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Child care is a necessary resource for families to succeed. Parents should be able to know that while they are at work or school, their children are being looked after by competent, qualified individuals, and should not have to worry about whether this care will cost them food on the table. By providing child care, we are affording parents opportunities not only to work but also to advance their education, opening countless doors for themselves and their families.

Working families who earn less than 200% of the state poverty level are unable to meet their basic needs for health care and child care without additional assistance. Often times, that includes help with child care. Unfortunately, to be eligible for child care subsidies, one can make no more than 150% of the state poverty line and can only maintain this help as long as they stay below 165%. That's right; there is no gradual decrease in help once one begins to earn more money. Once you make over 165%, you are immediately dropped, and often left worse off than if you had been making less money. This is true for parents all across the state, including one who said "they took my medical card, my child's medical card away, they took my food stamps away all because I made one dollar more than I was supposed to.....Even though I was making more money, I was further down than I was before."

Problems such as these contribute to families staying on subsidies programs because making more money only causes them to get more in the hole. On the other hand, families who receive child care assistance after transitioning off public aid are less likely to return to the rolls. With over 60% of

Kentucky's children age 5 and under having all available parents in the workforce, child care is vital to our community. Even with parents working full time, 50,000 children still live in poverty. Where do these low-income children go when their parents are at work? With child care costs reaching all time highs, at an average of \$10,000 a year for two children, how do we keep these children cared for without increasing the state deficit ten fold?

And what about parents who are trying to improve their situation by pursuing further education? Should we punish them for trying to better their lives and the lives of their children? By limiting the necessary number of hours to be enrolled in school, we can change the lives of families struggling to get by. Once these families have their footing, and can meet their basic needs for health care and child care, we can also allow a transition period so that they don't end up less financially stable than before. If families are living better on public assistance because they are struggling on their own, then they will not have incentive to work their way up the economic ladder.

By increasing eligibility from 160% of the federal poverty line to even 170%, an estimated 12,000 *additional* children will be covered by eligibility guidelines. We also need to increase awareness so that families can know what help there is for them, which means making sure all materials are written in a way that is easy to understand. Furthermore, we need to increase the time allowed between reauthorizations, allowing parents to schedule appointments according to their availability so they don't have to take time off work. Only then

can we keep families who should be receiving aide from being dropped because they couldn't make a reauthorization appointment.

I urge you to realize the need for adequate child care accessibility for children and their parents alike. By making child care more accessible and increasing eligibility guidelines, we can make a difference for the lives of those who need a helping hand.