

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 31
INTRODUCED BY T. FACEY

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA AUTHORIZING THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES TO DEVELOP INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS WITHIN THE TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE TO NEEDY FAMILIES PROGRAM THAT DIVERT FAMILIES FROM RECEIVING CASH ASSISTANCE AND THAT PROVIDE A PATHWAY OUT OF POVERTY.

WHEREAS, the goal of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program is to assist families in achieving economic self-sufficiency, but the evaluation of the Montana program shows that families who leave the program do not attain self-sufficiency and remain in low-income jobs with limited, if any, benefits; and

WHEREAS, the TANF caseload has recently increased and the limited funding only allows for cash assistance payments and minimal work experience programs to ensure that the state meets its work participation rate; and

WHEREAS, Montana's Human and Community Services Division is committed to assisting families to move out of poverty, not locking them into minimum wage employment that keeps them in poverty; and

WHEREAS, Montana has successful initial experience with asset-building programs, assisting over 175 low-income families in Missoula, Billings, and Helena to build individual development accounts and to use them to go to school, start businesses, and become homeowners; and

WHEREAS, low-income families need a stable income package so that they can achieve personal savings and commercial credit to build assets.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

That the Department of Public Health and Human Services be authorized to develop an innovative program within the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program that diverts families from the assistance program and provides a pathway out of poverty. The program should:

(1) assist families to build assets, such as personal savings and commercial credit, and use individual development accounts;

- (2) provide a stable income base on which to build;
- (3) assist participation in post-secondary education and high-wage training;
- (4) coordinate access to any other support programs for which a family may qualify including Medicaid and child care; and
- (5) not count against the time limits for assistance.

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