We should all be able to get help when we need it – regardless of where we come from. Equitable access to help should be a cornerstone of our safety net, and we should actively work to uproot policies with racist outcomes.

### Increasing Equitable Access to TANF

To qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), a family of three cannot make more than $1,308 a month – or $15,696 a year. The Federal Poverty Level for a family of three is $23,030 a year.

Prior to the Great Recession, families receiving TANF in Washington state could still get cash assistance if they needed it past the 60-month federal lifetime limit through broad hardship exemptions.

In 2011, Washington cut access to the TANF program by imposing punitive policies and removing broad hardship exemptions to reduce the caseload.

Over a decade later, the recession-era policies still remain in place. As a result:

- **Extremely narrow hardship exemptions and child-only time limits disproportionately cut off Black, Indigenous, and Latinx families** trying to access help.

- Despite efforts from the department, disproportionate time limit terminations were increasing for Black, Indigenous, and child-only Latinx families.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>% of TANF caseload in SFY 2020</th>
<th>% of cases terminated for time limits in SFY 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In response to the pandemic, the legislature temporarily restored broad hardship exemptions and eliminated time limits for child-only cases. This has significantly increased racial equity in access to TANF.

### Percentage Increase of Families on Time Limit Extensions Since 2020

- **Asian/Pacific Islander**: 300%
- **Hispanic or Latinx**: 300%
- **American Indian/Native Alaskan**: 250%
- **Black/African American**: 250%
- **Two or More Races**: 200%
- **White**: 200%
- **Race Not Reported**: 100%

*Poverty Action analysis of DSHS-ESA/EMAPS data December 2022*

- Time Limit Exemptions have increased access to help during times of need for all families, with families of color benefitting the most.

- Lawmakers must take action now, or the temporary budget extension will expire in June 2023 and a policy with demonstrated racist outcomes will be automatically reinstated.

To maintain the gains in equity that we've seen, the legislature must:

- [ ] Permanently re-instate broad hardship exemptions
- [ ] Remove the 60-month lifetime limit on child-only cases