

TAFDC: Massachusetts' Cash Assistance Program for Families

MASS. LAW REFORM INSTITUTE/GREATER BOSTON LEGAL SERVICES
MASSACHUSETTS CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION

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DECEMBER 2024

Agenda

Overview of TAFDC Program

10 minute break

TAFDC – Practical Tips

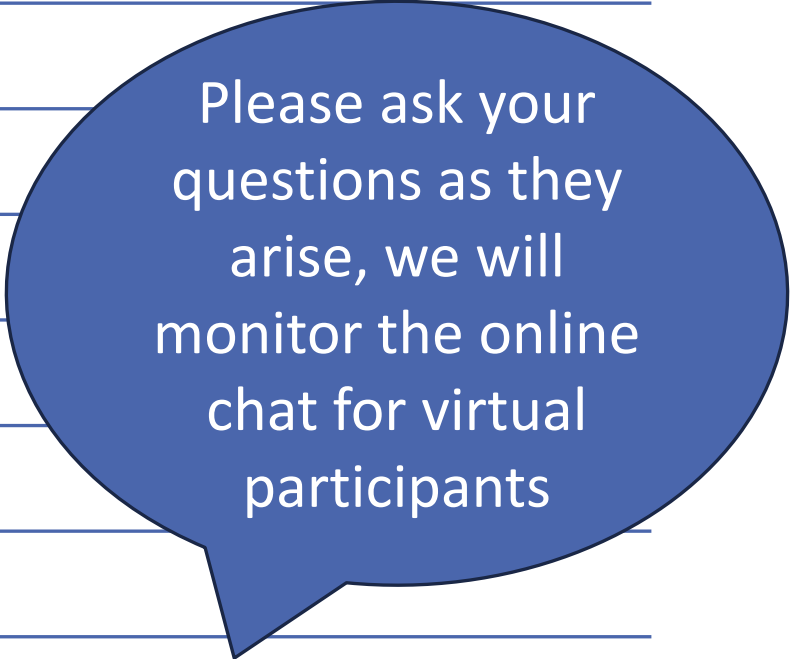
Lunch break from 11:45-12:30

Child Care

10 minute break

Immigrant Eligibility

Opportunities for Reform



Please ask your questions as they arise, we will monitor the online chat for virtual participants

Opportunities for Reform

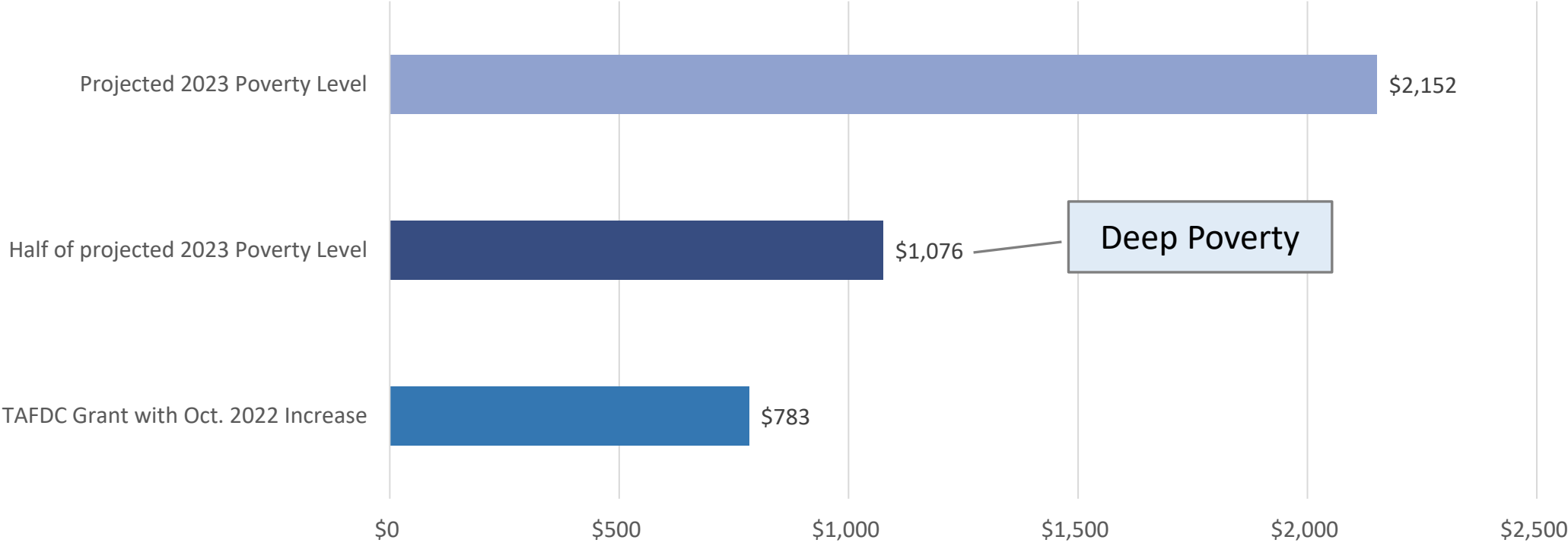
TAFDC BASIC BENEFITS TRAINING
DECEMBER 2024

Systemic challenges in TAFDC & related programs

- Low monthly benefits
- State takes kids' child support
- Challenges contacting DTA
- Barriers to immigrant eligibility

