

Washington State National Organization for Women

Economic Equity

Washington State National Organization for Women is committed to achieving an economic equity reality for all women.

Welfare Reform: Reinvesting in the Future

NOW believes that reinvestment of the surplus of \$2 Million Dollars from the decrease in welfare caseload goes back to programs that assist women leaving welfare to support their families on a livable wage is the best means in becoming successfully self-sufficient with long term job retention allowing for wage progression. Thus assuring families do not return to welfare to survive. NOW recognizes that access to work support benefits such as life skills and work skills training is crucial for a successful transition into the workforce.

NOW supports assuring that eligible women and children have access to child care, Medicaid and food stamp coverage after leaving TANF assistance.

Child Care

NOW supports expanded childcare support programs for low-income families such as subsidized co-payment for those families in need. Families below the poverty level should not have to make child care co-payments and those above the poverty no more than 10 percent of their net family income. NOW wants to assure childcare affordability, safety and accessibility for off- hour and other special need child care for all women and their families.

NOW supports raising the reimbursement rates for providers to the 75th percentile based on 1998 survey of childcare providers. Thus opening access to a larger pool of quality childcare providers for low-income families who currently have few options assuring healthy & safe environments with school readiness for their children.

Family Leave

Now supports paid family leave and expanding the Family and Medical Leave Act to create family friendly policies in the workplace. Loss of income can be devastating to low- income families.

NOW believes that creative solutions are necessary in supporting families who take time off to care for newborn, newly adopted children, or seriously ill parents. Financial pressure keeps many single parents, one-income families or low paid incomes keep them from balancing their work and home life. Taking unpaid time off to care for sick and aging parent or a child or even for personal health reasons is simply a luxury many people can not afford.

President Clinton in May 1999 directed the Labor Department to formulate regulations that would allow states to legislate changes under which surplus unemployment funds could be used for parental leave payments. Washington State should take advantage of this proposed Federal pilot project. The proposed parental leave rule would allow states to experiment with their differing unemployment insurance systems under a voluntary pilot program. The program would be inexpensive for states, which already collect payroll taxes and distribute unemployment benefits.