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September 29, 2010

Senate Committee on Finance  
Attn. Editorial and Document Section  
Rm. SD-219  
Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510-6200H

Dear Chairman Baucus, Senator Grassley, Committee Members and Staff:

Enclosed please find (1) our written statement in response to the hearing titled "Welfare Reform: A New Conversation on Women and Poverty" held September 21, 2010, and (2) a related citizen petition.

The Alternatives to Marriage Project (AtMP) is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that advocates equality and fairness for all unmarried people, including people who are single, choose not to marry, cannot marry, or live together before marriage. We provide support and information for this fast-growing constituency, fight discrimination on the basis of marital status, and educate the public and policymakers about relevant social and economic issues. We believe that marriage is only one of many acceptable family forms, and that society should recognize and support healthy relationships in all their diversity.

AtMP has over 9,000 members in all 50 states. Earlier this year, over 235 members signed a petition affirming the following statement. Many added moving comments based on their personal experiences.

Policies that aim to help children should support all the types of families in which children really live. It is wrong to use Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) to pay for marriage programs. Government is literally taking money away from impoverished families and giving it to programs that tell them their families are not good enough. There is no proof that marriage programs ease the burden of poverty or make low-income children better off. Marriage should be a personal choice, not a government mandate. Congress should state that the purpose of TANF is to end poverty, not to promote marriage. Congress should not reauthorize the Healthy Marriage Initiatives.

Thank you for considering our concerns. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Nicky Grist  
Executive Director

Written Statement in Response to the Hearing Titled  
**Welfare Reform: A New Conversation on Women and Poverty,  
September 21, 2010**

Submitted to the Senate Committee on Finance

By the

**Alternatives to Marriage Project**

PMB 131, 358 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Brooklyn NY 11215  
Nicky Grist, Executive Director

Thank you, honorable Chairman Baucus, Senator Grassley, Committee members and staff, for giving us the opportunity to submit comments on the important topic of welfare reform. Our comments focus on the use of TANF funds for marriage and fatherhood programs. We describe the differences between marriage promotion, relationship education, and fatherhood programs. We ask Congress to use the evidence it has received to set performance standards for the Fatherhood, Marriage and Families Innovation Fund. In brief, we recommend that the Fund:

- serve only low-income people;
- not discriminate on the basis of marital status or sexual orientation, nor stigmatize unmarried relationships;
- make relationship education inclusive of all relationships;
- develop standards, educational requirements and/or an accreditation system for relationship educators;
- let service providers work from their strengths rather than pursue fads;
- help men and women be great parents and partners, not husbands and wives;
- not confuse parenting with gender role-modeling; and
- gather and publish evaluation results quickly.

Finally, we suggest directions for re-envisioning TANF during the reauthorization process, keeping in mind that the goal of federal anti-poverty efforts should be to eliminate poverty.

**TANF Funding For Marriage & Fatherhood Programs**

For over a decade, the Alternatives to Marriage Project (AtMP) and our colleagues have assessed and critiqued the use of anti-poverty funds to promote marriage.<sup>1</sup> Our attention was required because of the excessive focus on marriage that entered welfare policy during the 1996 reform. The first words of The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act are “The Congress makes the following findings: (1) Marriage is the foundation of a successful

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<sup>1</sup> For additional reports and critiques, please visit <http://www.unmarried.org/experts-vs-marriage-promotion.html> and <http://www.unmarried.org/history-vs-marriage-promotion.html>

society. (2) Marriage is an essential institution of a successful society which promotes the interests of children.” This Act created Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and assigned it four purposes including the promotion of marriage, reducing pregnancies among unmarried women, and the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. When TANF was reauthorized in 2005, the Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) “made clear that the Congressional intent was to strengthen the formation and maintenance of two-parent, *married* families.”<sup>2</sup> The DRA redirected \$100 million per year to marriage programs and \$50 million per year to fatherhood programs (totaling \$750 million over 5 years).

As you know, TANF was due to be reauthorized by October 2010, but instead the Obama administration requested a one-year extension. However, the administration is not planning to extend current funding for marriage and fatherhood programs. Rather, it proposes to merge, expand and test these programs by making grants to states through a new Fatherhood, Marriage and Families Innovation Fund. We ask the Committee to critically examine this new Fund and to mandate high standards for not only performance but also fairness in its implementation.

### **Difference Between Marriage Promotion & Relationship Education**

AtMP has closely followed TANF-funded marriage programs since their inception. Some funded programs exclude unmarried people. Some programs devalue unmarried people by insisting that marriage is the best way to structure relationships and families and/or by making marriage the only acceptable goal. Such programs are properly called marriage promotion.

