



<https://childrenslawcenter.org/our-impact/systemic-reform/tanf-is-stilla-lifeline/>

The TANF is Still a Lifeline Coalition works to support families with children by fighting to preserve and bolster DC's TANF program. To learn more please visit our website shared above.

Taken together, the TANF is Still a Lifeline Coalition appreciates DHS's efforts to improve TEP employment outcomes, particularly through the proposed increases in incentive payments. We support putting more money directly into the hands of enrollees who secure employment, which could help mitigate TANF's benefits cliff if implemented effectively. However, rewarding participants for finding work does not ensure they can access stable, well-paying jobs or overcome the barriers that make maintaining employment difficult. Improving outcomes requires more than changes to TEP's financial structure. DHS must address shortcomings in the program's education, training, and job placement services, drawing on providers' and enrollees' experiences to determine what changes are needed to help participants secure and maintain quality employment.

Last year, DHS reported that it "has not completed a labor force analysis and is not aware of such an analysis that would allow the agency to match TANF customers with available jobs in the District." DHS should conduct this analysis and use its findings to ensure TEP prepares participants for jobs that are actually in demand and offer pathways to economic stability.

Furthermore, the coalition is also concerned by the elimination of the \$800 "higher wage" payment. DHS explained that the payment was eliminated because its wage threshold was tied to the minimum wage, rendering it effectively moot. However, rather than eliminating the payment, DHS could have raised the wage threshold to preserve an incentive for placing enrollees in higher-paying jobs. This change reflects a broader shift away from incentivizing quality job placements, toward simply counting job placements as a measure of success. TEP should reward progress toward meaningful, sustainable employment, not treat any job placement as an outcome worth incentivizing.