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*Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,
when it is in your power to do it.
Do not say to your neighbor, 'Go, and come again;
tomorrow I will give it'—when you have it with you. Prov. 3:27-28*

Dear Senate President Sweeny,

We write to you today, asking for your support of pending legislation A30/S1829 to increase benefit for WorkFirst NJ (WFNJ). As faith leaders we serve the least of us, and practice compassion of a merciful God. Our mandate is to serve the poor and needy in our communities. Legislation like WFNJ supports children, reduces racial and income disparities and reduces poverty. These problems have been exacerbated in part because there has not been any increase in assistance in nearly 3 decades. A family of three only receives a maximum of \$424.00 today, the same amount as 29 years ago. Due to inflation the purchasing power of this has been reduced by over half.

A typical family receiving TANF benefits (Temporary Assistance for Needy Family) struggle to meet basic needs. The Department of Human Services in NJ has determined a standard for decency that take into account real needs and the cost of housing, this standard is seven times higher than the current WFNJ benefit level. The poorest of NJ's children do not have access to these benefits. The eligibility standard is based on the same thirty year old program data which refuses benefits to applicants because their income, grossly insufficient by today's economic standards, exceeds this unadjusted threshold.

For those receiving TANF assistance, a family of more than two is ineligible for an increase in benefits do to the Family Cap law. This law denies families who have additional children after enrollment any proportional increase in benefits. We therefore also support A3410/S1854, this pending legislation will remove this unjust measure.

New Jersey has done plenty in recent years for corporations and the wealthy, but the poorest children in our state have been completely ignored. That is more than unfair, it is immoral. Please do the right thing and help the most vulnerable children in our state. We urge you to support A-30/S-1829 to increase WFNJ assistance and ensure that the funds for a ten percent increase are included in the FY 2017 budget.

Sincerely,

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