



April 18, 2012

The Honorable Pete Stark  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Stark:

On behalf of the National Partnership for Women & Families, I commend you for introducing the Woman's Option to Raise Kids Act (WORK Act) which would amend the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to allow low-income parents to stay home to care for their young children without fear of being pushed deeper into poverty.

The National Partnership for Women & Families is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy group dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace, access to quality health care and policies that help women and men meet the dual demands of work and family. Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) is a critical part of our nation's social contract. The National Partnership strongly supports this program, and works to level the playing field so low-income women will have more opportunities to escape poverty.

The WORK Act recognizes that raising children is work. The WORK Act would give states the flexibility to maintain a safety net for poor parents who choose to stay at home and raise their young children until the children start attending school. Under the WORK Act, low-income parents could receive job training or search for work, or they could stay home to raise their young children until they are school age.

All mothers are working mothers. Unfortunately, many workplaces offer little flexibility to help working women and men care for their families and still succeed at their jobs and our current laws do little to help the working women and men in the United States struggling to meet the dual demands of work and family. This is particularly true for low-wage and hourly workers, who are even less likely than higher income, salaried workers to have flexibility. Workers in this country need greater flexibility and control over scheduling, alternative schedules and overtime, parity for those working part-time, more telecommuting opportunities, support to meet after-school, child and elder care needs, paid sick days and paid family leave.

Again, we commend you for introducing this legislation to help women with the lowest incomes, and their families, access the supports they need to achieve economic security.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Debra L. Ness". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Debra L. Ness  
National Partnership for Women and Families