

October 14, 2010

Wendy Davis is a single mother, waitress, and college student. Although she receives help with her childcare costs through Washington state she still struggles to pay all her bills each month. Now she is facing losing her childcare subsidies to budget cuts. She feels that these cuts are short-sighted.

“Cutting my childcare will shoot me in the foot. I will have to decide between childcare and rent, which is illogical. I can’t work without childcare, but can’t afford childcare to work.”

Wendy is also a board member of POWER, Parents Organizing for Welfare and Economic Rights, an organization of low-income parents and allies advocating for a strong social safety net while working toward a world where children and care giving are truly valued, and the devastation of poverty has been eradicated. POWER members have launched a protest over Governor Gregoire’s \$51 million in cuts to welfare programs, offering suggestions as to where savings can be found without hurting the families who need assistance.

The Governor made the decisions of what to cut with no input from welfare recipients. People whose health and safety depends on these programs know what can and what can’t be cut.

We’re being told that everyone must tighten their belts, but welfare recipients already live below 40% of the Federal Poverty Level. Washington state legislators have enacted one 3% increase in welfare cash benefits in 17 years while inflation has increased by around 5% each year. A single parent with 2 children receives a cash grant of \$562 a month.

Governor Gregoire is cutting the support services that support looking for and maintaining employment, without decreasing the full-time work requirement. The largest cut to support services is to childcare subsidies for 2,500 women who have been successful in finding jobs.

In the Governor’s plan, most of the savings will be achieved by terminating a family’s welfare grant after 5 years even, if they have been participating in job search or job readiness programs the entire time. This will leave 5,555 families with only food stamps and no way to pay the rent.

Though POWER members have made weekly visits to her office, we have yet to achieve an audience with Governor Gregoire. We have however met with three

members of her staff and provided the following suggestions that could provide the same savings without harming children:

- 1) *Streamline welfare to work programs to match unemployment requirements.* Currently welfare recipients are required to make 15 job contacts a week, go to the Work Source office every day, and log 35 hours a week of job search. Unemployment recipients are required to make 3 job contacts a week and send weekly reports from their homes. Welfare to work participants who live 60 miles from the Work Source office, or for whom it is a 3-hour bus trip each way, are told there are no exceptions. They tell us the requirements get in the way of their finding a job. Governor Gregoire's staff members agreed the requirements are "ridiculous" and that this would save the state money.
- 2) *Make work requirements voluntary.* California legislators admitted they could no longer afford to adequately run their welfare to work program and made participation voluntary, saving a proposed \$510 million in childcare and administrative costs. Rather than plying the dangerous social experiment of withdrawing support services while maintaining work requirements, Washington should allow parent to choose whether to look for work outside the home or save the state millions of dollars in childcare costs by caring for their own children.

Please contact Governor Gregoire and ask her to make cuts that don't hurt children.

CALL: 360-902-4111 (for the deaf or hard of hearing, dial 7-1-1)

WRITE: Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

FAX: 360-753-4110

If you would like to get more involved or have questions about your own benefits, please contact POWER:

701 Franklin Street SE Olympia, WA 98501
360-352-9716 toll free 866-343-9716
welfarerights@riseup.net
<http://www.oly-wa.us/power/>
Find us on **Facebook** and **Myspace**.

