Director

Enclosure

- cc: Bruce Reed, Deputy Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy  
Jeremy Ben-ami, Senior Policy Analyst for Domestic Policy  
Diana Aviv, Council of Jewish Federations  
Ruth Brandwein, National Association of Social Workers  
Duffy Campbell, National Women's Law Center  
Mary Cooper, National Council of Churches  
Marian Wright Edelman, Children's Defense Fund  
Robert Fersh, Food Research and Action Center  
Juan Figueroa, Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund  
Robert Greenstein, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities  
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Fred Kammer, Catholic Charities USA  
Judith Lichtman, Women's Legal Defense Fund  
Gerald McEntee, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO  
Jennifer Vasiloff, Coalition on Human Needs  
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**TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES  
AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS**

**COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS**

**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

BY

**DAVID S. LIEDERMAN**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA**

**MARCH 10, 1994**

Chairman Towns and Members of the Subcommittee, I am David Liederman, Executive Director of the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), a membership organization representing more than 700 public and voluntary child serving agencies that assist over 2.5 million children and their families nationwide. Our member agencies in each state serve troubled and vulnerable children, many of whom not only have experienced the hardship of poverty but also have been served by the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program. Approximately 50 percent of children in substitute care are AFDC eligible children.

Thank you for holding this important hearing on the history, theory, and practice of need-based Federal governmental assistance programs. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on welfare reform and its implications for children and families served by the child welfare system.

I hope that this hearing begins to transform the welfare debate. Too many so-called "experts" have spent the last year attacking people who receive AFDC benefits as if they are all the same, as if they all deserve blame for their own poverty. I don't know what is next -- are we to blame AFDC recipients for the recession, the continued woes of the Boston Red Sox, or the failure of the Hubble space telescope?

To begin with, let's make one thing clear. People who receive or, at some time, have received AFDC benefits are real people, not robots. They have real lives. They are a heterogeneous population who are not easily classified. They include young and old, urban and rural, well educated and undereducated, all races and religions, even Members of Congress. Many AFDC recipients have valuable employment skills and work experience, while others have never found a job and have few skills. However, one important characteristic is common -- families grappling with poverty and how to spread a meager AFDC check and other resources all lead very challenging and difficult lives.

Because AFDC families are real people, welfare policy should not be haphazardly conducted, but should be very carefully thought out. This is no time to goof around in right field. Every policy should be tested, tried, and true. Individual lives are depending on your decisions. Handle our children and families with care.

Welfare reform is a highly complex and politicized issue, and it is extremely important that sound principles be formulated and implemented. Last November, 89 Representatives wrote to President Clinton, urging that he reject time limits on welfare and benefit reductions for having additional children, and endorse a broader anti-poverty strategy, quality education and training opportunities, full-time jobs, and public sector work for those who cannot find a job. I commend you, Chairman Towns, and Representatives Waxman, Barrett, Payne, Washington, Conyers, and Sanders, for writing this important letter. The strong leadership that you and your colleagues have demonstrated will help ensure that low-income children and families are neither ignored in this debate nor abandoned by a misguided final welfare

reform package that slashes benefits without providing a workable, sufficient, and humane alternative.

The welfare reform debate that awaits Congress offers an opportunity to increase support for families in need and to help lift families out of poverty. Some voices, however, will call for draconian measures in the name of welfare reform that will hurt children and families. I urge you and your colleagues to ensure that final welfare reform legislation is quality reform; if not, we will face more severe problems down the road. We must create opportunities that reduce welfare rolls, not simply start the clock running and cut AFDC recipient names from the list. Welfare reform is a broad issue that touches on many related concerns -- employment, health care, housing, child care -- and attempts to treat welfare reform in the narrowest way possible will be disastrous.

President Clinton's working group on welfare reform is preparing legislation that would transform the AFDC program from a means-tested income security program to a time-limited transitional program that would prepare its beneficiaries for long-term employment. The President's bill is expected to institute a two-year limit on AFDC benefits, provide job training, child care, public service work when a job cannot be found, and other assistance, and require that most teen mothers live with a relative.

