



# EVERY TEXAN

Formerly Center for Public Policy Priorities

## Every Texan **Supports** HB 116 by Minjarez

Relating to the eligibility of and receipt by certain relative caretakers of dependent children of supplemental financial assistance and the assignment of those relative caretakers as protective payees for financial assistance payments; creating a criminal offense.

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Every Texan supports HB 116 by Minjarez as it removes barriers to supplemental financial assistance for vulnerable children being raised by kin who are struggling to support them.

According to Census estimates, there are 250,000 children living in kinship care -being raised by an extended family member - in Texas. These families are not supervised by the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) and do not qualify for the monthly Kinship Reimbursement Payments authorized by the legislature. Relatives of all types step up to become caregivers - 66 percent of children with a kin caregiver in Texas are living with a grandparent, with the rest being with siblings or other relatives. Over half are in low-income families that make enormous sacrifices to support them.

The 76<sup>th</sup> Legislature recognized the tremendous financial burden families can be placed under by sudden and unexpected childrearing and created supplemental financial assistance – the TANF One-Time Grandparent Payment of \$1,000. It is time to extend the payment to other family members who step up to raise these kids and to update the rules to account for inflation.

Currently to qualify for the \$1000 TANF payment you must be (1) a grandparent 45 years of age or older; (2) the primary caretaker of a dependent child who is enrolled in TANF and lives in your residence; (3) have a family income that is at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level; and (4) not have resources that exceed \$1,000 in countable cash and (5) have a vehicle valued at less than \$4,650.

The vehicle limit of \$4,650 is not indexed to inflation and can no longer cover the cost of a reliable car. (Currently a 2005 Ford Expedition with **237,000 miles** is listed for \$4,650). If we want caretakers who are able to meet the needs of the children in their care, then access to a safe and reliable car is crucial.

HB 116 extends the list of relatives that can qualify and removes the values of any vehicles a caregiver may own from being counted as a resource for the purposes of qualifying for the TANF One-Time Kinship payment. The caregiver would still have to meet all other requirements including caring for a child enrolled in TANF, having an income below 200 percent of the poverty level and having cash assets of less than \$1,000.

Despite record levels of poverty and need in 2020, **only 198 families** got the TANF One-Time \$1,000 Grandparent payment. One reason why so few families got help is the asset test for vehicles which was set in the 1970's and failed to keep up with inflation. By eliminating the vehicle test and allowing other caregiving relatives to qualify, Texas will take an important step towards supporting its most vulnerable children.