



Every Texan **Opposes** HB 3425 by Slawson

Relating to the drug testing of certain persons seeking benefits under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

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Every Texan opposes HB 3425 by Slawson as it would further stigmatize the poorest Texans by imposing an unnecessary drug test on parents and grandparents applying for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) help for their children.

The original goal of TANF is “to keep children in their own homes or the homes of relatives” and keep poor children out of the foster care system. TANF was created to give cash support to the poorest families so they can meet the basic needs of their children. Yet Texas has some of the most stringent TANF eligibility rules in the country. Texas’ income limits for TANF have not changed in 25 years - \$188 a month for a mother with 2 children. And if a family is destitute enough to qualify, they get very little financial assistance. That same mother of 2 would get a maximum of only \$308 a month only if she complied with job search or training, parenting classes, not abuse alcohol or drugs and a long list of other requirements. The Legislature has made it so difficult to qualify that TANF serves less than 4% of poor families in Texas. In December 2020 only 8,400 adults and 33,000 children were on TANF in Texas.

Many of the children who are on TANF are being raised by a family member - like their grandparents. These kinship families struggle to make it through the overly burdensome application process for very little assistance – \$152 a month for 2 children. But TANF is the only cash assistance for which they qualify in Texas.

Adding a drug test to an already massively bureaucratic program will not only make it even harder for desperate families but depending on how the screening is implemented it will capture tens of thousands of people who would never be eligible for TANF. They simply checked a box online when applying for other programs.

HB 3425 is deeply flawed as it requires that families be referred to Child Protective Services (CPS) if they test positive for a control substance including marijuana. Currently the use of marijuana by all adults is legal in 17 states, and medical marijuana is legal in 36 states. Threatening parents with the loss of their children if they use a drug that is legal in much of the country would abuse the CPS system. And if Texas is serious about wanting to help people with a drug dependency, helping them step forward to get treatment should be the goal. Threatening to take away their children will only drive them underground.

Texas Has One of the Lowest TANF-to-Poverty Ratios in the Nation



Source: CBPP analysis of poverty and deep poverty data from the Census’ Current Population Survey.