As the welfare reform debate intensifies, a few facts are worth special attention. Combined federal and state AFDC benefit expenditures in 1992 totalled \$22.2 billion and AFDC administrative costs were \$2.7 billion. The share of federal spending devoted to AFDC family support has declined from 1.5 percent in 1975 to 1.1 percent in 1992. Budget experts estimate that implementing the President's draft plan would cost significantly more, not less, than is being spent now.

The combined AFDC and food stamp benefits are below the poverty level in all states and below 75 percent of the poverty level in 41 states. While the number of AFDC recipients has risen, fueled in recent years by economic recession, the average size of AFDC families has fallen from 4.0 in 1970 to 2.9 in 1992.

Claims that the AFDC program primarily serves "welfare queens" who live off their benefits for many years are hogwash. According to the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), data from a set of states suggests that 50 percent of single parent entrants exit the AFDC program within a year and 70 percent exit within two years of beginning to receive assistance. Less than 15 percent of recipients receive AFDC benefits continuously for five or more years. However, recipients who return to AFDC rolls often do so because a low-wage job does not work out.

These findings raise serious questions about the appropriate structure of a time-limited reform plan. For instance, according to Mark Greenberg of CLASP, imposing a two year "clock" from the moment AFDC receipt begins would force recipients to make irrational decisions about whether and when to initiate education and training activities, and might

preclude recipient access to postsecondary education. If time-limited approaches are adopted as trends indicate, how they should be structured is critical to avert damaging conditions for children and families that would likely result in even higher public costs.

The commitment of states to provide appropriate benefits to AFDC recipients is an open question. Although the 1988 Family Support Act "guaranteed" child care for all AFDC employment and training participants, many states have defaulted on this promise. Several states have been taken to court and forced to provide this entitlement, although child care provided by these states too often remains informal and low in quality.

Meanwhile, children are very poor. Despite the expansion last year of the Earned Income Credit (EIC) and other efforts by Congress and President Clinton to assist low-income children and families, the problem of poverty is greater than ever. The poverty rates for 1992, released last October by the Bureau of the Census, indicate that the disturbing family income trends of the past several years have worsened. While poverty among all Americans rose again to 14.5 percent or 36.9 million people, the poverty rate for children remained the highest of any age group, rising to 21.9 percent or 14.6 million young people. This is the highest rate in ten years. Nearly half (46.6 percent) of African American children live in families below the poverty line. Children under six are more than twice as likely to live in poverty as adults. Among low-income Americans, children are very poor. Close to half of all poor children (46.9 percent) fell below half the poverty line last year.

Everybody agrees that welfare as we know it doesn't work well for most involved -- clients, workers or administrators. Everyone favors a reform of the current system, with vastly differing views of why and how to achieve change. You may have been told that the mood of the country is solidly against welfare, but I urge you to examine carefully poll data before interpreting that to mean that Americans want to abandon their low-income neighbors. A survey conducted last November by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc. and American Viewpoint, Inc., respective Democratic and Republican polling firms, found that while 55 percent of voters surveyed said that too much money was spent on welfare, only 15 percent said too much was spent on poor families with children. In fact, 64 percent believed that government spends too little on poor children. When voters were given the choice between a strict two-year limit on AFDC benefits and a two-year limit followed by a public service work requirement for those who could not find jobs, they chose the latter by seven to one. More than 70 percent of voters, however, would make exceptions for mothers with preschool children and mothers on welfare who work part time at low-wage jobs.

I wish to address two issues -- what welfare reform should be and what I fear it may become. First, I will present a welfare reform framework that makes sense.

