



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities
In support of
H.104 An Act to lift the cap on kids and S.37 An Act relative to well-being and care of a child
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The League of Women Voters supports policies and programs that promote the well-being, encourage the full development and ensure the safety of all children and supports programs and policies to reduce or prevent poverty. Benefit levels should be sufficient to provide decent, adequate standards for food, clothing and shelter.

Child poverty is a moral issue as well as an economic and humanitarian one because children have no power over their economic circumstances, and the consequences of poverty are likely to limit their opportunities and incomes throughout their lives.

Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (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. 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.

The consequences of that kind of extreme poverty are very severe. Children are impacted in the present and in the future.

Children growing up in poverty suffer toxic stress and are more likely to drop out of high school, go to jail, have kids out of marriage, experience lower IQs, and end up poor as adults. The costs nationally are estimated to be \$500 billion a year, in economic losses, health care, and crime.¹

Being born into deep poverty more than doubles a child's chances of having very low incomes in the future relative to middle-income children. In addition, nearly half (45.3 percent) of adults who were persistently poor during childhood lived in poverty at age 35. Fully 40 percent of people born into deep poverty had incomes in the bottom fifth of the income distribution as adults.²

¹ Holzer, H.J., Schanzenbach, D.W., Duncan, G.J., Ludwig, J. (2008, March 4). The economic costs of child poverty in the United States. *Journal of Children and Poverty*. 14(1), 41-61. doi:10.1080/10796120101871280

² Anderson, A. (2015). *Five Facts Everyone Should Know About Deep Poverty* (Report). Sacramento, CA: California Budget and Policy Center

Deep poverty increases as public supports weaken. The Family Cap on benefits is a policy which weakens supports to the most vulnerable among us, the children. It is time to end this failed policy. The League of Women Voters urges you to support H.104 and S.37 and make every child count.

Thank you for your consideration.