

**TESTIMONY OF PROJECT HOPE IN SUPPORT OF
H.104 An Act to lift the cap on kids/S.37 An Act relative to well-being and care of a child**

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Dear Chairwoman Chang-Diaz, Chairwoman Khan, and members of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities:

Thank you for the opportunity to convey our support for the House and Senate bills to “lift the cap on kids” (H.104 and S.37). We urge the Committee to give a quick and favorable report to these bills.

Project Hope is a nonprofit social service agency that serves low-income families in the Dorchester and Roxbury neighborhoods of Boston. We offer a variety of housing services, job training programs, and adult education classes, in addition to operating a small family shelter and a family childcare business enterprise. Many of the families we serve rely on TAFDC benefits as they make the challenging transition from homelessness to stable housing and from unemployment or underemployment to secure, living wage jobs.

The bills sponsored by Representative Marjorie Decker and Senator Sal DiDomenico (H.104 and S.37, respectively) would undo a harmful and outdated policy that currently excludes 8,700 children from receiving TAFDC benefits because of when they were born. “Family cap” policies were implemented in 24 states including Massachusetts during the welfare reform of the 1990s in an attempt to reduce births among families receiving welfare. Evidence has shown that family cap policies have no effect on birth rates among women on welfare (which are on par with the birth rates of the general population), and eight states have since repealed their caps.

The TAFDC grant amount is woefully inadequate to begin with. Among families served by Project Hope that are receiving TAFDC, the median benefit amount is \$478 per month. TAFDC recipients affected by the family cap have an even harder time, as they must stretch their meager benefits to afford basic necessities for their newborn baby and the baby’s older sibling(s). The day-to-day stress of making sure that all of their children are fed, clothed, and healthy makes it virtually impossible for parents to focus on longer-term housing, education, and employment goals. An extra \$100 per month would go a long way in reducing some of this stress for the families we serve, helping them to meet their basic needs and providing a stronger foundation from which they can work towards economic mobility.

For these reasons, we urge the Committee to give your full support to these bills. Massachusetts never should have implemented the unjust family cap policy, and it is high time we repealed it.

Thank you again for your attention to this important issue.