



Public Testimony
Senate Finance Committee
Senate Bill 2687 (RI Works)
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Submitted by The Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty

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The Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty is a coalition of diverse religious communities and advocacy partners throughout the state who have come together to fight poverty.

We strongly support Senate Bill 2687, repealing the 24-month periodic time limit on RI Works.

RI Works serves approximately 7,000 families living in poverty, providing temporary cash assistance. It provides a necessary safety net for children whose families are severely impoverished. The benefits received are quite modest: \$449/month for a family of 2; \$554/month for a family of three; etc. However, this basic level of support remains essential for parents who are struggling to find work and unable to do so, yet. Job readiness training and job search activities help parents prepare for, seek, and find employment. Simultaneously, assistance with child care is available, if needed. Of crucial importance, some of our state's most impoverished children are provided with at least a minimum level of household income support by way of RI Works assistance.

Senate Bill 2687 would eliminate the limit currently placed on RI Works assistance that allows families to receive assistance for only 24 months in any given 60-month period. Many families do currently receive hardship extensions, allowing them to continue to receive benefits beyond the 24-month limit. However, these extensions require frequent renewals, creating unnecessary administrative burdens on families and social workers and increasing disruptions in continuity for both child care/education and parents' own job-readiness education.

We want families to have the best possible chance of success as they seek sustainable, long-term pathways out of poverty. If that takes some additional months of training and preparation – to build basic skills to an employable level, e.g. – then we believe that it is in the strong interest of Rhode Island to support families in doing so.

We encourage you to pass Senate Bill 2687, repealing 24-month periodic time limits.

Thank you for your time and public service.