In contrast, some TANF-funded programs teach relationship skills with an eye to helping people who are single, married, or in unmarried relationships. Colorado, for example, has several inclusive programs. A social worker in a TANF-funded program for people with disabilities says “It is important for people to know that not all who have these funds discriminate...most of us in CO serve same-sex couples, those who are dating and singles interested in learning good relationship skills. One thing about the HMI spokespersons that makes me nuts is how they lump all co-habitors into the same category, instead of [acknowledging] those in committed long term relationships who choose [not to or] are unable to marry. We are fighting for many of the same things you are within this community of grantees, i.e. change language from 'marriage' to relationship and no discrimination!”<sup>3</sup>

A relationship education trainer and researcher also based in Colorado calls it “unfortunate” that the TANF-funded programs were initially touted as promoting marriage, when in fact many grantees are more comfortable addressing a range of participants’ relationships and do not see marriage as a programmatic goal. Anecdotally, she noted that all service providers agree that children do better in stable homes while few prioritize marriage as a key to child outcomes. She also noted anecdotally that 90% of marriage and relationship education trainees are interested in providing services to same-sex couples. In fact, she believes that services to same-sex couples increased dramatically as a result of TANF-funded programs, although these services are not reported because they fall outside administration guidelines.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Mincy, Ronald B. *Marriage: Love It or Leave It?* The 2008 Kristin Anderson Moore Lecture. 2008 p. 2

<sup>3</sup> email from LuAnn Pierce, 11/09

<sup>4</sup> Conversation with Galena Rhoades, 7/15/10

The website of the TANF-funded program in Weld County, CO says

“Don’t let the name fool you. The Building Healthy Marriages Program isn’t just for married couples. It’s for anyone who wants to have healthier, stronger, more committed relationships in their lives. Whether you’re married, cohabitating, dating or just interested in having a healthy relationship with those you love, there’s a program that will fit you and your needs perfectly!”<sup>5</sup>

However, it is not clear whether this inclusion of a wide range of relationships is genuine or successful. The Weld County program design was broadened beyond people interested in marriage because the original design had not been reaching the types or numbers of participants that had been promised in the grant application. To keep its grant of over \$907,000 per year, the program started offering four different eight-hour Relationship Seminars to the general public with no assessment or eligibility determination. Two of the seminars focus on conjugal relationships, one is for singles, and one (Winning the Workplace Challenge) is for employees. “At the conclusion of any public event, couples (not individuals) were invited to contact Building Healthy Marriages to assess their eligibility to participate in” ongoing training. The evaluation reviewed Knowledge and Satisfaction Surveys from all of these seminars. Overall results were positive: participants generally enjoyed the seminars and learned something about relationships, typically about conflict resolution.<sup>6</sup>

The surveys asked participants for written comments, a few of which stand out with regard to AtMP’s interest in relationship education that fully recognizes the value of non-marital relationships. Of participants in 52 seminars using the popular PREP curriculum for romantic couples, only 5% were single, while 30% were in a relationship but not married. “[Among] negative comments [that] were made... [was] that the seminar was geared toward marriage and not singles...” In the three seminars that focused on singles, there were “few negative comments,” while overall knowledge and satisfaction scores were somewhat higher than in the other seminars. Scores were somewhat lower for employees who attended 12 workplace seminars, and one commented that they “seemed more about marriage and parenting than the workplace.”<sup>7</sup>

Much as we would like to, it is difficult to believe that all or even most marriage programs are inclusive and tolerant of family diversity and prioritize relationship quality over marital status. Some of the most vocal advocates for TANF-funded marriage programs take a clearly ‘marriage-only’ approach, and are loudly protesting the combination of marriage and fatherhood funding. As they have delivered their opinions directly to Congress, we will not repeat them here.

