

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 1516

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Hearing Date: March 16, 2021 8:00 AM

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Every Texan

Austin, TX

Every Texan opposes HB 1516 by Parker as it singles out the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program for expensive third-party audits that will not improve a program that only spends 4 percent of its funds on actual cash assistance to the poorest children in Texas.

The purpose of TANF is to help keep children in their own homes, or the homes of relatives, and keep them out of the care of the state if possible. Yet in Texas TANF rules are incredibly complicated and eligibility levels have not been updated in 25 years so enrollment has plummeted. To qualify for TANF a family of 3 cannot have more than \$188 per month in income or a car worth more than \$4,650. Limits so low that only the most destitute qualify. In December 2020 TANF served only 33,000 children and 8,000 parents in Texas despite record levels of poverty and hunger due to the pandemic.

Expensive outsider auditors will not solve Texas' failure to meet the goals of TANF. Only the Texas Legislature can simplify TANF's costly to administer rules and update our outdated eligibility requirements to reflect reality. Only the Legislature can redirect TANF funding to meet the needs of struggling children and families.