Nearly 3 in 4 States Have Welfare-to-Work Parent Lifetime Time Limits That Are More Generous Than California’s

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Lifetime Time Limits for Parents by State, 2018

California allows parents less time receiving welfare-to-work cash support than 37 states and D.C. In most states, parents’ lifetime time limit is 60 months, the maximum allowed for federally-funded TANF support. But California restricts parents in CalWORKs, the state’s TANF program, to only 48 months – a full year less.

California’s restrictive CalWORKs lifetime limit was adopted in 2011 to address a state budget shortfall in the wake of the Great Recession. State revenues have improved, but the previous 60-month lifetime limit has not been restored.

California also imposes confusing CalWORKs “time clock” requirements, which limit parents to only 24 months to focus on addressing serious work barriers or completing education.

Allowing parents a more realistic time period to address barriers and improve skills, and restoring the 60-month lifetime limit, would help more families achieve stability.

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