## **A "CHILD-FRIENDLY" VISION FOR WELFARE REFORM**

Responsible welfare reform must improve the lives of AFDC-eligible children -- they are the prime beneficiaries of welfare. Despite the already energetic welfare reform debate, few have addressed welfare reform with children as the prime concern. **We should only accept welfare reform that protects and helps children.**

Above all, "child-friendly" welfare reform should bring us closer to ending child poverty in America. President Clinton and the Congress, by greatly expanding the EIC, already have gone a long way to ensure that no working family will live in poverty. We can do a great deal more for children and families through welfare reform, but only if we utilize adequate resources and address the root causes of poverty.

"Child-friendly" welfare reform must provide strong transitional support services for AFDC families expected to work. These service components should include superb education resources, job training, and child care, and an increased minimum wage that "makes work pay." In many communities, a shortage of jobs exists or the jobs are too low-paying as well as low in quality. Job opportunities must pay well and make appropriate skills expectations, or families will continue to return to the AFDC rolls. Strong transitional services are essential to reduce reliance on needs-based programs and to end poverty.

In addition to AFDC transitional support services, a meaningful anti-poverty strategy must include improved unemployment insurance protection, a refundable children's tax credit, universal access to health care, paternity establishment, child support enforcement and assured child support benefits for all children with an absent parent, improved access to federal nutrition programs, as well as other reforms and initiatives outside of the AFDC system.

Representative Lynn Woolsey is crafting a welfare reform bill that is expected to take a responsible "child-friendly" approach to welfare reform. As a Member of Congress who was an AFDC recipient herself, Representative Woolsey would replace AFDC eligibility checkers with case managers that help recipients formulate individualized Employment Availability Plans. Her proposal would institute child support assurance, abolish financial penalties against two-parent families, and provide a full range of transitional supports, including child care, health care and counseling, and qualified case management. I hope that the Woolsey bill receives favorable attention.

### **Parenting**

Welfare reform must value and encourage excellent parenting, the most vital means to help children grow up healthy. Some AFDC heads of household are not able to work or should not be expected to so. Young mothers, for example, must not simply be tossed into the working world -- parenting itself is too important and parenting is indeed hard work. Instead, they should be encouraged to care for their children and pursue an education, and they should be provided with appropriate job exposure and training.

Both parents have a responsibility to support their children. Fathers should be required to contribute financially to their children's well-being, and should be strongly encouraged to be active parents and family members. Struggling families should receive case manager support in reformed AFDC offices that focus on providing family services. All AFDC recipients should be encouraged to complete high school and pursue higher education.

### **Employment**

"Child-friendly" welfare reform must encourage and assist AFDC parents to become self-sufficient and to act responsibly, find and keep work outside of the home, pursue education, maintain adequate and stable earned income, and contribute to the care of their children. Federal funding for the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) or a successor program should be increased so that all participants receive the necessary skills to obtain a decent paying, stable job. AFDC requirements that discourage work and marriage should be changed. AFDC asset limits should be raised so that recipients can save for their children's education or start a business without having to sell virtually everything they own. However, we should not endanger children's well-being by masking an ill-advised policy to rid AFDC rolls, when no jobs are available, under the guise of contributing to self-sufficiency, or by expecting that every AFDC family can move at the same speed to find employment.

Young people, however, should be permitted and encouraged to gain experience through education, internships, and other learning experiences, without having the immediate and premature responsibility of a job.

AFDC recipients who are ready and able to work but cannot find a job in the private sector should be provided with quality full-time public sector work at family-supporting wages. Improved employment opportunities in the children's services sector, for example through full funding of Head Start and expansion of child care programs, can fill the dual need of expanding children's services while providing public sector jobs for adults. A higher minimum wage would promote work incentives and draw more low-income families out of poverty. Extreme care must also be taken to avoid creating workfare programs that displace existing workers and institute a new substandard minimum wage for AFDC recipients or substandard working conditions that would have a harmful impact on the labor market and promote divisiveness in the work force.

