February 7, 2018

To: House Committee on Early Learning and Family Supports  
Representative John Lively, Chair  
Representative Daniel Bonham, Vice Chair  
Representative Carla Piluso, Vice-Chair

Re: HB 4081 – Temporary Assistance to Needy Families - Support

The League of Women Voters has a national position on meeting basic human needs. Persons who are unable to work, whose earnings are inadequate or for whom jobs are not available have the right to an income and/or services sufficient to meet their basic needs for food, shelter and access to health care.

The current benefit levels for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) does not meet the basic needs of a family. The benefits do not cover the current costs to rent housing in most communities. Many families have to double up or live with friends or relatives. In some cases, they cannot find housing they can afford and are homeless. In fact, the grant levels are contributing to the homeless problems in the state today.

This bill asks to use savings in the TANF program to increase the amount of cash grants equal to the value of grants in 1996. Inflation should have increased the grants considerably since that time. The state has provided food programs, health care, and some child care while in training, but most families cannot survive without a cash grant for rent, utilities and other essential needs. Isn’t it time to increase grant levels to allow for the rises in costs of housing, utilities and essentials like medications?

How can we expect a parent to concentrate on work training when they are living within such a tight budget? Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Norman Turrill  
LWVOR President

Karen Nibler  
LWVOR Social Policy Coordinator