



BECAUSE WE DON'T WANT WELFARE
WE WANT
WEALTHFAIR™

A Just and Equitable Share in America's Prosperity



Can I Live, Inc takes the position that all Americans are created equal and possessed of inalienable rights to life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness—and to justice under the law. Yet the entitlements provided to millions of families living at or below poverty are structured to keep them poor while entitlements offered to wealthier Americans and corporations assist in wealth creation and enhanced prosperity.

A Working Document...

“Data compiled by the staff of Can I Live, Inc. has illustrated that if 1million women are removed OFF welfare, the savings at the end of 10 years could be as much as \$101,750,000,000, if not more.”

What does Poverty Look Like?

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the new face of poverty is comprised of households headed by single African American women between the ages of 18 to 35. Many of these women live in public housing. According to the National Center for Law and Economic Justice (2012), “overall, 21.8% of children under 18—or some 16.1 million American youth—were living below the poverty line”. Also, according to the National Women’s Law Center (2014), more than one in seven women – nearly 18 million, lived in poverty in 2013. At Can I Live, Inc our mission is to help these single mothers’ and fathers of all races and nationalities, particularly those living in public housing and subsidized communities, to advance their abilities as earners, and eliminate their need for public assistance.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2013, the official poverty rate was 14.5% of the U.S. population, or 45.3 million people.

The only way to address the problem of poverty and government dependency is through policy change, program accountability and personal responsibility—together these ingredients will grow capacity to reduce dependency on government subsidies. And while the solution to reducing poverty is an elusive one, the literature is clear that this approach is an effective strategy to break the cycle of generational and inter-generational poverty.

Eradicating poverty in America requires responsible and righteous policy making, program accountability and a clarion call for personal responsibility and action.

Need for Policy Change

It is a widely held view that current public housing policies contribute to an addictive reliance on government assistance, making it difficult for the poor to change their circumstances for the better. Changing these policies will help provide affordable housing, while at the same time, place more emphasis on helping public housing residents earn more and break their dependence on governmental assistance.

Often public housing residents make a very simple decision not to work. Why? Because it costs more to work than it does to do nothing and sit at home. Outdated policies continue to contribute to complacency and dependency, thus contributing to the growth of poverty and its many detrimental effects on families.

Public housing serves millions of economically disadvantaged citizens who do not have to be employed nor seek work or educational opportunities to continue receiving housing subsidies. As long as a resident is compliant with their lease agreement, he or she may reside in public housing for life which contributes to dependency and abuse of the system.

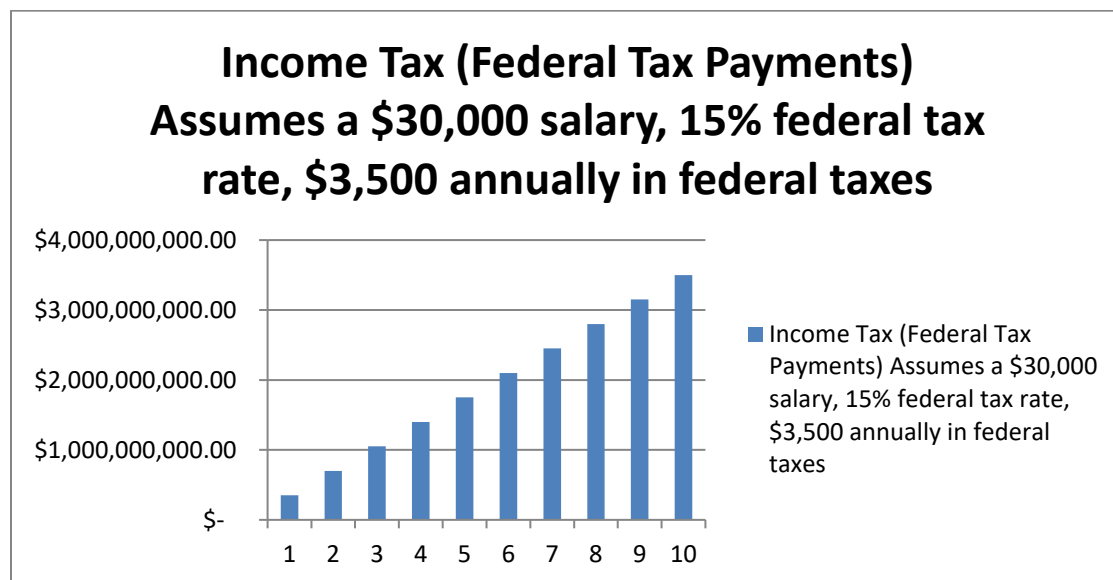
Most residents already work and many more want to work and pursue their dreams, however circumstances (i.e. trauma, mental health, child care, transportation) make it almost impossible to do so.