### ***Difference Between Marriage & Fatherhood Programs***

Marriage and fatherhood programs share ideological origins but differ in their service delivery.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.buildinghealthymarriages.org/> last accessed 8/12/10

<sup>6</sup> O’Halloran, Mary Sean, et al, *Weld County Building Healthy Marriages Annual Report Year 3*, University of Northern Colorado, 2009, p. 10-11, 15, 38, 41

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 49, 58

Promoting marriage and fatherhood as elements of *political ideology* originated with the so-called “family values” messaging that was consistently adopted by the coalitions that first achieved political power during the Reagan administration in the 1980s. Movement leaders achieved administrative power during the G.W. Bush administration in the 2000s.<sup>8</sup>

Fatherhood programs have been guided by two different mindsets: “pro-marriage” and “fragile-families.” They differ in that, “unlike the pro-marriage groups that use a moral/culturalist approach to family formation, fragile families organizations apply a structuralist/economic perspective and focus on the barriers to breadwinning and marriage among poor and minority men.”<sup>9</sup>

The debate between these two aspects of the fatherhood movement is occasionally clear and pointed. For example, a fragile families expert once said, “promoting marriage as a policy incentive in the fatherhood movement makes second-class citizens of a large and growing number of children who have unmarried fathers.” The pro-marriage brand of fatherhood programs is clearly more focused on gender, sexuality, biology and the role of marriage as a “key to all social problems.”<sup>10</sup>

However, the overlap between the two sides of the fatherhood movement has been more visible than their differences; on the ground, their focus on marriage is often identical. For example: fragile-families programs often relate responsible fatherhood to the achievement of marriage; both program types promote and reinforce gender roles; and both philosophies (though more so under the pro-marriage wing) describe fathers as irreplaceable and necessary because of the “maleness” that they bring to the so-called parenting equation. At the same time, the nation’s leading marriage/fatherhood educators reinforce the notion that men are only made into fathers through culture, custom and law – while claiming that women’s role as mothers is a function of biology alone. A researcher noted that these programs “draw on a combination of biblical and sociobiological discourses that make up a loose essentialist approach to gender relations.”<sup>11</sup>

A report of the Task Force on Fatherhood and Healthy Families (part of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships) offers some insight into how debating the importance of marriage affects the delivery of economic assistance to low-income people:

“Couples employment programs are designed to serve couples that are jointly raising a child and are dedicated to being in a committed relationship with each other, irrespective of whether they are married. Some Council Members would be opposed to such programs to the extent that people qualify to participate in such a program precisely because they are involved in “committed” sexual relationships other than marriage. Those Council Members further submit that, if, by contrast, ... the program confers benefits based on the existence of nonmarital sexual relationship, *but also has as its purpose to steer those participants toward marriage*, then the concern raised by those Council Members would be alleviated.”<sup>12</sup> (italics added)

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<sup>8</sup> Hardisty, Jean. *Pushed to the Alter: the Right Wing Roots of Marriage Promotion*. Political Research Associates and Women of Color Resource Center, 2008. pp. 12-22

<sup>9</sup> Gavanas, Anna. *Fatherhood Politics in the United States*. University of Illinois Press, 2004. p. 72

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 163, 154

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 154, 44

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ofbnp-council-final-report.pdf> last accessed 6/7/10

In terms of *service delivery*, marriage and fatherhood programs came from very different places. Fatherhood services developed at the community level with “a common focus on low-income fathers and on enhancing their ability to be involved with their children,” with activities that “focus on the barriers that result from poverty.”<sup>13</sup> By contrast, marriage education services developed largely for middle-income, different-sex, legally married or engaged couples, often within their faith communities.<sup>14</sup>

When funding for marriage programs skyrocketed in 2005, fatherhood programs with a fragile families approach felt entirely left out.<sup>15</sup> Some long-standing fatherhood programs added marriage to their missions. Fatherhood “program representatives who saw marriage education services interfere with or displace other needed services for low-income clients viewed marriage services as irrelevant at best, and, more commonly, as harmful to their clients.”<sup>16</sup>

In Baltimore “a community-based organization that was known for providing employment and fatherhood services to low-income men since 1999” was the lowest performing of the Building Strong Families (BSF) national marriage education demonstration sites.<sup>17</sup> While the demonstration achieved no net impact nationally, at this fatherhood site “couples were less likely than control group couples to remain romantically involved (and) reported being less supportive and affectionate toward each other than control group couples did. In addition, women ... were more likely than women in the control group to report having been severely physically assaulted by a romantic partner in the past year.... Baltimore BSF couples also rated the quality of their co-parenting relationship lower than control group couples did and reported that BSF fathers spent less time with their children and were less likely to provide them financial support than control group fathers were.”<sup>18</sup>

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) press release about the BSF evaluation says “These findings are very timely as Congress considers the more comprehensive Fatherhood, Marriage and Families Innovation Fund, proposed in the President’s 2011 budget. ... The results of this study show that it is possible to positively influence and strengthen families with support programs, but also suggest that the current approach isn’t adequate.”<sup>19</sup>

