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FACT  
SHEET

**House Bill 2678 – DRUG TESTING OF  
TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE TO NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF) RECIPIENTS  
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TANF benefits provide minimal, time-limited cash assistance to extremely poor mothers and children while moms gain work skills and seek jobs. HB2678 requires the Department of Economic Security to drug test all recipients and applicants for TANF and other welfare benefits. An applicant or recipient who tests positive for drugs and fails to participate in drug treatment will be denied assistance. An applicant or recipient who receives a second positive drug test would be denied assistance.

***Routine Drug Testing Spends Taxpayer Dollars without Targeted Results***

Routine drug testing spends large amounts of dollars on testing everyone, rather than focusing resources on families where substance abuse is preventing employment.

The Joint Legislative Budget Committee estimates that one-year costs of this drug testing alone would be \$3.4 million. *This amount does not include the cost of treatment.*

Drug testing programs were rejected in Louisiana, New York and Maryland due to the high cost.<sup>1</sup>

Because chemical drug testing will identify some adults who do not have significant drug abuse or dependence problems, scarce resources will be diverted away from more productive uses.<sup>2</sup>

***TANF Recipients Must Comply with Work Requirements***

Since federal welfare reform in 1996, TANF recipients must comply with work requirements and a variety of other rules – they must participate in job training and/or job search activities.

***Arizona has a Model Substance Abuse Program for TANF Recipients***

Arizona's Families First program allows TANF recipients to be referred to substance abuse treatment. This program has been cited by the National Conference of State Legislatures as a model program to promote self-sufficiency and stable home environments for children.<sup>3</sup>

## ***Widespread Drug Testing Requires Widespread Treatment Policies and Funding***

Drug testing by itself does nothing to promote employment, economic stability, or responsible parenting. If routine drug tests are conducted, how will the safety of children be protected? Will there be treatment available? Is residential treatment available when needed? Where will the children live? After drug testing, the state must have policies to provide treatment and safety to children.

## ***Routine Drug Testing Violates Constitutional Rights***

Beginning in October 1999, Michigan required all TANF applicants to provide urine tests as a condition of eligibility for aid. Testing was halted by a restraining order in November that same year. A federal appeals court permanently shut down the program in mid 2003, finding that the state's policy of blanket testing recipients was unconstitutional.<sup>4</sup>

Mandatory drug testing assumes that welfare applicants are substance abusers and that being poor is a crime.<sup>5</sup>

## ***Withholding TANF Benefits Hurts Innocent Children***

Cash assistance through TANF is very low. The benefit level has not been increased since 1992 and is not adjusted for inflation. A decrease or loss of benefits has devastating consequences for children.

According to a study of six large cities involving nearly ten-thousand families, young children living in families where benefits are cut suffer increased health crises and more hunger. For families receiving reductions or termination of cash benefits, there was a 90% increase in hospitalization at the time of an emergency room visit. Young children suffered a 50% higher risk of food insecurity when welfare benefits were decreased or ended.<sup>6</sup>

Research and experience with drug treatment show that relapses are common on the road to recovery. Arizona should not sanction a policy that endangers innocent children while their mothers are in treatment.

For more information, please contact:

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<sup>1</sup> *Conditional Welfare: A Family Social Work Perspective on Mandatory Drug Testing*, Michael Spencer, Jordana Muroff, Jorge Delva, The Haworth Press, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> *Drug Testing Welfare Recipients – False Positives, False Negatives, Unanticipated Opportunities*, Harold Pollack et. al., January 2001.

<sup>3</sup> *Substance Abuse and TANF*, State Policy Choices, National Conference of State Legislatures, April 2003.

<sup>4</sup> *Substance Abuse and Welfare Reform*, National Poverty Center, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan, April 2004.

<sup>5</sup> *Conditional Welfare: A Family Social Work Perspective on Mandatory Drug Testing*, Michael Spencer, Jordana Muroff, Jorge Delva, The Haworth Press, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> *The Impact of Welfare Sanctions on the Health of Infants and Toddlers*, Deborah Frank, Alan Meyers, Carol Berkowitz, Diana Cutts, Nieves Zaldivar, Maureen Black, and Patricia Casey. Children's Sentinel Nutrition Assessment Program, 2002.