

TAFDC: Massachusetts' Cash Assistance Program for Families

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

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DECEMBER 2022

Agenda

- Overview of TAFDC Program
- *10 minute break*
- Child Care
- *Lunch break from 11:45-12:30*
- TAFDC – Practical Tips
- Immigrant Eligibility
- Opportunities for Reform

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

Sources for Information

Advocacy Guides, www.masslegalservices.org

DTA Regulations, www.mass.gov/dta

Mass. Legal Services, www.masslegalservices.org

Mass. Legal Help, www.masslegalhelp.org

DTA Online Guide, www.mass.gov/dta

Local legal services program

Advocacy community

Opportunities for Reform

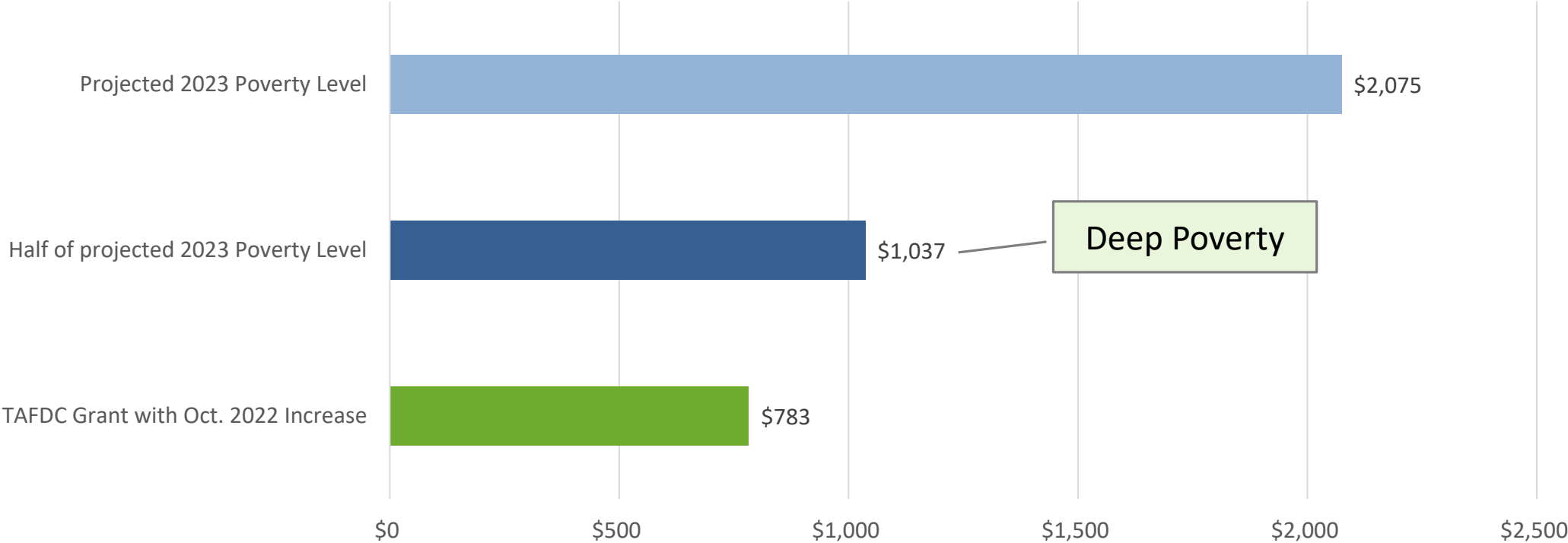
TAFDC BASIC BENEFITS TRAINING
DECEMBER 2023

Systemic challenges in TAFDC & related programs

- Low monthly benefit levels
- Barriers to immigrant eligibility
- Child support requirements discourage applicants
- Other issues
 - Improper terminations or denials
 - Challenges contacting DTA