No one wakes up in the morning and deliberately chooses to struggle and live in lack and defeat. Furthermore, families will not choose to work if they too don't get to benefit from their own hard labor. Assisted families who return to work are immediately penalized (i.e. loss of food stamps, increased rents, loss of health insurance, etc.), making working optional to stay afloat.

Imagine if at least one (1) million women (men included), who currently receive welfare, were no longer being provided these subsidies. What if these women and men were properly educated and trained to find jobs that moved them out of poverty? The results would not only benefit the lives of the women and men who have been able to lift themselves out of poverty and government reliance, but it would also add new revenue to local and national economies. Data collected by the staff of Can I Live, Inc illustrates that if one (1) million women (men included), who are currently on welfare, are removed from its rolls over a 10-year period, as a result of gainful employment, would pay an additional \$19 billion in federal income taxes.

See **Table 1** for an explanation.

Table 1: Savings Over 10-Years: 2020-2030 (Additional Federal Income Taxes)



To that end, we recommend the following policy changes as related to Public Housing Authorities and the Families they Serve:

Place Section 3 (Self-Sufficiency) Outcomes to Housing Authority Performance Scores:

Public Housing Authorities are frequently evaluated using a system called the Public Housing Assessment System (PHAS). In past years resident satisfaction was a measure on the performance score. However, in recent years resident satisfaction was taken off the performance score. Now, housing authorities are not held accountable to the manner in which they serve and ensure economic opportunities are actualized for residents.

Section 3 is the starting point for self-sufficiency as stated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Because of HUD past connection to enforcing red lining and other discriminating practices, Section 3 and its profound and powerful economic leveraging potential should be seen as the departments priority.

- Can I Live, Inc advocates Section 3 efforts and its outcomes to be included on the PHAS scoring system with a metric not less than 15 points within its (Management 25-points) performance score.
- Can I Live, Inc believes that housing authorities should be evaluated on the quality of life for residents as well as the progress by which they are given opportunities to reduce dependency on government subsidies.
- Section 3 is not optional for HUD financially assisted agencies such as housing authorities. PHA's often fail meeting their numerical goals, good faith efforts and or providing training that ensures residents are prepared for future economic opportunities. Can I Live, Inc. advocates for greater compliance and oversight to the Section 3 federal regulation. Because there are no sanctions and or consequences to not meeting these numerical goals, the urgency to produce outcomes are ignored and not prioritized by many PHA leaders.
- With more than \$16 million dollars a week in wages for low income residents hanging in the balance, and new programs like RAD (Rental Assistance Demonstration) poverty and its eradication can no longer be something we merely measure, but rather something we mandate—through accountability of the federal section 3 program which we recommend offer harsher sanctions and consequences for failure to comply and meet numerical goals of any kind.

Can I Live seeks to establish an Economic Opportunity Committee (EOC) to provide oversight, accountability and technical assistance to the federal Section 3 program.

