

Testimony
Senate Bill No. 2291
Senate Human Services Committee
Senator Judy Lee, Chairman
January 25, 2023

Chairman Lee and members of the Senate Human Services Committee, I am Michele Gee, Director of the Economic Assistance Section with the Department of Health and Human Services (Department). I appear before you to provide testimony on Senate Bill 2291.

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program was originally established as part of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), replacing the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) Program.

Senate Bill 2291 proposes changes to North Dakota Century Code section 50-09-29, setting the maximum benefit level for the TANF Program to “at least fifty percent of the federal poverty level based on household size”. The House Human Services Committee is currently considering House Bill 1036 with the same intent to raise the maximum benefit level for the TANF Program.

The TANF benefit level is currently defined in section 75-02-01.2-35 of the North Dakota Administrative Code and represents the amount of household income, adjusted by household size and living arrangement, that is necessary to maintain a standard of living compatible with decency and health. The six basic items of need considered are shelter, food, clothing, personal need items, household supplies, fuel and utilities.

The current standard of need as outlined in North Dakota Administrative Code means that families whose household income is approximately 22-25% of the Federal Poverty Limit may be eligible to receive assistance from the TANF program. Translated into dollars and cents, this means that a single parent household with two children may be eligible to receive a financial benefit from TANF if their household income is equal to or less than \$5,069 a year, or approximately \$422 of earnings per month.

The change proposed in Senate Bill 2291 would allow families with household income that is equal to approximately 50% of the Federal Poverty Limit to become eligible for TANF financial assistance in North Dakota. This would mean that a single parent household with two children may be eligible for the TANF program if their income is equal to or less than \$11,520 a year, or approximately \$960 a month.

This concludes my testimony. I would be happy to try to answer any questions the committee may have. Thank you.