

# LARSON BLASTS REPUBLICAN WELFARE BILL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 16, 2002  
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Legislation Makes it More Difficult for People to Escape Poverty; Saddles Connecticut With a \$133 Million Unfunded Mandate

WASHINGTON, D.C.- U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) today voted against H.R. 4737, the Republican welfare reform authorization bill that would significantly limit the state's ability to move people off of welfare, forces many recipients into "make-work" activities instead of actual wage-paying jobs and fails to adequately fund child care -- providing barely enough to keep up with inflation. The legislation would also burden states with up to \$11 billion in unfunded mandates - including \$133 million for Connecticut.

Larson stated: "Connecticut and many other states are already facing budgetary difficulties, and this bill would impose a massive unfunded mandate of \$133 million on the state. At the same time, the legislation fails to provide the resources to assist families in escaping poverty and States the capacity to reduce the number of people on assistance. The Republican strategy for welfare reform re-authorization seems to be: 'if it isn't broken, try and fix it anyway, and in the process make the program more restrictive.' In fact, this legislation should have created greater opportunity for people to become educated, gain meaningful employment and incentivize them to leave public assistance programs. This legislation should not be about punishing the poor, it should be about further assisting those out of poverty and into work.

"I voted for the Democratic alternative because what we need to do is build on the present system by increasing the incentives for people to get out of poverty, not just off public assistance. The Democratic alternative would have promoted employment through grants to states, increased child care funding by \$11 billion over five years, counted vocational education and study leading to a GED as work participation requirements, promoted two-parent families and worked to reduce teen pregnancy," said Larson.

The Republican bill's unfunded mandates could force states to cut assistance to working families - such as child care - in order to meet the new requirements for welfare recipients, while 15 million American children are currently eligible for day care assistance but cannot participate because many states lack the necessary funding. The bill also restricts state discretion to provide education and training to recipients, and doubles the number of required work hours for mothers with children under the age of six, from 20 to 40 hours a week. Additionally, the Republican bill does nothing to provide additional assistance to people who leave welfare in the form of transitional health coverage so they are not left in poverty once they exit welfare. Also, the bill no longer even allows states to include vocational education as one of the work-related activities that can count towards their work requirement and continues to prevent assistance from going to legal immigrants.

The provisions for the Democratic Alternative to the Republican bill include:

## 1. Work Requirements

- Require every recipient to have an individual responsibility plan, increase work participation rate to 70%, provide state with options to require 40 hours of participation per week, include employment credits

## 2. Vocational Education

- Count vocational education and post-secondary education for 24 months against the work participation requirement,

count course of study leading to English literacy or GED toward work requirement, count rehabilitative services designed to promote employment, including substance abuse treatment for six months as a work activity

### 3. Poverty Reduction

- Include reducing poverty as a purpose of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and provide financial bonuses to states reducing child poverty

### 4. Promoting Employment

- Provide grants to states to promote employment advancement and require states to have goals to increase earnings for people who leave welfare, exempt TANF-funded wage subsidies from the five year time limit, permanently extend and improve the Transitional Medicaid Program for people leaving welfare for work, ensure that participants in work experience jobs are covered by workplace protections

### 5. Funding

- Provide inflation increase for TANF
- Extend and improve Supplemental Grants
- Increase child care funding by \$11 billion over five years
- Make Puerto Rico and the territories eligible for certain TANF and child care funding

### 6. Immigrants

- Remove the ban on states serving legal immigrants with federal TANF funds
- Remove the ban on states serving legal immigrant pregnant woman and children under Medicaid

### 7. Family Formation and Responsible Parenting

- Provide \$100 million per year for grants to states to promote the formation of two parent families, reduce teenage pregnancies and help non-custodial parents support their children
- Encourage states to pass through child support to current and former welfare families
- Replace abstinence only program with an abstinence-plus program

### 8. Research and Data

- Require tracking of the employment status of people who leave welfare in every state
- Increase information about TANF programs and caseloads, including outcomes based on race.

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