



I N D I A N A
COMMUNITY ACTION
POVERTY INSTITUTE
Research and Public Policy

Good Morning Chairman DeVon and members of the committee,

My name is Erin Macey, I'm the NEW director of the Indiana Community Action Poverty Institute. We are a program of the Indiana Community Action Association, which is the statewide association of Indiana's 22 community action agencies. Collectively, these agencies offer over 40 unique programs – from financial literacy and savings programs to home weatherization and Head Start. The Institute supports their efforts to set families on a path to self-sufficiency through research and policy advocacy.

Since you have already heard testimony on this bill, I just want to briefly underscore the importance of this program as a tool to support children, families, employers, and the state. I have spent the past two years working as part of a maternal and child health initiative supported by Riley Children's Foundation focused on building better support systems for pregnant women in zip codes with high infant mortality rates.

Pregnancy and early parenthood can cause separation from employment and episodes of need, especially among women in physically demanding, low-wage jobs. Being told by a doctor that you need to stop working or risk losing your baby or having childcare fall through are perfect examples of this. Cash assistance can and does help stabilize these households.

The increased benefits you are providing under SB 265 will allow a mother in need to hold on to her car, and to afford basics like diapers. It may not be enough for her to remain independently housed, but it does offer enough to allow her to contribute to rent at the home of a friend or family member, which in turn keeps her out of a shelter or off the street. TANF can also connect women quickly to child care, help with job search, and support transportation to job interviews.

For employers, this means potential workers get back into the workforce more quickly and with greater reliability and availability.

At the same time, the stability and support provided through cash assistance can have significant health benefits and can reduce expenditure on other services, like shelters and child protective services. A small, well-timed investment in the life of a family can have an outsized impact.

I'm grateful for the step you are taking today to update TANF and for the persistent advocacy of those who got the bill to this point. This bill also has the support of the Indiana Coalition for Human Services, and I have been asked directly to express the support of the United Way of Central Indiana, the Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Feeding Indiana's Hungry, the Indiana Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, and Lafayette Urban Ministries. We all appreciate your support of SB 265.