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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

WASHINGTON, DC 20515

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

June 20, 2002

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
Chairman, Committee on Health, Education
Labor, and Pension
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kennedy:

On May 16, 2002, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 4737, the "Personal Responsibility, Work and Family Promotion Act of 2002." This legislation reauthorizes the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program for 5 years, continuing and building upon the dramatic success of the 1996 welfare reform law, which lifted nearly 3 million children from poverty and led to significant increases in employment and earnings by current and former welfare recipients. Under current law TANF's authorization expires on September 30, 2002.

As Chairman of the Ways and Means Human Resources Subcommittee with jurisdiction over TANF, child care and related programs, I am concerned that the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pension (HELP) has yet to reauthorize these critical programs. While a number of proposals have been introduced in the Senate, including S. 2648 introduced on June 19, 2002 by Senators Hutchinson and Sessions that closely tracks the House-passed bill, there has been no formal Senate action, either in Committee or on the floor, to reauthorize the 1996 reforms as required.

As of today, 35 days have elapsed since the House passed its bill and only 102 days remain before the TANF program expires. The coming weeks include the Fourth of July and August district work periods. Other priorities, such as homeland security, prescription drug coverage, and multiple appropriations bills, will compete for attention. In short, it is imperative for the HELP Committee and the full Senate to act in the coming weeks to extend the 1996 reforms. Further delay will threaten Congress' ability to reauthorize this critical program in a comprehensive fashion, as the House has done and the President has proposed.

Senator Kennedy
Page 2

I urge the HELP Committee to act on welfare reform legislation as soon as possible, so that the Senate can then approve a bill, conference deliberations can occur, and a final agreement can be approved and presented to the President for signature before the program expires.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wally Herger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The word "Wally" is written in a larger, more prominent script than "Herger".

Wally Herger