### **Childhood development and child care**

Children whose families receive AFDC are among those most at risk of developmental delays and diminished educational achievement. There is widespread agreement that, in order for them to thrive and succeed in school, they need the benefits of comprehensive, high quality early childhood programs. The Clinton Administration has recognized the value of a positive early childhood experience by committing to fully fund Head Start. It can do no less for children receiving AFDC benefits who do not have the opportunity to participate in Head Start but receive child care assistance through a welfare-related child care program.

Welfare reform will place an increased demand for child care on a system that even now cannot ensure adequate and affordable quality care. Adequate resources and an improved infrastructure must be in place in order to ensure that all children have access to quality child care. Welfare reform child care policy must include consistent standards to ensure the healthy and safe development of children regardless of the funding source for their child care assistance, a substantially lowered state match requirement for AFDC child care so that states stop shirking their responsibility to provide high-quality child care, and federally set minimum payment levels that are based on the market rate of child care.

AFDC child care programs must be strengthened if AFDC parents are to increase their participation in education, training, and work activities. These programs are under enormous strain, and require significant new funds. In addition, parents who leave AFDC for work should receive child care assistance beyond the current twelve months, so that they are not forced to lose their job for lack of child care.

### **Child support**

Paternity establishment and child support enforcement and assurance are fundamental elements of welfare reform. Child support is a crucial factor to keep children and their custodial parents out of poverty, sends a message that both parents are responsible for their children, and can make a substantial difference in the financial security of all single-parent families. According to the National Women's Law Center, our nation's system of paternity establishment has overwhelmingly failed. Of child support cases in 1989, paternity was established in only 31 percent of non-marital births, and \$5.1 billion of court-ordered child support was not paid to custodial parents with child support orders. Improved child support enforcement will solve part of the problem. However, low-income children whose parents do not or cannot pay child support rely on AFDC. A federally assured minimum child support payment, proposed by Representative Woolsey, would help many families achieve a decent standard of living.

### **Teen pregnancy**

Improved efforts to prevent teen pregnancy are crucial to help young people stay healthy and in school, and reduce poverty, HIV/AIDS cases, and dependence on government assistance. Every 31 seconds, an adolescent becomes pregnant, and every minute an adolescent gives birth. The United States has the highest teen pregnancy rate of all industrialized countries. Experts have identified three major program strategies that prevent adolescent pregnancy -- informing and influencing attitudes about sexual behavior in order to encourage teens to delay sexual activity, providing sexually active teens with family planning services, and expanding adolescents' awareness of life options. Public and private agencies across the nation have developed a wide range of programs to reduce teen pregnancy. A broad-based welfare reform plan should include a rational, comprehensive, and culturally competent adolescent pregnancy prevention policy.

### **Teen parent residency and support**

If a teen parent residency requirement is instituted, we must ensure that young parents do not return to abusive or otherwise unsafe households, that exceptions are made when such a requirement makes no sense for a particular family, and that teen parents' special needs for intensive case management are addressed. If AFDC offices are transformed from check-writing operations into actual service providers, "teen parent case managers" could be assigned to help minor parents. The idea of utilizing teen parent case managers, advanced by CWLA and a coalition of public policy organizations, would be an excellent way to assist minor parents. Teen parent case managers would help the client draw up an individual plan to attain independence, assist the client in achieving her plan by linking her with needed education, health, and other social services, and help the client make determinations about where to live. Recognizing that the teen parent case manager would play a critical role in assuring the rights and safety of teen parents and their children, caseloads of no more than 20 clients to each teen parent case manager should be maintained.

### **Health care**

Health care is a serious concern for AFDC families. True welfare reform depends on the assurance of health care coverage -- promised by health reform. Quality health care must be available to AFDC recipients and workers in low-wage employment. Without adequate health care coverage, workers often are forced to neglect proper health care, stay home to take care of sick family members, pay enormous health care bills and neglect other responsibilities, or quit their jobs to obtain health coverage under public assistance.

