

109TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. CON. RES. 438

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Congress that continuation of the welfare reforms provided for in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 should remain a priority.

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Whereas the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program established by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–193) has succeeded in moving families from welfare to work and reducing child poverty;

Whereas there has been a dramatic increase in the employment of current and former welfare recipients;

Whereas the percentage of working recipients reached an all-time high in fiscal year 1999 and held steady in fiscal years 2000 and 2001;

Whereas, in fiscal year 2004, 32 percent of adult recipients were counted as meeting TANF work participation requirements, significantly above pre-reform levels;

Whereas earnings for welfare recipients remaining on the rolls also have increased significantly, as have earnings for female-headed households;

Whereas single mothers, on average, earned \$13.50 per hour in 2004, almost three times the minimum wage;

Whereas the increases have been particularly large for the bottom 2 income quintiles, that is, those women who are most likely to be former or current welfare recipients;

Whereas welfare dependency has plummeted;

Whereas, as of September 2005, 1,887,855 families, including 4,443,170 individuals, were receiving TANF assistance, and accordingly, the number of families in the welfare caseload and the number of individuals receiving cash assistance declined 56 percent and 61 percent, respectively, since the enactment of the TANF program;

Whereas, since the enactment of welfare reform, the number of children in the United States has grown from 69,000,000 in 1995 to 73,000,000 in 2004, which is an increase of 4,000,000, yet 1,400,000 fewer children were living in poverty in 2004 than in 1995—a 14 percent decline in overall child poverty;

Whereas the poverty rates for African-American and Hispanic children also have declined remarkably—20 percent and 28 percent, respectively, since 1995;

Whereas, as a Nation, we have made substantial progress in reducing teen pregnancies and births, slowing increases in non-marital childbearing, and improving child support collections and paternity establishment;

Whereas the birth rate to teenagers declined 30 percent from its high in 1991 to 2004. The 2004 teenage birth rate of 41.2 per 1,000 women aged 15 through 19 is the lowest recorded birth rate for teenagers since 1940;

Whereas, during the period from 1991 through 2001, teenage birth rates fell in all States and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands;

Whereas such declines also have spanned age, racial, and ethnic groups;

Whereas there has been success in lowering the birth rate for both younger and older teens;

Whereas the birth rate for those aged 15 through 17 declined 43 percent since 1991, the rate for those aged 18 and 19 declined 26 percent, and the rate for African American teens—until recently the highest—declined the most—falling 47 percent from 1991 through 2004;

Whereas, since the enactment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, child support collections within the child support enforcement system have grown every year, increasing from \$12,000,000,000 in fiscal year 1996 to over \$22,000,000,000 in fiscal year 2004;

Whereas the number of paternities established or acknowledged in fiscal year 2003—over 1,600,000—includes an almost 300 percent increase in paternities established through in-hospital acknowledgement programs promoted by the 1996 welfare reforms, and there were almost

915,000 paternities established this way in 2004 compared to 324,652 in 1996;

Whereas child support collections were made in nearly 8,100,000 cases in fiscal year 2004, significantly more than the almost 4,000,000 cases in which a collection was made in 1996;

Whereas the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 gave States great flexibility in the use of Federal funds to develop innovative programs to help families leave welfare and begin employment, and to encourage the formation of 2-parent families;

Whereas annual Federal funding for under the new TANF block grant program have been held constant at the all-time highs set in 1995, despite unprecedented welfare caseload declines and despite the fact that States may spend as little as 75 percent as much as they spent spending under the prior AFDC program;

Whereas total welfare and child care funds available per family increased over 130 percent between 1995 and 2004, from \$6,934 to \$16,185;

Whereas child care expenditures have quadrupled under welfare reform, rising from \$3,000,000,000 in 1995 to \$12,000,000,000 in 2004;

Whereas, under the TANF program, States have enjoyed significant new flexibility in making policy choices and investment decisions best suited to the needs of their citizens;

Whereas, despite all of these successes, there is still progress to be made;

Whereas significant numbers of welfare recipients still are not engaged in employment-related activities;

Whereas, while all States have met the overall work participation rates required by law, in an average month, only 41 percent of all TANF families with an adult participated in work activities for even a single hour that was countable toward the State's work participation rate;

Whereas, in 2002, 34 percent of all births in the United States were to unmarried women;

Whereas, despite recent progress in reducing teen pregnancy in general, with fewer teens entering marriage, the proportion of births to unmarried teens has increased dramatically to 80 percent in 2002 from 30 percent in 1970;

Whereas the negative consequences of out-of-wedlock birth on the mother, the child, the family, and society are well documented;

Whereas the negative consequences include increased likelihood of welfare dependency, increased risks of low birth weight, poor cognitive development, child abuse and neglect, teen parenthood, and decreased likelihood of having an intact marriage during adulthood, and these outcomes result despite the often heroic struggles of mostly single mothers to care for their families;

Whereas there has been a dramatic rise in cohabitation as marriages have declined;

Whereas an estimated 40 percent of children are expected to live in a cohabiting-parent family at some point during their childhood;

Whereas children in single-parent households and cohabiting-parent households are at much higher risk of child abuse than children in intact married families;

Whereas children who live apart from their biological fathers are, on average, more likely to be poor, experience edu-

cational, health, emotional, and psychological problems, be victims of child abuse, engage in criminal behavior, and become involved with the juvenile justice system than their peers who live with their married, biological mother and father;

Whereas, despite the strenuous efforts of single mothers to care for their children, a child living with a single mother is nearly 5 times as likely to be poor as a child living in a married-couple family; and

Whereas, in 2003, in married-couple families, the child poverty rate was 8.6 percent: in households headed by a single mother the poverty rate was 41.7 percent: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
 2 *concurring)*, That it is the sense of the Congress that in-
 3 creasing success in moving families from welfare to work,
 4 as well as in promoting healthy marriage and other means
 5 of improving child well-being, as promoted by the welfare
 6 reforms in the Personal Responsibility and Work Oppor-
 7 tunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, are very important Gov-
 8 ernment interests and should remain priorities for the re-
 9 sponsible Federal and State agencies in the years ahead

- 1 for assisting needy families and others at risk of poverty
- 2 and dependence on government benefits.

Passed the House of Representatives July 18, 2006.

Attest:

Clerk.