

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 384 Session of 2024

INTRODUCED BY KENYATTA, CEPHAS, GREEN, MAYES, CERRATO,
N. NELSON, GIRAL, SANCHEZ, SCHLOSSBERG, HANBIDGE, KHAN,
DELLOSO, PARKER, KINSEY, WAXMAN, CIRESI, KIM, KAZEEM, SCOTT
AND BOYD, APRIL 10, 2024

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, APRIL 10, 2024

A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Joint State Government Commission to conduct a
2 study and issue a report on benefits cliffs in this
3 Commonwealth.

4 WHEREAS, A benefits cliff refers to a situation when public
5 benefits programs phase down or run out quickly for families as
6 household earnings increase; and

7 WHEREAS, Unfortunately, household earnings have typically not
8 increased enough for self-sufficiency to be reached, and
9 families may suffer an abrupt reduction or loss of some or all
10 of their benefits; and

11 WHEREAS, In this Commonwealth, approximately 12% of residents
12 live in poverty, with 8% of those falling under the extreme
13 poverty rate; and

14 WHEREAS, Among households experiencing poverty, 27% of
15 working families are under 200% of the poverty line; and

16 WHEREAS, Individuals receiving multiple benefits may
17 experience multiple benefits cliffs due to the variance in

1 income requirements by program; and

2 WHEREAS, Poverty affects rural, suburban and urban residents
3 alike, with individuals from each of these areas reporting
4 similar barriers to escaping poverty, including a lack of child-
5 care services, housing, food, transportation, adult education
6 and job opportunities that pay livable wages; and

7 WHEREAS, In this Commonwealth, there are 165,000 Black or
8 African-American children living in families where neither
9 parent has full-time, year-round employment; and

10 WHEREAS, The barriers of escaping poverty entrap individuals
11 living in poverty and prevents them from improving their
12 circumstances; and

13 WHEREAS, Benefits cliffs negatively impact employers,
14 individuals receiving benefits and their families; and

15 WHEREAS, In the United States, the average minimum wage
16 worker would need to work about 86 hours per week in order to
17 afford a one-bedroom rental home; and

18 WHEREAS, In this Commonwealth, roughly 403,600 residents are
19 paying more than 50% of income on housing; and

20 WHEREAS, Although 1.9 million residents in this Commonwealth
21 receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
22 benefits, approximately 10% of households still face food
23 insecurity; and

24 WHEREAS, The unavailability of quality, affordable child care
25 in this Commonwealth can leave families with a hard choice to
26 make, with the average annual cost of child care being \$11,300;
27 and

28 WHEREAS, Children are the most likely of all populations to
29 live in poverty, with 17% of children in this Commonwealth
30 living in poverty; and

1 WHEREAS, Several states, including Connecticut, Maine,
2 Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont, and
3 organizations, including the National Conference of State
4 Legislatures and the Administration for Children and Families
5 within the United States Department of Health and Human
6 Services, are working to develop new solutions to address
7 benefits cliffs; and

8 WHEREAS, The two-generational approach of providing public
9 benefits to assist adults and children of low-income families is
10 being explored by other states as a preferred method for
11 reducing poverty and benefits cliffs; and

12 WHEREAS, In many instances, residents of this Commonwealth
13 living in poverty become constrained to a life of poverty due to
14 the "cliff effect," which perpetuates the poverty cycle, rather
15 than incentivizing individuals to become self-sufficient;
16 therefore be it

17 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives direct the Joint
18 State Government Commission to conduct a study and issue a
19 report on benefits cliffs in this Commonwealth; and be it
20 further

21 RESOLVED, That the report include:

22 (1) The impact of benefits cliffs in this Commonwealth.

23 (2) Models for overcoming the cliff effect in this
24 Commonwealth, including successful programs implemented in
25 other states.

26 (3) Policies that would mitigate barriers to overcoming
27 poverty, such as child care, housing, food, health care and
28 transportation.

29 (4) Best practices for alleviating poverty and
30 addressing benefits cliffs in this Commonwealth, including

1 two-generational approaches and strategies for incorporating
2 such approaches into current programming;
3 and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission issue a
5 report with its findings and recommendations no later than one
6 year after the adoption of this resolution to all of the
7 following:

8 (1) The President pro tempore of the Senate.

9 (2) The Speaker of the House of Representatives.

10 (3) The Majority Leader of the Senate.

11 (4) The Majority Leader of the House of Representatives.

12 (5) The Minority Leader of the Senate.

13 (6) The Minority Leader of the House of Representatives.

14 (7) The chair and minority chair of the Appropriations
15 Committee of the Senate.

16 (8) The chair and minority chair of the Appropriations
17 Committee of the House of Representatives.

18 (9) The chair and minority chair of the Health and Human
19 Services Committee of the Senate.

20 (10) The chair and minority chair of the Human Services
21 Committee of the House of Representatives.