### **Housing**

Welfare reform must address the housing needs of AFDC families. Low-income families often spend an enormous percentage of their income on inadequate housing. The average single parent renter pays 58 percent of her income on housing. Studies indicate that a lack of stable housing inhibits many people from succeeding in education and training programs or obtaining and retaining employment. CWLA has been concerned for years about children who are separated from their families solely because of a lack of affordable housing. Yet nearly two-thirds of AFDC families receive no housing subsidy. Unfortunately, the President's working group has not yet issued a welfare reform housing strategy.

A welfare reform policy on housing should change the welfare payment schedule to include realistic costs of housing and other living expenses, allow the use of Emergency Assistance Funds to be used to prevent homelessness and assist family unification efforts, and require that HUD and HHS coordinate rental subsidies with job training, health, and family services to meet the needs of poor children and families.

## **MOST WELFARE REFORM PROPOSALS ENDANGER CHILDREN**

Unfortunately, most welfare reform proposals go against the best interests of children. They are headed in the wrong direction -- wrong for the millions of children who depend on AFDC checks for basic necessities and wrong if government thinks that eliminating benefits will save money now or in the long run.

Time limits and elimination of need-based benefits to legal immigrants highlight restrictive Republican welfare reform legislation (H.R. 3500, S. 1795). The two bills would institute a two-year limit, a massive workfare program, strict sanction requirements and paternity determination rules, state options for a wide variety of punitive behavior requirements, elimination of welfare benefits for all non-citizens, an "entitlement cap" on low-income entitlement programs, and a block grant of the food stamp and WIC programs with nine other nutrition programs. To their credit, the Republican bills recognize that welfare reform is expensive -- they allocate \$10 billion to states to provide AFDC parents with day care and other employment services.

So-called "expert" Charles Murray has taken the Republican approach even further out to right field. He proposes that need-based assistance, including AFDC benefits, food stamps, and subsidized housing, be abolished. Murray's solution for the children of families that dissolve under the pressure of such abandonment -- mass orphanages -- ignores everything we know about child welfare, that children are generally best off with their own families. Clearly, there are situations where children cannot be protected in their own families and, in those cases, the utilization of quality family foster care and residential group care is appropriate.

The President has already approved several state AFDC waivers that have permitted some states to cut benefits and impose punitive behavioral requirements on recipients. Care must be taken to prevent recipients from becoming worse off by granting harmful waivers. The Clinton Administration should be aware that waiver approvals often suggest federal policy approval of state plans. We are very concerned that we are moving down the road toward welfare reform by waiver, and we urge you and your colleagues to ask the President to disapprove wrong-headed and damaging designs and to work with the states to construct more enabling approaches.

The danger in permitting states to carry out misguided welfare policy is demonstrated by the recent experience of several states which cut general assistance funds for many thousands of people. A report released last month by the Center on Social Welfare Policy and Law found that hundreds of thousands of men and women suffered without jobs or income support after states targeted single "employable" people for welfare cuts. The report looked at welfare cuts in Michigan, Ohio, and Illinois, and found that state definitions of "employability" were totally unrealistic, most former recipients did not find jobs, and crises were immediate and severe for large numbers of individuals left homeless, hungry, and sick following the cuts.

Many of the more conservative welfare reform proposals, including features of the President's draft plan, would use punishments such as reduced benefits as a form of cost-cutting "behavior modification." Both the President's draft plan and the Republican legislation propose to limit AFDC payments to families that have additional children. The Republican bills would require AFDC mothers to identify the fathers of children born out of wedlock or risk losing AFDC benefits altogether. Yet this approach only punishes behavior and hurts families; it demeans AFDC families and does nothing to help them escape poverty.

When Congress finally considers welfare reform, the key issue will be whether legislation is crippled by cost-saving alterations. Some have proposed paying for welfare reform by cutting programs targeted to low-income and other vulnerable people or to legal immigrants. I hope that you reject these ideas. Such approaches would undermine a crucial welfare reform goal, to "make work pay," and would jeopardize the well-being of children, women, the elderly, legal immigrants, and people with disabilities who are dependent on every penny provided by these programs.

