



# TANF Coalition

## Improving Colorado Works for Families

### Support HB22-1XXX

Reps. Duran & Jodeh

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), known here as Colorado Works, provides financial support to families far below the federal poverty level. A parent with two children must make **less than \$421 a month** to qualify for TANF basic cash assistance. Even before the pandemic, families enrolled in TANF were facing the greatest barriers to financial security and well-being.

### For a family of three, living in extreme poverty means getting by on only \$10 per person per day

For a family of three to get out of extreme poverty (above 50% of the Federal Poverty Level) they would need to make more than \$10,980 per year. To lift families out of extreme poverty, Colorado should:

- ◆ Increase TANF basic cash assistance and ensure that it keeps up with the rising cost of living
- ◆ Make improvements to how TANF serves families
- ◆ Reduce the “cliff effect” and create a smoother off-ramp to economic security
- ◆ Improve engagement and outreach with families

### Increase cash assistance and ensure that it keeps up with the rising cost of living

- Basic Cash Assistance (BCA) is the most targeted approach Colorado can take to reducing extreme childhood poverty, which has a lifelong impact on child well-being.
- BCA in Colorado is only \$508 a month for a family of three, leaving that family living at about 28% of the poverty level. Twenty states have BCA payments higher than Colorado measured as a percentage of the poverty level.
- **Colorado should increase BCA payments for families to the equivalent of 50% of the poverty level**, or \$915 a month for a family of three, and ensure that payments keep up with the rising cost of living in Colorado in future years.

BECAUSE THE TANF BASIC CASH ASSISTANCE PAYMENT IS NOT TIED TO INFLATION, IT IS WORTH LESS TODAY THAN IN 1996.

MONTHLY TANF BCA BENEFIT LEVELS FOR A SINGLE-PARENT FAMILY OF 3 IN 2018 DOLLARS



Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

### **Make improvements to how TANF serves families**

- Reduce punitive sanctions to minimize barriers for families seeking economic security
- Improve access to child care and child care assistance for families enrolled in TANF
- Update work requirements to be more responsive to the needs of families
- Fully lift the drug felony ban from participation in the TANF program

### **Reduce the “cliff effect” and allow a smoother off-ramp to economic security**

- Improve income disregards as parents find employment and move toward economic security
- Improve time limit extensions for participation in TANF to be more responsive to families’ needs
- Extend the recertification period to 12 months to align with other programs

### **Improve engagement and outreach with families**

- Elevate family voices in the spaces where decisions about TANF policies are made and implemented
- Make investments to improve outreach and communication about TANF to eligible families, including immigrant families
- Require consistent communication with enrolled families about program options and services, including child care, work and education, and other supports

### **Supporters:**

Colorado Center on Law & Policy  
Colorado Children’s Campaign  
Clayton Early Learning