### **Congress Must Set Standards for the Innovation Fund**

The proposed \$500 million Fatherhood, Marriage and Families Innovation Fund will be available to states on a competitive basis, probably in two or more funding rounds.<sup>20</sup> It seems states will have the option of applying to one or both of the Fund’s two separate, equally sized programs –

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<sup>13</sup> Roulet, Marguerite. *Fatherhood Programs and Healthy Marriage Funding*. Center for Family Policy and Practice, 2009. p. 6

<sup>14</sup> Ooms, Theodora, *The New Kid on the Block: What Is Marriage Education and Does It Work?* Center for Law and Social Policy, Couples and Marriage Series Brief No. 7, July 2005 p. 2

<sup>15</sup> Mincy, op cit, p. 2

<sup>16</sup> Roulet, op cit, p. 33

<sup>17</sup> Dion, MR, et al., *The Building Strong Families Project: Implementation of Eight Programs to Strengthen Unmarried Parent Families*, 2010. p. 58

<sup>18</sup> Wood, Robert G. et al, *Strengthening Unmarried Parents' Relationships: The Early Impacts of Building Strong Families, Executive Summary*. Mathematica Policy Research Inc., 2010. p. 5

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/news/press/2010/building\\_strong\\_families.html](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/news/press/2010/building_strong_families.html), last accessed 9/8/10

<sup>20</sup> Conversation with Phil Cowan, 6/12/10

which we'll nickname Fatherhood and Family. The Family program will focus on employment for very low-income parents. The Fatherhood program "could include a set of activities relating to young people who are not yet pregnant or parenting, to expectant parents, and/or to custodial parents, including couples, and services could include addressing the consequences and responsibilities of becoming a parent. ...[C]ore elements of a comprehensive fatherhood service delivery network could include such services as: peer support; relationship skill-building (which can include marriage education); co-parenting services; conflict resolution; child support case management; job training and other employment services; employment preparation services; training subsidies; financial incentives; earning supplements; legal services; substance abuse and mental health treatment (typically, through partnerships with public agencies and community-based providers); linkages to domestic violence prevention programs; and linkages to public agencies and community-based providers offering housing assistance, benefits enrollment, and other services."<sup>21</sup>

In testimony to the House of Representatives and in its budget justification statements, HHS has presented the Fund under the umbrellas of fatherhood, child support enforcement and even employment, not marriage. An HHS spokesperson said the fund reflects the fact that "children live in a wide range of family structures and there are many different ways that fathers can engage in the lives of their children."<sup>22</sup>

The budget justification statement notes that the Fund will fill any gaps left by the elimination not only of the Healthy Marriage funding initiative, but also by JOLI, Job Opportunities for Low-Income Individuals, which "provides grants for business and microenterprise opportunities [but] has never been evaluated, nor does it have performance measures."<sup>23</sup>

In contrast, HHS testified that the new Fund "will be required to establish meaningful performance goals, such as higher family earnings and improvements in factors that relate to child outcomes, and to measure progress toward those goals. Grantees will be required to agree to participate in a rigorous evaluation as a condition of funding."<sup>24</sup>

The immediate impact of the Fund will be on program design and partnership development within the states that apply for grants (in the way that the Race to the Top education grant competition inspired states to change their laws and procedures in the hope of winning or in the assumption that the competition standards represent best practices). To date HHS has declined to specify many standards, preferring to "encourage applicants to develop and put forward innovative and comprehensive proposals to address these outcomes. It does not earmark dollar amounts for particular services or activities. ... While the Administration envisions that relationship education will play an important role in programs supported under the Fund, a strong application will not just be about the provision of relationship education services by themselves. ... The explicit goal of the Fund is to encourage comprehensive, multi-faceted

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<sup>21</sup> [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/2010/Fatherhood\\_Marriage\\_and\\_Families\\_Innovation\\_Fund\\_QA.html](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/2010/Fatherhood_Marriage_and_Families_Innovation_Fund_QA.html)  
last accessed 9/8/10

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2010/0810/Fatherhood-not-marriage-is-focus-of-Obama-family-policies>  
last accessed 9/9/10

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/acf\\_perfplan/ann\\_per/2011\\_perf\\_plan/2011\\_final.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/acf_perfplan/ann_per/2011_perf_plan/2011_final.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/olab/legislative/testimony/2010/HansellFatherhoodTestimony.html> last  
accessed 9/8/10

efforts that are not narrowly focused on parenting or relationship skills alone, or just on employment and employability efforts.”<sup>25</sup>

If criteria remain vague, each state’s application will be shaped by the relative strengths of various local interest groups. Few if any states are already providing the integrated services that partner welfare agencies with community organizations as envisioned by the Fund. Marriage promotion lobbies have already demonstrated their persuasiveness in TX, OH, AZ, CO, UT, NM, NY, AL, GA, and OK by redirecting 1% of the TANF block grant to marriage programs as of 12/07, in addition to the grantees that won direct federal funding in 2006.<sup>26</sup>

The Fund’s ultimate impact on the lives of America’s diverse families will depend on which aspects of marriage, relationship and/or fatherhood programs each state decides to carry forth.

