

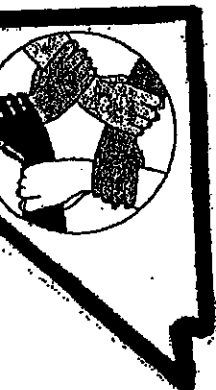
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Nevada Empowered Women's Project

"Furthering the Rights of Women and Children"

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE WELFARE DIVISION BUDGET

March 4, 2003

Chairman and Committee members, thank you for this opportunity to address your committee. For the record, my name is Brenda Carrera, and I am the director of the Nevada Empowered Women's Project, an advocacy group for low-income women and children. NEW Project represents over 1000 low-income individuals and families, as well as social justice advocates throughout our state.

Members of NEW Project and myself recognize the tough decisions and financial restraints you are facing during this 2003 Legislature and how the needs of many low-income women and their children can be drastically impacted by them.

We have some very serious concerns that with the purpose to economize, further cuts could be made to programs aimed to assist families who are living in or near poverty. Reducing the already low cash grant benefit available thru TANF which has not gone up in the past 12 years (a maximum of \$348 for a family of three), would be cruel and heartless.

As you may know, families who seek welfare assistance face many crisis and challenges that usually cannot be predicted and have little or no control over. These challenges include working at low-paying, dead-end jobs without health insurance, no child support due to poor enforcement, domestic violence situations, and unaffordable childcare, only to mention a few.

Due to our poor economy, last year alone, NEW Project directly advocated for more than 200 mostly single low-income women who were barely making enough to make ends meet. These women were facing similar crisis situations while at the same time juggling basic necessities such as whether to paying the rent, power bills, or obtain food for their children. These families had to request public assistance to "swim" thru their difficult situation and avoid "sinking".

Nevada can no longer continue to expect families to excel and climb out of poverty when we don't even provide them enough to survive. We urge you to support the proposed welfare division budget and any efforts to provide a stable and fair tax base to increase revenue for our state.

1101 Riverside Drive • Reno, NV 89503 • (775) 348-9566 • Fax (775) 348-7478

EXHIBIT H Senate Committee on Finance

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