Low monthly benefit levels

TAFDC Keeps a Family of 3 Below 50% of the Poverty Line

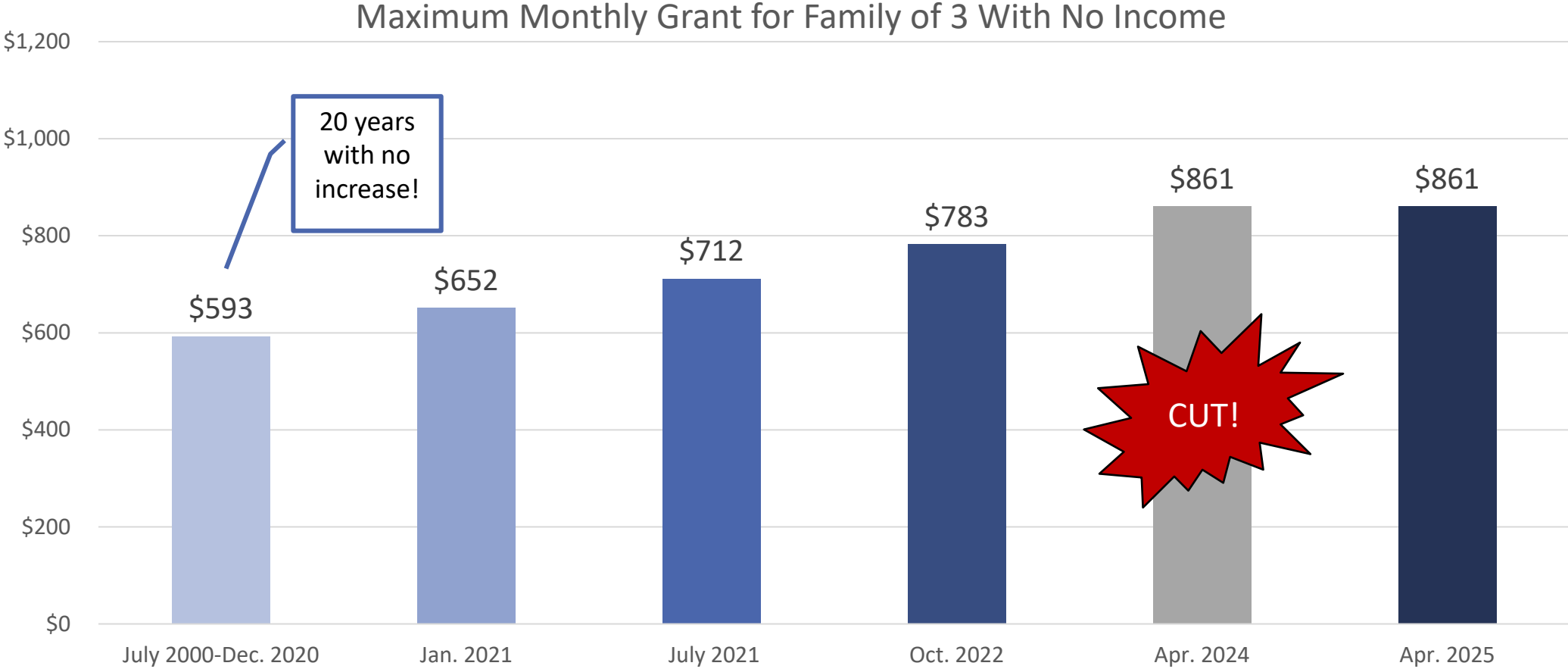


Campaign to Lift Kids Out of Deep Poverty



- State legislative campaign to increase cash assistance grant levels
 - Both TAFDC & EAEDC
- Lead sponsors in state legislature:
 - Representative Marjorie Decker
 - Senator Sal DiDomenico
- 160 org coalition members across MA
- Won 40% increase overall in TAFDC and EAEDC starting Jan. 2021

Recent Victories in Raising TAFDC Grants



More work to do – join Lift Our Kids!

- Coalition fighting to raise TAFDC and EAEDC grants.
- Pushing for annual cost of living increase so benefits keep up with inflation



For more information, contact:

**Deborah Harris, Mass. Law Reform Institute,
617-538-1680 (cell) dharris@mlri.org**

**Naomi Meyer, Greater Boston Legal
Services, 617-603-1621, nmeyer@gbls.org**

Follow on social media:

@LiftOurKidsMA

Child support policies hurt families

CHILD SUPPORT POLICIES IN TAFDC

- Applicants must pursue child support enforcement
 - exceptions for DV and other situations
- Custodial parents only receive \$50 of child support paid (“pass through”)
- Limits choice for families who do not want to pursue formal child support, many forgo cash assistance

LEGISLATURE AND DTA CAN CHANGE POLICIES

- Change is possible!
- We need more voices involved
- Contact Betsy Gwin, bgwin@mlri.org, for more info

Barriers to immigrant eligibility

- Many **legally present immigrants** who have lived in MA for years - including immigrants with TPS, pending asylum, DACA/Dreamers, Humanitarian Parole, victims of violence - **don't qualify for critical cash and nutrition benefits**
- Why? In 1996, Congress cut core benefits to millions of legally present immigrants across the nation
- From 1997 to 2002, the Massachusetts legislature provided state-funded food benefits (SNAP) and cash assistance (TAFDC and EAEDC) to immigrants cut off from federal benefits. Most of those state-funded benefits ended in 2002.

Feeding Our Neighbors Campaign



FeedingOurNeighborsMA.org

For more info, contact:

Pat Baker, Mass. Law Reform Institute,
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Stay connected
with legal aid
and advocacy
community



Help us identify
problems and trends



Seek support on
administrative appeals



Get advice on
challenging cases



Engage with coalitions



Support clients in
speaking out

Sources for Information

Mass. Legal Services (including Advocacy Guides), www.masslegalservices.org

DTA Regulations, www.mass.gov/dta

Mass. Legal Help, www.masslegalhelp.org

DTA Online Guide, www.mass.gov/dta

Local legal services programs and other legal help on Mass Legal Resource Finder, <https://masslrf.org/en/home>

Advocacy community