Before approving the creation of the new Fund, Congress must create basic standards for the federal administration, and the administration must require that all state grantees and local sub-grantees meet the same minimum standards. Here are the standards that we recommend:

- ✿ **Serve low-income people.** In the long run, it would be better for relationship education services to be available to people at all income levels, and for anti-poverty funds to be dedicated to employment, education and other services that help people earn above poverty-level incomes. However, a small portion of federal spending is dedicated to low-income people, this Fund is part of that budget, and low-income people should receive its full benefit (hoping there is any benefit).
- ✿ **Don’t discriminate** on the basis of marital status or sexual orientation **or stigmatize** unmarried relationships.
- ✿ **Make relationship education inclusive.** Low-income parents and children depend on a wide web of relationships with friends, unmarried partners, extended family, community members and representatives of institutions. Programs should be evaluated with inclusiveness in mind: all participants should be counted, and effectiveness should be measured for different constituencies.
- ✿ **Develop standards, educational requirements or an accreditation system for relationship educators.** Currently there are no standards for training of educators who run programs at the local level.
- ✿ **Let service providers work from their strengths rather than pursue fads.** Participants suffered the worst outcomes in fatherhood programs that tried to become marriage programs.
- ✿ **Help men and women be great parents and partners, not husbands and wives.** Enhance skills as parents and co-parents, reduce conflicts among both biological and non-bio parents, increase the resources, safety and stability of children’s homes.
- ✿ **Don’t confuse parenting with gender role-modeling.** As the courts have stated, “gender is not relevant to the state in determining spouses’ obligation to each other and to their dependents,” and “gender no longer forms an essential part of marriage; marriage under law is a union of equals.” While children benefit from having both male and female role models, strictly gendered *parenting* has not been proven relevant to child outcomes.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/2010/Fatherhood\\_Marriage\\_and\\_Families\\_Innovation\\_Fund\\_OA.html](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/pubs/2010/Fatherhood_Marriage_and_Families_Innovation_Fund_OA.html) last accessed 9/8/10

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.smartmarriages.com/legislation.html> last accessed 9/13/10

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.feministlawprofessors.com/2010/08/hiding-plain-sight-facts-about-marriage-parenthood-california-marriage-case-irrelevance-gender/> last accessed 8/24/10

✿ **Gather and publish evaluation results quickly.** It would be nearly impossible for the new Fund's grantees to generate scientifically measurable results before September 2011, the next opportunity for TANF reauthorization. The grants should last no longer than the shortest feasible evaluation period, lest we throw good money after bad.

**Write New Congressional Findings and Purpose Statement During Reauthorization in 2011**

Inclusive relationship education, if proven effective, should be completely separate from the TANF program. "Services should be available and accessible to those who seek them. Counseling for partners should be available through health programs. Preparation for parenting should be available as part of elementary-secondary schooling. Parenting classes should be available for adults who are parents. Supports should be offered to partners who have to flee relationships due to intimate violence. Educational and support services for parents and prospective parents should not target poor people, should not pathologize poverty. They should reach everyone in recognition that anyone might benefit from parenting support."<sup>28</sup>

TANF performance measures will be revisited during reauthorization. Notably, HHS has not met its targets on the two current measurements related to marriage: increasing the rate of case closures due to marriage and increasing the number of children living in married households as a percentage of all children in households.<sup>29</sup> Marriage and relationship decisions should remain personal, not be government performance measures at all.

The findings and purpose statement should also be revisited. HHS's early statements about the target population and anticipated outcomes of the Innovation Fund suggest that the Obama administration is interested in returning anti-poverty funds back towards economic solutions to poverty such as jobs and education. This is the right direction. Congress must create a more realistic and fair foundation for future anti-poverty work.

