

2022 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 35

BY REPRESENTATIVES BACALA, ADAMS, AMEDEE, BOYD, CREWS, DUBUISSON, ECHOLS, EDMONDS, EDMONSTON, FIRMENT, FISHER, GADBERRY, GREEN, HORTON, TRAVIS JOHNSON, KERNER, LARVADAIN, MCMAHEN, MIGUEZ, DUSTIN MILLER, NEWELL, CHARLES OWEN, ROBERT OWEN, SCHAMERHORN, SELDERS, STAGNI, THOMPSON, TURNER, AND WRIGHT

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To request a joint study effort by the Department of Children and Family Services, the Louisiana Department of Health, the Louisiana Department of Education, the Louisiana Housing Corporation, and the Louisiana Workforce Commission to examine the phenomena known as "benefits cliffs" and their effect on beneficiaries of public assistance programs and to submit recommendations to the legislature concerning means by which these disincentives for work can be eliminated.

WHEREAS, in certain means-tested public assistance programs, individuals lose eligibility for benefits as a result of an increase in their wages, even if the increase is not sufficient to cover basic needs; and

WHEREAS, when a needy family relying upon a public assistance program for food, housing, medical care, or other basic needs has an increase in earned income, the family experiences a reduction in or termination of public assistance; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's major means-tested public assistance programs include the following:

(1) The medical assistance program administered by the Louisiana Department of Health in accordance with Title XIX of the Social Security Act and known commonly as Medicaid.

(2) The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program administered by the Department of Children and Family Services (formerly known as the Food Stamp Program).

(3) The Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program administered by the Department of Children and Family Services as the general cash assistance component of the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant (the successor to the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program), commonly referred to as "welfare".

(4) The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children administered by the Louisiana Department of Health and known commonly as WIC.

(5) The Child Care Assistance Program administered by the Louisiana Department of Education.

(6) Housing assistance programs administered by the Louisiana Housing Corporation; and

WHEREAS, policymakers with differing ideologies generally agree that earning income from employment is essential in order for people to move from poverty to self-sufficiency; and

WHEREAS, the legislature finds that removing barriers to employment for members of low-income families who are willing and able to work and helping those who are needy to become financially self-reliant are widely shared goals among the members of this body.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby request a joint study effort by the Department of Children and Family Services, the Louisiana Department of Health, the Louisiana Department of Education, the Louisiana Housing Corporation, and the Louisiana Workforce Commission to examine the phenomena known as "benefits cliffs" and their effect on beneficiaries of public assistance programs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Children and Family Services shall lead the study effort called for in this Resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, no later than sixty days prior to the convening of the 2023 Regular Session, the Department of Children and Family Services shall submit to the elected members of legislature and to the David R. Poynter Legislative Research Library a report featuring key findings from the study called for in this Resolution and recommendations concerning means by which benefits cliffs can be eliminated.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study and report called for in this Resolution shall feature, at minimum, all of the following:

(1) An itemized listing of the major means-tested public assistance programs currently operating in this state along with the income eligibility standards and benefit amounts associated with each program and descriptions of the nature of the benefits offered by each program.

(2) For each type of benefit addressed in the report, an indication of whether benefit amounts phase down incrementally with increasing household income or a pronounced cliff occurs whereby income increasing by any amount causes a dramatic reduction in, or elimination of, benefits which is out of proportion to the gain in earned income.

(3) For each type of benefit featured in the report which has a pronounced cliff associated with it, options for actions that the state may take to eliminate the cliff.

(4) Any other information and findings that the parties conducting the study deem appropriate and necessary for the legislature to consider.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services, the secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health, the state superintendent of education, the executive director of the Louisiana Housing Corporation, and the executive director of the Louisiana Workforce Commission.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE