

## Strengthen TANF as a Lifeline

The *Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)* program provides monthly grants to needy children and their families. The grant helps families meet their basic needs, including rent, utilities, clothing, personal hygiene products, diapers, transportation, etc. Eligible families are often unfairly sanctioned, leaving them at risk of severe hardship.

### What are TANF Sanctions?

- A sanction is a suspension of a TANF grant when an adult does not meet certain participation requirements.
- Almost half of sanctioned families on TANF report experiencing one or more of the following four hardships:
  - o Maternal or child hunger
  - o Eviction or homelessness
  - o Utility shutoff
  - o Unable to receive medical care due to cost.<sup>1</sup>
- **In Virginia, there are an average of 260 families in TANF sanctions a month where the entire family does not receive TANF cash assistance due to the noncompliance of an adult in the household.**

### What's the Impact on Families?

- Families that are sanctioned tend to have worse outcomes on average than other TANF recipients, including higher rates of hardships, less employment and lower income.
- Low levels of income or no income in early childhood can lead to long-term negative outcomes like lower earnings in adulthood. Duncan and Magnuson say policymakers “should take care to ensure that sanctions and other regulations do not deny benefits to families with very young children.”<sup>2</sup>

### How Do We Solve This?

- Virginia has the power to legislatively change the full family sanction.
- Rather than punishing the entire household, this bill penalizes a portion of the TANF benefit so that children are left largely unaffected.

**Vote YES to HB1158**

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<sup>1</sup> Reichmann, Nancy, et al (2005). “TANF Sanctioning and Hardship.” *Social Services Review*, 215-236.

<sup>2</sup> Duncan, Greg and Magnuson, Katherine (2011). “The Long Reach of Early Childhood Poverty.” *Pathways*, 27.