The ultimate goal of federal anti-poverty efforts should be to eliminate poverty. Intermediate objectives should include creating opportunities for people in poverty to make the same meaningful life choices that are available to economically stable Americans. For example, all Americans should have equal opportunities to choose whether and when to marry or form other healthy relationships, to pursue employment or education, to have children, to relocate, etc. The Alternatives to Marriage Project looks forward to contributing more detailed recommendations during the reauthorization process.

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<sup>28</sup> <http://feministsocialjustice.blogspot.com/2010/06/obama-administration-plan-to-establish.html>, last accessed 8/12/10

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/acf\\_perfplan/ann\\_per/2011\\_perf\\_plan/2011\\_final.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/acf_perfplan/ann_per/2011_perf_plan/2011_final.pdf) last accessed 9/8/10

anonymous AK 99503	My parents divorced when I was 9, and even with child support, my mother, my brother, and I lived below the poverty line for several years. Her second marriage, to an abusive man, was the worst thing that ever happened to our family.
Sanjeev Gopal AZ 85650	marriage is a personal matter. no governmental interference please
Crista Underwood CA 94102	What helps families and children are stable families. Human cultures have evolved and chosen a wide variety of family structures to meet these needs, and marriage is only one of them. To favor one particular way that people choose to live their lives and support each other over all others is naive at best and discriminatory at worst. Supporting marriage is not the way to help all children, it is a way to further intolerance. Supporting families, of whatever composition, supports children and reduces poverty. Put the money into affordable childcare and health care, and it will go a lot further!
Collie Collier CA 95008	So many adults have never moved beyond their childhood fantasies; it's comforting for them to believe in the simple nostalgia of protective, perfectly happy, *married* parents. Unfortunately clinging to these fantasies ensure an adult who is unable to cope with hard human realities. In the long run, privileging only one narrow understanding of marriage harms everyone.
Jessica Gottlieb CA 91403	Until everyone can marry in all 50 states this is absurd.
Fernand Alvarez CA 94608	two parents does not make a healthy society, we need aunts, uncles, friends, strong connected community... Households with with 5 or more adults in them, regardless of any legal status, blood relation or intimacy, should be encouraged, the standard. only this type of reconnection can save our fragmented society from total disolution.
anonymous CA 92026	I have a daughter that is gay and a daughter-in-law that's gay. I don't believe that God intended that for humans to act that way. We need to help the poor a lot moor than the same sex marriages. Our government should put a stop to this ASAP.
Linda Masterson FL 32807	As a single person, I resent the implication that I would be a better parent, or would be better equipped to care for a child if I was married. The tax codes, in fact the entire system of government is set up in a manner that discriminates against 44% of the population. It is time to stop trying to legislate people's behavior based on antiquated ideas of what constitutes a family.
Vickey Waqas KS	marriage its just a socail behavior to be unmarried mean happy life i want to be unmarried for every but here at pakistan no one support me
Emily Boone KY 40206	It is important that the government not mandate religious policy. Religious policy is best left up to religious organizations to implement among their members. The US is not a theocracy.
Jane Zuroff IN 46544	Education for "the poor" is always welcome until there is an agenda added to it.
Stephanie May MA 01776	Simply put, marriage does not guarantee the best home.
Seema Desai MN 55407	No personal TANF experience, but TANF's role is to provide a safety net, not to promote the institution of marriage. In a time when funding is limited, such resources should not be wasted on morality/normalcy crusades; rather, it should be used to help the many people in need.
Christine Insley NC 27801	If we were to get married we would most likely lose our medicaid and foodstamps we do not recieve any cash assisstance, this is per a social worker who advised me not to get married or lose my services.

