

Increase in NC's Work First cash assistance program would help families meet basic needs



North Carolina's Work First program benefit has stayed the same since 1996, even as the costs of rent, food and other basics have increased. The program, which is meant to provide support to households in crisis and struggling to move out of poverty, currently provides such meager cash assistance that families are still left below the poverty line.



BENEFITS

- Improve children's health, academic and economic outcomes¹
- Stabilize families facing a crisis²
- Help families pay for rising rents³
- Promote racial equity⁴

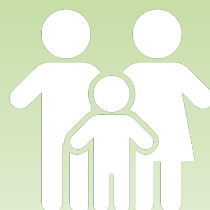
AN INCREASE TO THE WORK FIRST BENEFIT PAYMENT WOULD:



Ensure that families have the income to keep up with increases in housing and transportation costs



Create automatic increases to the benefit level each year so that the amount of assistance keeps up with the rising costs of modest rent



Support movement out of poverty for families struggling to meet basic needs

Learn more at [NCBudget.org](https://www.ncbudget.org)

WHY NOW?

As North Carolina considers the future landscape of opportunity in the state, making sure that families have what they need to live well and safely should be a priority. Temporary cash income provided to households struggling to make ends meet helps put food on the table and keep a roof over their head during a crisis.

1 in 5 children in NC live in poverty (less than roughly \$25,000 a year) — the 10th highest child poverty rate in the country.⁵

40% of households with children report that it was somewhat or very difficult to pay for usual household expenses during the past week.⁶

\$272 is the monthly maximum for Work First in NC, an amount that has eroded by 41% since 1996.⁷

10% is how much the monthly maximum benefit would cover of a fair market rent in NC.⁸



When we make sure that people have what they need to meet the basics, we can boost the well-being of families and communities.

Endnotes

1 Safawi, Ali, and Cindy Reyes. "States Must Continue Recent Momentum to Further Improve TANF Benefit Levels." Center on Budget & Policy Priorities, December 2, 2021. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/states-must-continue-recent-momentum-to-further-improve-tanf-benefit>.

2 Safawi, Ali, and Cindy Reyes. "States Must Continue Recent Momentum to Further Improve TANF Benefit Levels." Center on Budget & Policy Priorities, December 2, 2021. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/states-must-continue-recent-momentum-to-further-improve-tanf-benefit>.

3 Ibid.

4 Schott, Liz, Ife Floyd, and LaDonna Pavetti. "Cash Assistance Should Promote Equity." Center on Budget & Policy Priorities, August 4, 2021. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/cash-assistance-should-promote-equity>. Nichol, Gene, and Heather Hunt.

5 "The Persistent and Pervasive Challenge of Child Poverty and Hunger in North Carolina." NC Poverty Research Fund, December 2021. https://law.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/NC-child-poverty_final-web.pdf.

6 Household Pulse Survey.

7 Safawi, Ali, and Cindy Reyes. "States Must Continue Recent Momentum to Further Improve TANF Benefit Levels." Center on Budget & Policy Priorities, December 2, 2021. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/states-must-continue-recent-momentum-to-further-improve-tanf-benefit>.

8 Ibid.



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