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TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES REAUTHORIZATION

REQUESTED ACTIONS: Reauthorize the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to restore and enhance state and county flexibility to tailor work and support services that move families into self-sufficiency based on their unique needs. CSAC supports provisions maintaining the overall work focus of the program, while recognizing that “work first” does not mean “work only.” CSAC supports a permanent authorization and appropriation of funding for TANF subsidized employment programs. The reauthorization bill also should measure states’ performance in a fair and comprehensive manner that recognizes multiple potential positive outcomes for families.

BACKGROUND: Congress approved a one-year TANF extension in 2010 and included some modifications to the program’s reporting requirements that are due to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Congress late this summer. Those reports are intended to provide a more comprehensive compilation of the different levels of participation in work activities and receipt of other non-cash assistance supports. Those reports from HHS are intended to assist Congress as it crafts changes to TANF during the reauthorization process.

For its part, the Obama administration did not recommend any specific policy proposals for TANF reauthorization as part of its fiscal year 2012 budget request. Instead, the administration highlighted three areas in which it wants to work closely with members of Congress in the development of a new TANF bill. The areas the administration wants to address are:

- Developing a variety of strategies to strengthen the TANF program’s capacity to improve outcomes for families and children, including helping more parents succeed by building on recent successes with subsidized employment.
- Using performance indicators to drive program improvement; and,
- Preparing the TANF program to respond more effectively in the event of a future economic downturn.

To date, the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources has not scheduled any reauthorization hearings. A mark up of legislation may not occur until fall, which is the time that HHS is expected to complete the reports to Congress mentioned above.

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