



FEDERATION OF PROTESTANT WELFARE AGENCIES

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### **End Durational Sanctions**

The Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies calls for the end of durational sanctions, which is an arbitrarily applied, punitive measure used against welfare recipients. Case sanctioning is a system-wide epidemic that keeps eligible households living in extreme poverty from receiving critical cash assistance and deepens suffering.

25% of the caseload in New York City is currently being sanctioned.

### **Current Policy is Counterproductive to Stated Goal**

Ending durational sanctions will only help people who comply with the rules.

The goal of the sanction policy is to enforce engagement in mandatory welfare work programs. Durational sanctions are counterproductive because once a sanction is applied recipients are unable to comply (and therefore engage in work activities) until the specified sanction expires.

### **Sanctions often based on Agency Error**

77% of work related Fair Hearings are won by clients and reverse the agency's action.

### **Penalties**

For households with minor children receiving Family Assistance, if the parent is deemed non-compliant with welfare work rules, the household budget is reduced by the parent's share of the allotted budget. *Additionally, sanctioned families also become ineligible for rent subsidies directly exposing them to loss of housing.*

The duration of sanctions vary depending on whether there is a minor child in the household. For Family Assistance cases the duration of the sanctions are as follows: 1<sup>st</sup> sanction: until compliance, 2<sup>nd</sup> sanction: 3 months, 3<sup>rd</sup> sanction: 6 months.

For household without children the sanction results in a case closing. The duration of the sanctions is as follows: 1<sup>st</sup> sanction: 90 days, 2<sup>nd</sup> sanction: 150 days, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> sanction: 180 days.

## **Impact on Income**

Welfare grant levels in New York State fall below 50% of the Federal Poverty Line. The maximum level a New York City household of three receives to meet all of their basic needs, including rent is \$721 per month (\$8,652 annually). Families face chronic crises and deprivation without enough income -- juggling necessities such as rent, utilities, providing clothing for growing children, school supplies, transportation, personal hygiene products, and laundry. A reduction in income only deepens deprivation.

## **Lack of Basic Workplace Protections**

Welfare recipients who are subject to work requirements are expected to participate in a “simulated work week” yet are afforded few of the basic work protections offered to workers in other settings. Since there is no allotted sick time or personal time, one absence or missed appointment, regardless of previous attendance, will likely result in a sanction. Documentation to verify absences, such as a doctors’ note for a single sick day are often impractical.

A worker without sick or personal time who misses work hours will not be paid for the time missed. A household sanctioned subject to welfare work rules will lose the parents’ share of the income for an extended period. For households without income, they lose their entire income.

## **Vulnerable Households Should be Exempt from Work Requirements**

Inadequate screening for employability results in a disproportionate number of vulnerable households being sanctioned. Welfare recipients with physical or mental illness, work limitations, sick children, or those in domestic violence situations are either not screened or undergo a cursory screening and are often incorrectly deemed employable. This process sets these households up for failure because they have difficulty keeping up with the stringent work requirements.

## **For more information please contact:**

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