

May 13, 2020

The Honorable Brian P. Kemp  
Governor  
State of Georgia  
206 Washington Street  
Suite 203, State Capitol  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Tom C. Rawlings  
Director  
Georgia Division of Family & Children Services  
2 Peachtree St. NW  
19<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Atlanta, GA 30303

Dear Governor Kemp and Director Rawlings,

Thank you for your service and dedication to our state during this very difficult time. We know you are working to lessen the economic harm caused by the pandemic while attempting to reduce the spread of the virus and protect as many Georgians as possible.

**As a partner in seeking ways to help families survive economically the undersigned organizations are writing to ask for your support in allocating unobligated Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) reserve funds to provide limited emergency cash assistance to low income families with children in order to pay rent, utilities, and other bills so that they are able to remain adequately housed.**

Georgia has a history of utilizing these funds to provide emergency cash assistance. During the Great Recession Georgia used unobligated TANF reserve funds to establish the Fresh Start Program which provided a one-time crisis payment of up to \$3,000 to help families with children meet housing expenses and obtain or retain housing.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, our neighbors in Tennessee are using TANF funds to offer Emergency Cash Assistance that provides two monthly cash payments to families who were employed as of March 11, 2020, and have lost a job or at least half of their earned income due to the COVID-19 emergency.<sup>2</sup>

Federal law empowers Georgia to deploy TANF reserve funds to provide up to four months of non-recurring, short-term (NRST) assistance to very low-income families with children suffering due to a loss of income as a result of the pandemic.<sup>3</sup> The allocation of these funds, currently set aside in an unobligated reserve account, would not require any action or appropriation by the Legislature.

Providing one time short term direct cash assistance to families means they can pay their rent, keep up with needed bills and hopefully weather this crisis, and meet the essential goals of the TANF program. The economic impact to vulnerable families would keep them sheltered, avoid the harm of eviction filings and eviction that are devastating and long lasting, and keep families from ending up homeless or living in emergency shelters, already stretched to meet the demands of the pandemic. It would have a significant positive benefit for landlords able to meet their financial obligations, pay their mortgages, and bring money back into hard hit communities suffering economically.

To best leverage these dollars, we urge you to adjust the definition of need for NRST support to include families with children earning up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level (\$3,620 monthly for a family of three) who otherwise meet the requirements of TANF, including asset limits.

Providing this type of direct assistance to families with children is a strategic and powerful one time boost to help keep families from falling into homelessness or other desperate circumstances. Families will be able to pay their rent, utilizing these funds to keep up with bills and satisfy the needs of landlords, while maintaining stable housing to ensure some level of stability for young children engaging in distance learning and helping to stem the spread of the virus by ensuring families do not end up on the street or in a shelter.

Thank you for your consideration of our request to use Georgia's unobligated TANF reserves to meet the needs of Georgia's poorest families with children who have been hardest hit by the pandemic and fulfill the essential purposes of the TANF program.

Respectfully,

9to5

Anderson Smith Consulting  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Atlanta  
Atlanta Bicycle Coalition  
Atlanta CareerRise  
Atlanta Community Food Bank  
Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation  
Betty and Davis Fitzgerald Foundation  
BECAUSE Georgia  
Center for Black Women's Wellness  
Center for Civic Innovation  
Center for Community Progress  
Center for Pan Asian Community Services, Inc.  
CHRIS 180, Inc.  
Circles of West Georgia  
Columbia Presbyterian Church  
Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta  
Corners Outreach  
Deep Center  
Emmaus House  
Enterprise Community Partners  
Faith in Public Life  
Feminist Women's Health Center  
Fulton Atlanta Community Action Authority  
Gateway Center  
GEEARS  
Georgia Advancing Communities Together, Inc.  
Georgia Black Constructors Association  
Georgia Budget & Policy Institute  
Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda

Georgia Conservation Voters  
Georgia NAACP  
Georgia Shift  
Georgia STAND UP  
Georgia Stand-Up  
Georgia State Representative, House District 89  
Georgia Supportive Housing Association, Inc.  
Georgians for a Healthy Future  
Groundswell  
Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition  
HouseATL  
Interfaith Children's Movement, Inc.  
International Rescue Committee  
Latin American Association  
Latino Community Fund Inc.  
Los Ninos Primero  
Nat'l Association Of Minority Contractors  
National Domestic Workers Alliance  
New American Pathways  
Nicholas House  
Our House  
Partnership for Southern Equity  
Path Project  
Peoplestown Revitalization Corp  
Ser Familia, Inc.  
SOSSI- Saving Our Sons & Sisters International  
St. Vincent de Paul Georgia  
Statewide Independent Living Council–GA  
Step Up Savannah, Inc.  
The Will To Win, LLC  
TransFormation Alliance  
U.S. Green Building Council  
United Way of Greater Atlanta  
Urban League of Greater Atlanta  
West Atlanta Watershed Alliance, Inc.  
Women of Wonder Outreach Ministry

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<sup>1</sup> Georgia Fresh Start Program offers help with housing, power bills. <https://gafcp.org/2010/06/24/fresh-start-program-offers-short-term-financial-crisis-assistance/>

<sup>2</sup> Information on Tennessee's Emergency Cash Assistance program:

<https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/covid-19/emergency-cash-assistance-and-covid-19-faqs.html>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2020). Questions and answers about TANF and the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/resource/tanf-acf-pi-2020-01>