Welfare reform will cost a lot of money. Overhauling the welfare system immediately would require dedication of resources that no one as yet has been able to identify. Reforms that are less ambitious in the short term may provide an opportunity to address the resource question and, more importantly, to craft sensible policies that benefit, rather than hurt, children and families. If the President's bill is an overly ambitious plan, the significant investments required to pay for it may prompt Congress to unwisely strip the "child-friendly" elements of the plan. For example, by instituting time limits without ensuring the supportive services that AFDC recipients need to find and keep a job, the welfare reform plan would become simply a mechanism to cut families with children off public assistance. If that happens, you and I will undoubtedly meet here again in a short time to assess the breakdown of the child welfare system due to overwhelming numbers of abused and neglected children entering the system, the squalor of newly formed Depression-type "shanty towns," or the cost to society of having produced yet another generation of angry, violent youth with no sense of a future.

## CONCLUSION

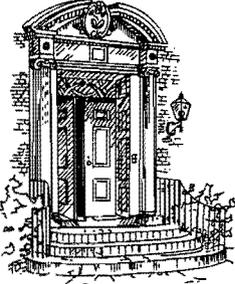
The stakes are high. If we succeed at welfare reform, we could improve family incomes and help keep families together, reduce AFDC rolls, and even free up government resources to address needed improvements in the child welfare system. On the other hand, if we fail, misguided welfare reform will leave thousands more low-income families with children under greater stress than before, and will swell the child welfare system as well as other human services that provide a safety net for poor children and families.

Welfare reform, whatever approach Congress takes, will have a significant effect on children. It needs to be done with care. Handle our poor children and families as we would handle our own children and families -- with care. I look forward to working with you,

Chairman Towns and Members of the Subcommittee, to ensure that children -- not budgets, bureaucracies, or politicians -- are the real winners in welfare reform.

\*\*\*

APR 28 REC'D



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1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

April 21, 1994

Dear Ms. Rasco,

I was in Washington last week at the Child Welfare League of America's National Conference. When visiting key Congresspeople on Capitol Hill, I was asked to re-submit a welfare reform proposal that was submitted in early 1993. I thought you might like a copy of it. Welfare reform does not need to be an expensive venture. The needed components of such reform are already in place. In Rhode Island, funded day care, transportation vouchers, all types of counseling, and a medical van are all currently available for women attempting the giant step of exiting themselves from the welfare system. This proposal suggests a collaboration between the public and private sectors to provide both training and employment.

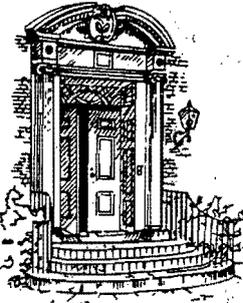
The model for this program would include three large factory training sites across the state. These revenue producing factories would provide many different types of training and employment possibilities such as factory worker, foreperson, secretary, receptionist, maintenance, child care worker (on-site day care center), marketing, and management.

After one year in the program, women would leave with training, experience, a professional resume, and a job.

Please contact me anytime to discuss or clarify this proposal.

Sincerely,

Dianne Sprague,  
Director, Home-Based Programs,  
St. Mary's Home for Children



## ST. MARY'S

HOME FOR CHILDREN 420 Fruit Hill Avenue, North Providence, Rhode Island 02911-2825 401-353-3900

Bernard J. Smith, ACSW, CISW  
Executive Director

Welfare reform is a critical issue which this nation must confront. We believe that a comprehensive jobs program is a possibility, and have given some consideration to the components such a program would entail. We must provide the recipients of public assistance with the tools and the opportunities which will relieve them of their dependence on the government.

The State of Rhode Island is home to all aspects of American life. There are rural and urban areas, tourist attractions and inner city slums. The women who collect Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) live throughout the state. Because of the small size of Rhode Island, we believe that it would be advantageous to use this area for a National Pilot Program which would demonstrate the feasibility of a comprehensive work program for mothers.

