

Re: Testimony in Support of amendment to HF466

Being Heard: 2/21/23

Today's Date: 2/17/23

My name is Curt Anderson, and I am the Supervisor of Workforce Impact. Workforce Impact is Beltrami County's Employment Services provider and has served in this capacity for our counties Diversionary Work and Minnesota Family Investment Programs participant families since 2017.

I am providing testimony in support of the amendment to HF466 to remove the statutory requirements for the State of Minnesota to operate a Diversionary Work Program (DWP) and instead, provide our most vulnerable low-income families with one cash assistance program that serves all Minnesota Families through the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP).

While the Diversionary Work Program states that the four-month program helps low-income Minnesota families find a job and the goal is to help parents quickly find work so that they do not need to go on the Minnesota Family Investment Program, these same Minnesota families that should benefit from the program often face barriers due to the requirements of the program. For Beltrami County, prior to the Peacetime State of Emergency due to COVID, we had a total of 414 family cases that were participants of the DWP program. Out of that total only 15 Beltrami County family cases exited successfully from the program. This is a less than 4% success rate for our families that are facing critical times. Many of those that were successful were seasonal workers, and that short four-month timeframe was not enough to allow them to develop skills and seek a more stable and family sustaining form of employment.

During the Minnesota Peacetime State of Emergency, DWP was put on hold and all qualifying Minnesota low-income families were placed on MFIP. This assisted families who already were facing barriers to employment to focus on job search and skill development for self-sustaining employment during a critical time as many employers had to change their model based on the changed environment. Once Minnesota's Peacetime State of Emergency was lifted, the DWP Program once again started up in October of 2022. Since that time, we have had a total of 39 Beltrami family cases approved for DWP but only 1 of those cases exited successfully which is a less than 3% success rate.

Almost all families in Beltrami County who have participated in DWP have transitioned to MFIP at some point in the 12 months following their initial application. This defeats the goal of diverting families from having to go on to long term cash assistance. The successful exits from the past have been mostly seasonally employed families and the short timeframe is difficult to truly develop a long term solution that includes finding appropriate Child Care as many times our clients have to be on a wait list longer than 4 months in order to place their child with a provider. Also, it's difficult to address more longer-term issues like transportation, mental health needs or potential safety concerns in that short time frame.

As an Employment Services Supervisor I strongly support the simplification of family cash assistance programs to assist our low-income families, by removing barriers and administrative burdens on the family to allow them to focus on addressing needed skill development, safety and childcare concerns to move toward more stable and self-sustaining employment opportunities.

Curt Anderson

Supervisor

Workforce Impact

Beltrami County Health & Human Services