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Title of Hearing: Improving Work and Other Welfare Reform Goals

Documented need for CASH ASSISTANCE – We have documented 266 families with children within the Greenbrier Connections Collaborative area (Monroe, Greenbrier, Summers, Pocahontas counties) that have no cash income. One recommendation in regard to the capacity “Families have an enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs” is to create a direct connection between federal food stamp (SNAP) participants and an additional guaranteed minimum cash income of \$6,000.00 a year or \$500.00 a month to all families with children. This would mean the difference of a family having a roof over their head and being able to stay together. The cost to the government for homelessness would decline if a family had the cash needed to stay in their home.

One area not being addressed in looking at foster care, adoption and Child Protective Services (CPS) is the ability of the family to provide basics for their children. Without cash, we would all be at risk for being evicted for non-payment of rent or our mortgage. We would be at risk of losing our automobile to repossession. We would be at risk of having our utilities turned off by the electric and water companies for nonpayment. This in turn would make us at risk for neglect of our family/children if we could not provide shelter, utilities, etc. We would not be able to look for a job, much less keep a job if we did not have transportation, especially in rural areas. These stresses on families would multiply which could lead to domestic violence and child abuse. This in turn could lead to a CPS investigation and the possibility of a family losing their children. Then a child is placed in foster care and someone is paid \$600.00 a month per child to care for the child. In our current economic recession, many families are facing the scenario described above for the first time in their life. They soon become aware that a \$340.00 TANF check once a month will not pay the rent, utilities, auto payment, auto insurance, health insurance, taxes, etc...

While researching family income and the ability of families to pay for basics, we were finding families with no cash income. Monroe County already knew this was a growing problem since they have a flex fund that helps families as a fund of last resort in existence for ten years and have been identifying families with no cash income as part of the application process. Upon further investigation, a 2007 USDA report about incomes of SNAP cases said that 15% of all cases nationwide have no cash income. Within the four county collaborative we work in, that would come to 750 SNAP cases if we used the 15% national percentage. We estimate that more than 20,000 SNAP cases/families in West Virginia have no cash income. We requested data from local, regional and state officials beginning in March 2009 to determine actual

numbers of SNAP cases with no cash income. We were finally successful in July 2009 to receive the requested data from a state level person for the month of June, 2009. The actual number in our four county collaborative was higher than our 15% estimate. There were 811 SNAP cases with no cash income. 266 of these 811 SNAP cases/families have children. Greenbrier County has 138, Monroe County has 55, Pocahontas County has 26 and Summers County has 47 families with children with no cash income.

Our next step was to determine how many of the 266 SNAP cases/families with children in our collaborative area were CPS cases. How many had been investigated? How many of the 266 families had lost their children due to neglect? We are still trying to get accurate statistics. This information should be easy to get by the state DHHR office. The CPS intake form on page 2 has Demographic-Employ/Income/School and says Enter the Approximate Monthly Gross Income. This information is available at http://www.wvfacts.org/WVFact/learning/guides/Intake/CPS_Intake.htm

According to a NCANDS report provided to our collaborative there were 1,588 (duplicated) CPS referrals in 2006. These were listed by allegation type as follows: Physical Abuse 282, **Neglect or Deprivation of Necessities 580**, Medical Neglect 23, Sexual Abuse 71, Psychological or Emotional Maltreatment 184, No Alleged Maltreatment 372, Other 76. It is clear that neglect or deprivation of necessities were highest for CPS referrals in 2006.

The Center for the Study of Social Policy states that child neglect can be a consequence of family crisis, such as stresses associated with the lack of resources. We live in a material world in America. As of January 21, 2009, there were 8,928 TANF families in West Virginia according to a USDHHR report. A report by the Child Welfare League of America: Advocacy: State Fact Sheets 2009 for West Virginia gives the following data: The number of families receiving TANF in March 2008 was 8,569, a 12.3% decrease from March 2007. The total number of individuals receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in West Virginia decreased from 23,271 in March 2007 to 18,702 in March 2008, a decrease of 19.6%. In 2003, a family of three receiving only TANF and food stamp benefits in West Virginia was at 42.4% of the federal poverty guidelines. In 2006, West Virginia spent \$115,049,674.00 in TANF funds. These funds were used as follows:

1. 32.4% on basic assistance
2. 3.93% on child care
3. 14.5% on transportation
4. **49.2% on non assistance**

