

109TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. CON. RES. 447

Expressing the sense of the Congress that States should have the flexibility to design welfare programs that make sense in their communities with an overall goal of helping children and reducing poverty by promoting and supporting work.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 13, 2006

Mr. McDERMOTT (for himself and Mr. LEVIN) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Congress that States should have the flexibility to design welfare programs that make sense in their communities with an overall goal of helping children and reducing poverty by promoting and supporting work.

Whereas the number of children in poverty dropped from 14,500,000 to 11,600,000 between 1996 and 2000;

Whereas the percentage of single mothers working increased from 63.5 percent in 1996 to nearly 73 percent in 2000;

Whereas dramatic gains in the collection of child support have been achieved since 1996;

Whereas many States substantially increased their investments in key work supports such as child care and transportation, making it possible for the parents of poor children to go to work;

Whereas a strong economy in the late 1990s, a significant increase in the Earned Income Tax Credit, and a number of new Federal and State welfare policies helped stimulate these improvements;

Whereas a significant portion of this progress has been reversed in the last 4 years;

Whereas over 5,000,000 more Americans fell into poverty since 2000, including 1,500,000 children;

Whereas the percentage of employed single women with children declined from nearly 73 percent in 2000 to less than 69 percent in 2005;

Whereas as many as half of the parents who left welfare for work lacked health insurance a year later, in part because of problems in the Transitional Medicaid program;

Whereas the percentage of poor single mothers who report they are neither working nor receiving cash welfare increased to 33 percent in 2004, the highest rate on record according to an analysis from the Congressional Research Service (CRS);

Whereas, in 2004, children of single mothers in extreme poverty experienced a dwindling benefit from their mothers' income, as that income dropped to its lowest level in at least 18 years, reaching only 26.4 percent of the poverty threshold;

Whereas Congress had an opportunity to help restore the progress of the late 1990s by continuing the States' flexibility to design programs to meet local needs but with a

stronger emphasis on making work pay and reducing poverty as the end goal of welfare reform;

Whereas federally funded research has demonstrated that State programs which focused on moving people to better jobs resulted in longer-term employment, more family self-sufficiency, and fewer returns to cash assistance;

Whereas Congress enacted provisions in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2006 (DRA) that instead impeded State flexibility to pursue many of the strategies that have proved to be most effective in generating long-term employment, while also increasing the incentive to cut caseloads at the expense of reducing poverty;

Whereas provisions in the DRA went so far as to impose Federal requirements on programs implemented with only State funds, including on programs designed specifically to help two-parent families;

Whereas the Congressional Budget Office has estimated it will cost States \$8,400,000,000 over 5 years to comply with the requirements of the DRA;

Whereas the value of the grants provided to States under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program will have lost 27 percent of their original value by 2010 under the DRA;

Whereas only one-quarter of children eligible for child care assistance under State eligibility rules receive any assistance and only one-seventh of those eligible under Federal criteria receive such aid;

Whereas the Congressional Budget Office estimates that it will cost \$3,500,000,000 over the next 5 years for Federal child care funding to maintain pace with inflation and simply continue the current level of child care serv-

ices, yet the DRA provided less than one-third of that amount; and

Whereas the value of work has been allowed to dangerously erode, with the minimum wage now at its lowest level as a percentage of poverty on record, not even reaching 70 percent of the poverty threshold for full-time, full-year work: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
 2 *concurring)*, That it is the sense of the Congress that re-
 3 warding hard work and helping families and children es-
 4 cape poverty is a vital national interest, and that the Fed-
 5 eral Government should provide States with sufficient
 6 guidance, flexibility, encouragement, and resources to pur-
 7 sue this goal through their welfare programs.

○