anonymous NY 10305	There's oppressive unrealistic ideology favoring 2-person/2-earner households, especially when children are involved. Single parents by choice are stigmatized as somehow inadequate. To say this is inappropriate and unfair to children and extended families is a profound understatement.
Jonathan Minkoff NY 10036	The top portion may be form letter, but it is accurate and I cannot stress enough how important it is to allow people the freedom to live their lives -making the most private and personal decisions- out from under the thumb of big government. Let the role of govt be support for all, not prejudice -religious based or otherwise. Jonathan
anonymous NY 11218	i've seen the impact that feeling pressured to marry can have on couples, and i can only imagine how it can negatively impact the wellbeing of their children.
Bobby Mauger OR 97330	Never had TANF myself, and hope to not need it, but as a happily unmarried person I cannot think of any reason either of our benefits should be tied to whether we ever marry.
Maggie Bagon OR 97301	I went on public assistance after leaving an extremely physically and emotionally abusive husband. Because of his attempts to kill me and lack of help from law enforcement, I left Ohio and moved to Montana to be near my support system. I was unable to find steady employment and had to go on welfare. The way I was able to find permanent employment and get off welfare and out of poverty was through education. In my opinion marriage is not the answer for most women and fund to marriage promotion will not help women get off welfare.
Mark Weil PA 15218	Marriage should be only one option for people who love one another, and want to be considered a family. There are many reasons people who either do not want, or can't get married for a variety of reasons. It should not be up to the Government to legislate "morality".
Inessa Trombley TX 75206	TANF is meant to end poverty! The money should be spent on the basic needs and medications for survival. It is frivolous to spend it on promoting arbitrary standards like marriage.
Caitlin MacIntyre TX 78741	As the child of a mother and two gay fathers, I know firsthand the beauty and joy of diverse family structures and think it is vital that all families be supported, valued, and recognized in a meaningful and tangible way.
Angie Walls VA 22032	I strongly support diversity in what we consider "family" in today's society, and I do believe that marriage and "nuclear family" initiatives do more harm than good.
Monica Peabody WA 98501	In Washington state, which has a relatively high grant amount compared to other states, a TANF grant provides families only 40% of the Federal Poverty Level, relegating them to desperate poverty, substandard rentals, and meeting only some of their basic needs. People need food, housing, heat, water, not marriage promotion!
Michelle Joosse WI 53083	In WI., BadgerCare/Food Share program enrollment automatically enters your family in the child support system. Whether you and your significant other are "cohabitating" full-time or living separately(but in a relationship). They put the father in this system, and ASSume that you are not a family unit! Even if cash support is being paid, they state that support needs to go through their office....Discrimination based on marital status/living arrangements!! To provide for your family. this state makes you go through"hoops" just to provide insurance for your children! I found out that it just wasn't worth it!! Hopefully, all children will be insured, regardless of their parents' marital status!!
Peter Blaise Monahon VA 22206	Give equivalent consideration to all those in need.
Glen Anderson WA 98503	Conservatives say they want to get "Big Government" off our backs. Conservatives should get rid of this intrusive marriage-promotion propaganda. People can make their own decisions. The real solution is to eliminate poverty.

“Congress should state that the purpose of TANF is to end poverty, not to promote marriage. Congress should not reauthorize the Healthy Marriage Initiatives.”

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Rachel Buddeberg CA 94116	Teri Hu CA 94116
Bella DePaulo CA 93067	anonymous CA 95150
Mary Ann Vorasky CA 90404	Alyssa Clark CA 90026
Michael Marshall CA 96088	Iarry Marshall CA 96088
Lauren Alderman CA 93401	Joel Rane CA 90027
Brooke Bardin CA 92127	Brian Brackney CA 94102
Sandra Newton CA 95829	Amber Harvin CA 93933
Alex Vanderburgh CA 94131	Elizabeth Gardner-McBride CA 94709
Rider . CA 92806	Kathleen Collins CA 94707
Cole Thompson CA 95370	Lori King CA
Chiquita Dineyanti CA 91767	Paul Lathrop CA 94610
anonymous CA 94123	anonymous CA
Danielle Bowers CO 80233	Alice Greczyn CO
anonymous CO 80908	Desiree Hickson CO 80906
Matthew Berntsen CT 06807	Penelope Deotte CT 06457
Kristen Horvath CT 06237	John C. & Roberta Stewart DC 20010
Betsy Lehrfeld DC 20012	Marya Torrez DC 20001
Amanda Thon FL 32905	Rachel Tramell FL 33403
Rebecca Deotte FL 32784	Dean Millard FL 33611
Ken Nix FL 33613	Ellen Pattison FL 32055
Patrick Berry FL 32765	Monica Pignotti FL
Stephanie Tang IA 50010	Scott Williams IA
Virginia Brock IL 61201	Janine Putnam IL 60517
Anita Lee-Bjerke IL 60640	Barbara van Davis IL