Cooperation from all areas of society is necessary for such a program to succeed. We do believe, however, that the program would best serve AFDC recipients through the social service sector. It is not possible to simply "put these women to work." Adjunct services such as counseling, day care, living skills training and educational programs must also be available. We propose the establishment of a consortium of people, probably women, from business, education, government and social services to work together toward this goal -- a comprehensive jobs program for all AFDC recipients.

This proposal is not complete at this time, but we have given careful consideration to the various components that would be needed.

### Proposal Components

\* Create government subsidized work stations, perhaps three throughout the state, which would be composed of several different industries. There would be day care at the stations, provided by women participating. Transportation would also be provided. Theoretically, these businesses would create revenue.

\* Throughout the first year, women would continue receiving AFDC benefits with a monetary incentive. In addition, Medicaid benefits would continue for the family. During maternity leave, regular AFDC payments would resume.

\* Jobs for participants would range from drivers to management; women could choose which ones they would like to learn. Work stations might include: small businesses, factories, nursing homes, temporary agencies, an answering service and retail. Some of these positions will allow for flexibility in work hours.

\* At each work station there would be a Career Counselor responsible for discussing options with participants, posting private sector job advertisements, finding apprenticeships for participants, assisting participants in developing a resume, helping in the transition into permanent employment and assuring that this transition takes place as quickly as possible. The services of this Career Counselor will remain available for women who have graduated from the program to assure that employment continues.

\* At each work station there would be a Career Development Assistant responsible for supervising job training, organizing seminars on occupational topics of interest to participants, and coordinating educational training. A large part of this position would be recruitment of volunteers who: are willing to provide one-on-one tutoring, desire to give seminars on relevant topics or who are otherwise able to contribute.

\* There will be a Public Relations Assistant responsible for working with the public and private sectors to ensure that women working through this program will have positions to move into. This individual will also work on fund raising drives which would create a sense of civic responsibility.

\* After some time, participants may take the above three jobs.

\* Create smaller satellite work sites in the communities, in collaboration with cooperating small businesses. Businesses hiring people from the program and providing family health insurance could be given tax incentives.

\* Women would have health care coverage for themselves and their families for a certain period of time after being released from the program. This could be ensured either through private sector cooperation or health care legislation.

\* While a woman working in this program will receive an incentive in her payment, a trust account will be building in her name. This money will be released to her care when she has graduated into employment in the private sector. This will help to provide a cushion for families, to allow them some independence, and will act as a further incentive.

\* Every woman leaving this program will be asked to keep the program informed of her progress, allowing for longitudinal demographic statistics. Hopefully all graduates will be willing to serve this program in some capacity, perhaps by providing volunteer services.

\* Children receiving child care would receive free meals. Women would be able to purchase subsidized meals. Mealtime programs for mothers and children would be provided.

\* Head Start would be located at the sites. Children would be given immunizations and check-ups. There would be provisions to care for sick babies.

\* Male and female older children would be given the choice of taking part in the program. They could choose from the following services: seminars, tutoring, part time employment, career counseling, apprenticeship and employment placement.

\* On the premises there would be a clothes bank for women and children. People taking different kinds of jobs will need to dress accordingly.

\* Services provided and information given will include: substance abuse counseling and prevention, stress reduction workshops, child abuse prevention, domestic violence counseling and workshops, medical care and emergency advocacy and training, money management, home maintenance, parenting skills, resource awareness, literacy training, GED training, career counseling, job training and job placement.

\* This program will provide more than employment, it will provide opportunity. Participants will be given the tools to combat the forces which perpetuate poverty. Individuals will be given the ability to live independently, without government assistance.

\* There are already programs which aim to assist women in poverty and with other difficulties. The people involved in the implementation of these programs will be contacted to coordinate efforts. The job sites would be a clearinghouse, coordinating efforts of agencies specializing in different aspects of human/social services, business, and government. With this organizational structure, we could be assured of providing thorough assistance to the population in question.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dianne Sprague, MA  
Catherine Wyss, BA