



Committee on Health and Human Services
April 24, 2015 (**Speaker #2**)

My name is I am here today to speak on behalf of Good Faith Communities Coalition. Good Faith is a voice of District faith congregations concerned about our neighbors who are poor and marginalized.

Good Faith actively supports public programs such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). The human cost of homelessness and housing insecurity that the city is experiencing is staggering. Close to 17,000 families are currently enrolled in TANF. **TANF serves roughly one-third of all DC families.** Close to 6,000 families with more than 13,000 children are due to lose all benefits in October.

The Department of Human Services and many advocates have stated that TANF has not delivered the promised services that would have assisted these 6,000 families to develop work skills that would prepare them for employment. In addition, assistance in finding a job in a job market that remains weak for DC residents with less than a bachelor's degree has not been available on the scale and time frame required. This situation was not the fault of the families, but rather the design and implementation of the program itself.

We can lament lost time and increased costs, but we can't make these 6,000 families pay for a program that promised help and then failed to deliver. The Department of Human Services has made a proposal to use a one year extension to correct deficiencies in TANF and meet the needs of those about to age out. Their plans also include future improvements in the program so that assessment allows targeting families with more specific needs with appropriate training and providing hardship extensions if warranted.

The Department's planning is sound, the needs are documented. We must invest in this one year extension if for no other reason than if 6,000 families are terminated from benefits and services many will find themselves in the shelter system. Clearly this system is already overloaded and beyond capacity. There is no benefit for the families or for the community from this draconian scenario.

As faith communities we honor and embrace all people in our community. Families receiving TANF benefits are our neighbors, our community, children of God. **We must invest in their future.**

Thank you for listening; we look forward to your leadership in making homelessness "rare, brief and a non-recurring experience."

Note: Statistics from DCFPI's *What's in the Proposed FY2016 Budget for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)?* Budget Toolkit, 2016.