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Paul Christensen IL 60654	Tom Giesler IL 60302
Cheryl Hooks IL 60950	Virginia Brock IL 61201
Michelle Wirth IN 46617	Angi Bailey IN 46040
Natalie DeWitt IN 47403	Carolyn Marie Fugit KS 67218
anonymous KS 66502	Elizabeth Moyer KY 40258
anonymous KY 41076	Jim Collings KY 42701
Leah Foster LA 70118	Sherry Lester Kircus LA 71109
Jennifer Griffith MA 01030	Elizabeth Brownell MA 02115
Michael Leibensperger MA	Stephen Karpf MA 02446
Woody Glenn, Alan Hamilton, Pepper Greene MA 02143	Mary Gniadek MA 01201
William Churchill MA 01776	Ari Lev Fornari MA
Arthur Torrey MA 01862	anonymous MA 01983
John Lapham MA 02474	Anna Churchill MA 02472
anonymous MA	Anne Marigza MD 20772
C.T. Butler MD 20912-4514	Gessika Rovario-Cole MD
anonymous MD 21223	anonymous MD
Sara Mansoury MD 20882	Cecelia LaPointe MI 49686
Heidi frankenhauser MI 48103	anonymous MI 48108
Kathie Lesich MI 48316	Roscoe Jackson MI 48219
Robert Cowles MI 49441	Veronica Hayes MI 48220
Cheryl Cowen MI	Rachelle Busser MN 55426
April N MN 55337	Beth Varro MN 55104
anonymous MO	Kori Amos MO
Dr. Eric Blumberg MS 48220	Nick Frankenhauser NC 27886
Stephanie Shaw NC 28805	anonymous ND 58554

Penny Postel NJ 08034	Sarah Radford NJ 08854
Michelle Lerner NJ 07836	James Denny NJ 08054
Juliann Barbato NV	doyle warren NY 11215
Jessica Gafkowitz NY 11230	Rev. Reg Richburg NY 11435
Richard Semegram NY 11218	Ray Grist NY 11206
William Wolf NY 14072	Terry Boggis NY 10012
Diana Gabriel NY 10024	Michele Hirsch NY 10075
Jamie Levato NY 12561	Jessica Levy NY 11238
Dr. Rosalyn Baxandall NY 10012	David Graves NY 11215
Dorian Solot NY 12202	anonymous NY 12180
Michael Yarbrough NY 11217	Sam Miller NY
Ira Rosen NY 11226	Alissa Wise NY 11218
Alex Weissman NY	Hannah Mermelstein NY
lezie frye NY	Rebecca Ennen NY 10040
Katie Goldstein NY 11226	Miriam, Rebecca, & Robin Tell NY 12209
Joseph n. DeFilippis NY 11385	Emma Potik NY 12209
Kristen Eichenhofer NY 12209	Christian Burgess NY 10033
Brady Amoonclark NY	Emmaia Gelman NY 10025
Elise Harris NY 11215	Myra Batchelder NY
Maria Fiesta NY 11238	Vanessa Brocato NY 11218
anonymous NY	Veronica Bayetti NY 11216
Michael Reynolds OH 45419	Arthur Severance OH 44060
Sharon Woznicky OH 44107	Molly McHenry OH 11230
Jessica Baldwin OH 45750	Matthew Webb OH 45036
Valerie Lambert OH 45410	Deborah Dawson OK

Lindsay Millar ON	Elisa Pelaccia ON N9C 2A3
Carolyn Wiesner OR 97220	Alecia Haggard OR 97216
anonymous OR 97201	Sylv Cordier ot
Nicole Johns PA 19050	John Geiger PA 17887
Kimberly Meigh PA 15206	anonymous PA 19066
Gail Brown PA 15234	anonymous PA 15218
Susanna Gilbertson PA 19143	Sara Narva PA
Karey Bacon PA 19119	Nava EtShalom PA
Rebecca Subar PA	Ken Rosso PA
Susanna Gilbertson PA 19143	Rosa Friedman PA 19010
Alice Yew RI 02906	Melinda Brown TN 37217
Kristen Ruiz TN 38135	Jenny Salata TN 37909
Elizabeth Mei Wong TN 37901	Meredith Spies TX 77373
Karen Kaiser TX 75039	Stacey Salling TX 78723
Ricky Harris TX 78041	Courtney martin TX
Heather Francell TX	Amber Nelson UT 84068
Tina Kling UT 84088	Christopher Matthews VA 24450
Marisa Martineau VA 22041	Jonathan Krall VA 22301
Therese Lee VA 22041	Harold Kornylak VA 23451
Del Hardesty VA 22306	Sherri William VA 23112
Kathryn Snow VA	Debra Gram VA 22801
Stephanie Pratt VA	Anna Rabin VA 35170
Wynn Solomon VA 22971	Rev. Reg C. Richburg MSW,LSW VA
Len Smolen WA 98015	Amy Donahue WA 53703
Angela Kelly	anonymous

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WA 98501	WA 98030
Renee Martineau WA 98502	Tracy Bingham WA
Robert West WI 53705	Colin Hempstead WA 98236
Jennie Hill WV 25302	