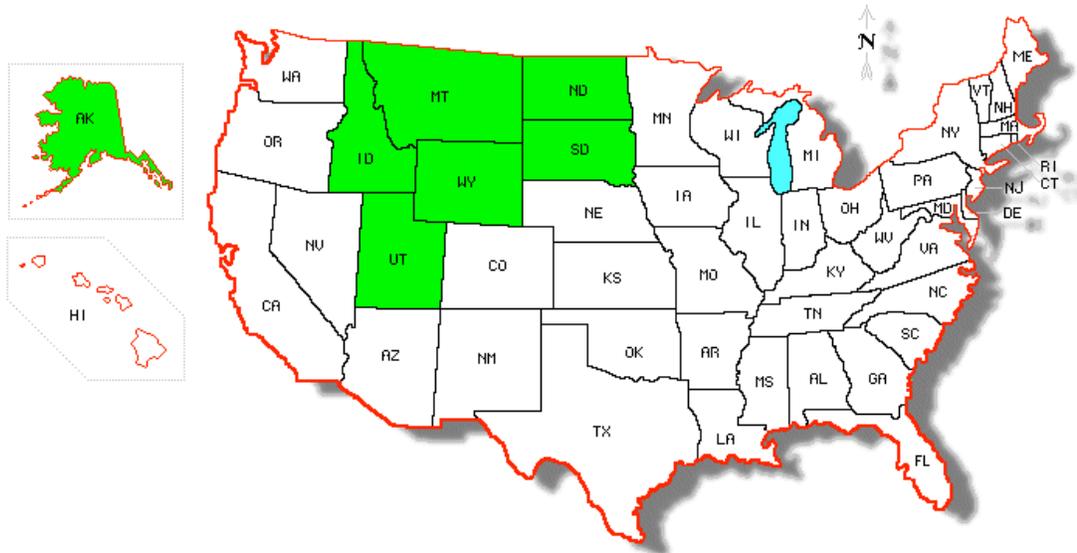
In 2007, West Virginia collected and distributed \$179,519,305 in child support funds, a 2.7% increase from 2006. In these distressing economic times, it would be prudent to spend 100% of TANF funds on basic assistance for those already on TANF and those that have little or no cash income. The fact that 49.2% of TANF funds are spent on non assistance is open to question. Where is this money going? \$6,000.00 divided into \$115,049,674.00 TANF funds equals 19,175. This means that TANF funds could provide 19,175 families with \$6,000.00 a year. As of March 2008, there were 8,569 families receiving TANF

which would leave enough current funding to provide 10,606 more families with \$6,000.00 per year. MOE or Maintenance of Effort funds should only be used for basic assistance for families. No family in America should have to live without cash assistance.

The following information was taken from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Studies:

1997	22.9 million people – 9% had no income = 2.061 million individuals with no cash income
1998	19.8 million people – 9% had no income = 1.782 millions individuals with no cash income
1999	18.2 million people – 8.5% had no income = 1.547 million individuals with no cash income
2000	17.2 million people – 8.4% had no income = 1.445 million individuals with no cash income
2001	17.7 million people – 9% had no income = 1.593 million individuals with no cash income
2002	19 million people – 11% had no income = 2.09 million individuals with no cash income
2003	21.3 million people – 12% had no income = 2.556 million individuals with no cash income
2004	23.9 million people – 13% had no income = 3.107 million individuals with no cash income
2005	25.7 million people – 14% had no income = 3.598 million individuals with no cash income
2006	26.7 million people – 14% had no income = 3.738 million individuals with no cash income
2007	26.5 million people – 15% had no income = 3.975 million individuals with no cash income
2008	28.4 million people – 16% had no income = 4.544 million individuals with no cash income
2009	33.7 million people – 18% had no income = 6.066 million individuals with no cash income

In March 2011 there were 8,025,719 individuals that had no cash income in America. That is more individuals than the populations of Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Alaska and Utah



NOTES:
Population of Wyoming (544,270), North Dakota (646,844), South Dakota (812,383), Montana (974,989), Idaho (1,545,287) Alaska (698,473) Utah (2,763,885) = 7,986,645 individuals

6-15-11

We end this statement with a quote "I am convinced that the simplest approach will prove to be the most effective-the solution to poverty is to abolish it directly by a now widely discussed measure: the guaranteed income" - Martin Luther King Jr. in his final book *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (1967) from the chapter entitled "Where We are Going".

We request consideration by the Committee and for inclusion in the printed record of the hearing. Thank you.