



# The District's Dime

Going Beyond the Budget Book

The DC Fiscal Policy Institute blog  
[www.dcfpi.org](http://www.dcfpi.org)

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## Give Parents the Time They Need to Prepare for Living Wage Jobs

By Kate Coventry

Public assistance to DC residents with children is supposed to meet two broad goals: stabilize families so basic needs are met and help parents get into jobs that will eventually lead them to economic independence. A critical component in reaching this second goal is ensuring that parents receive the preparation needed to secure living wage jobs. To help make this happen, the DC Council voted earlier this year to give parents time to finish education and training before enforcing time limits that would cut – and eventually eliminate -- benefits. But this policy has not been implemented due to its cost. Finding the resources to implement this exemption would help thousands of parents who are trying to make progress by participating in education and training.

In June, the DC Council voted to temporarily exempt TANF recipients from the time limit clock when they are in education or training, to ensure that parents are not forced to drop out and take dead-end jobs to make up for the loss in benefits. Twelve states have similar policies to promote education for TANF parents.

But the exemption has not been implemented because it may cost \$2.5 million more than originally estimated, according to the Chief Financial Officer. The District should not let this relatively small amount of funding stand in the way. Research has consistently found that postsecondary education or training is increasingly important in obtaining employment. This is particularly true in the District, where an estimated 72 percent of all job openings in 2018 will require some postsecondary education, higher than in any state.<sup>1</sup> Without additional education and training, DC's TANF parents will be facing intense competition for the smaller number of jobs that require only a high school degree or do not require a degree.

DCFPI urges the mayor and Council to work together to find the needed resources to ensure that our TANF parents are on the road to employment success.

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<sup>1</sup> *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018* by Anthony P. Carnevale, Nicole Smith, and Jeff Strohl. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. June 2010.  
<http://cew.georgetown.edu/jobs2018/>