Low monthly benefit levels

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



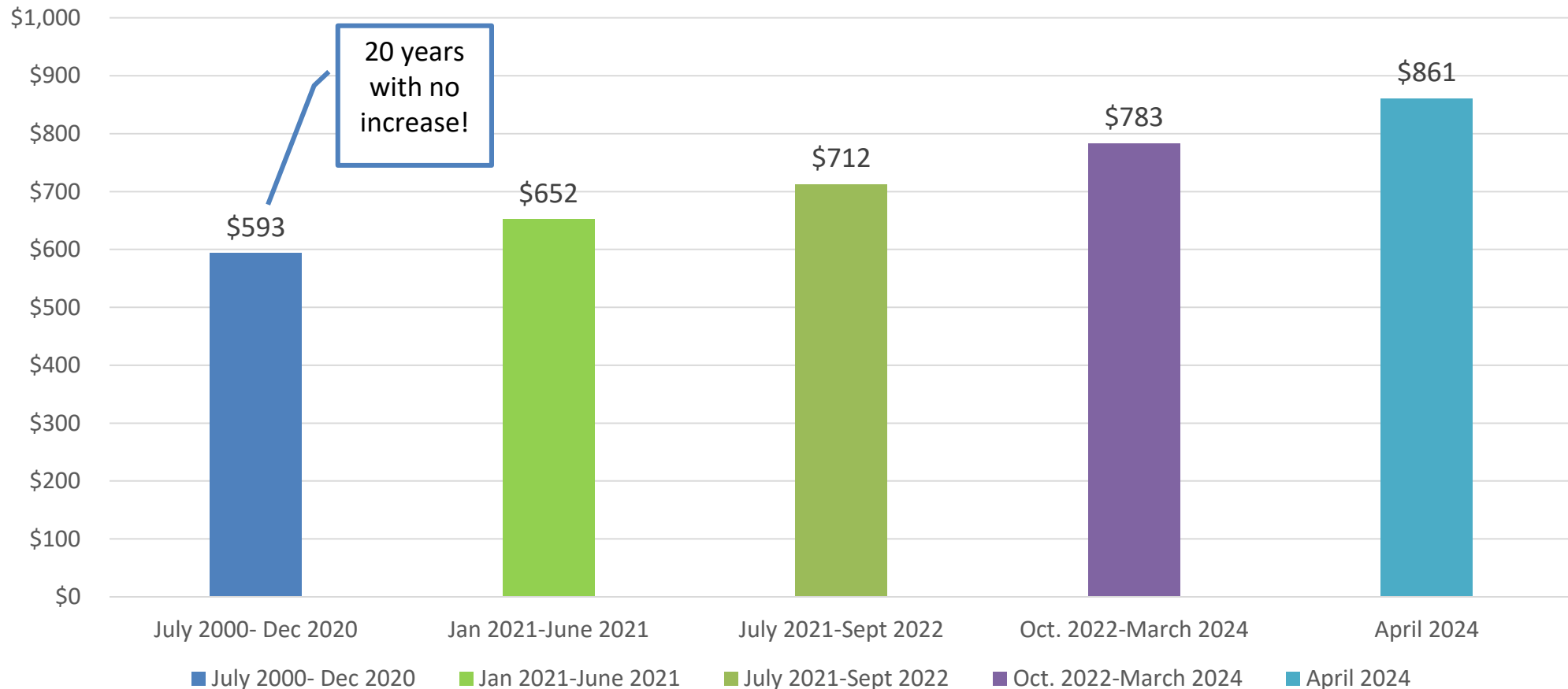
Campaign to Lift Kids Out of Deep Poverty



- State legislative campaign to increase cash assistance annually until grants reach 50% of federal poverty level
- Lead sponsors in state legislature:
 - Representative Marjorie Decker (H. 144)
 - Senator Sal DiDomenico (S. 75)
- 160 coalition members across MA
- Achieved four consecutive increases to cash assistance in state budget

Recent Victories in Raising TAFDC Grants

Maximum monthly cash assistance for family of 3



More work to do – join Lift Our Kids!

- High inflation undercuts recent grant increases
- Coalition fighting for annual cost of living adjustments 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

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

- La Colaborativa & MLRI leading a coalition of over 70 organizations
- Introduced new bill in 2023, “An Act establishing basic needs assistance for Massachusetts immigrant residents”
 - H. 135 (Rep. Cabral, Rep. Garcia)
 - S. 76 (Sen. DiDomenico)
- Bill would restore basic food benefits and basic cash benefits for low-income, legally present immigrants living in Massachusetts



Feeding Our Neighbors Campaign



FeedingOurNeighborsMA.org

For more info, contact:

Pat Baker, Mass. Law Reform Institute,
pbaker@mlri.org

Follow on social media:

@FeedingOurNeighborsMA

Child support requirements discourage applicants

CHILD SUPPORT POLICIES IN TAFDC

- Applicants must cooperate with 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 choose not to get cash assistance

AN ACT TO FURTHER FAMILY-CENTERED CHILD SUPPORT, H. 127, S.70

- Bill proposes to:
 - increase child support pass-through to 100% of support paid
 - Allow parents to claim good cause for not cooperating with child support when it is not “in the best interests of the child” to give parents more choice
- Contact Betsy Gwin, bgwin@mlri.org, for more info

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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

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