



Legislation Summary:

An Act relative to the care and well-being of a child

Initial bill number: [H85](#) (Bill numbers will change as legislation proceeds.)

Sponsor: Rep. Marjorie C. Decker

The Massachusetts Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) program provides basic cash grants to poor families to reduce the harmful effect of poverty on children. It currently includes a “family cap” which denies welfare benefits to children conceived while, or soon after, a family qualifies or receives assistance except in rare circumstances such as rape or incest if documented. The bill would remove the family cap and allow all children in a family to count toward benefits.

TAFDC benefits are extremely low to begin with. If an additional child is born, the child does not count toward the benefit level and does not receive the annual clothing allowance for children (\$250/year). As a result, benefits received must stretch further, negatively impacting the new child and any older siblings. The family cap pushes families deeper into poverty. In general, welfare benefits go up by about \$100 a month as family size increases. For example, the basic grant for a family of two with no countable income is \$478 a month (36% of federal poverty level); the basic grant for a family of three is \$578 a month (36%). But a family of three with a child excluded by the Family Cap receives only \$478 a month (28% of FPL).

League Position: Meeting Basic Human Needs: To support programs and policies to reduce or prevent poverty. Benefit levels should be sufficient to provide decent, adequate standards for food, clothing and shelter. Where We Stand p. 48-50