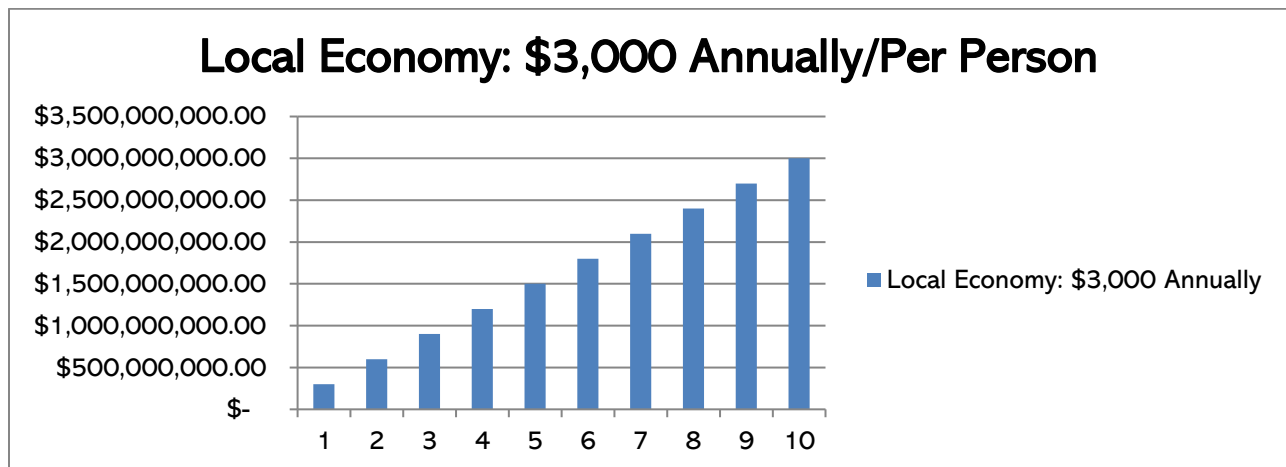
Establish A Step-Up Housing and 1MMOW Program Demonstration:

Can I Live, Inc urges policy makers to seek “step-up” housing as a viable alternative to traditional public housing. Similar to what is happening in Winston-Salem, NC, the idea is to “grow people out of poverty” by providing incentives and rewards that keep residents motivated. Step-Up housing is an upgrade from the traditional “no thrills” public housing with a work requirement stipulation, where residents move in and gradually progress through the affordable housing process as follows: No thrills–Project Based–Section 8–Market Rate or Homeownership. Residents then can decide to move into a home or townhouse owned by the housing authority as the final steps of growth. Can I Live, Inc recommends that the Section 8 voucher program be utilized at this stage of the affordable housing paradigm. Research is very clear that families who live in homes/townhomes tend to contribute more to the local economy than families who live in public housing.

The Step-up housing brings forth a more responsible conversation for promoting upward mobility as well as recycling the nations largest affordable housing stock.

As an example, consider the impact on the local economies if an additional 1 million working women, who are no longer living in government housing as a result of becoming self-sufficient. Research conducted by the staff of Can I Live, Inc illustrates that the impact to these local communities can be as high as \$16.5 billion after 10 years. See **Table 3** for more details.

Table 3: Savings Over 10-Years: 2016-2025 (Dollars Enhancing Local Economy)



Incentivize NOT Penalize Working Families For Wanting To Become Self-Sufficient:

Implement a Benefit Disallowance while engaged in Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Program

Rather than penalize public housing residents for work and education efforts, we propose that residents who are enrolled in HUD's grant funded Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program experience what we call a *Benefit Disallowance*, which allows residents who return to work not have their benefits (i.e. SNAP) decrease right away. It supports self-sufficiency by rewarding residents who work to continue in their self-sufficiency endeavors.

We propose

- 100% of benefits (i.e. SNAP) received while working for the first Year;
- 50% of benefits (i.e. SNAP) received while working for the second Year;
- 0% of benefits (i.e. SNAP) received while working in Year 3.

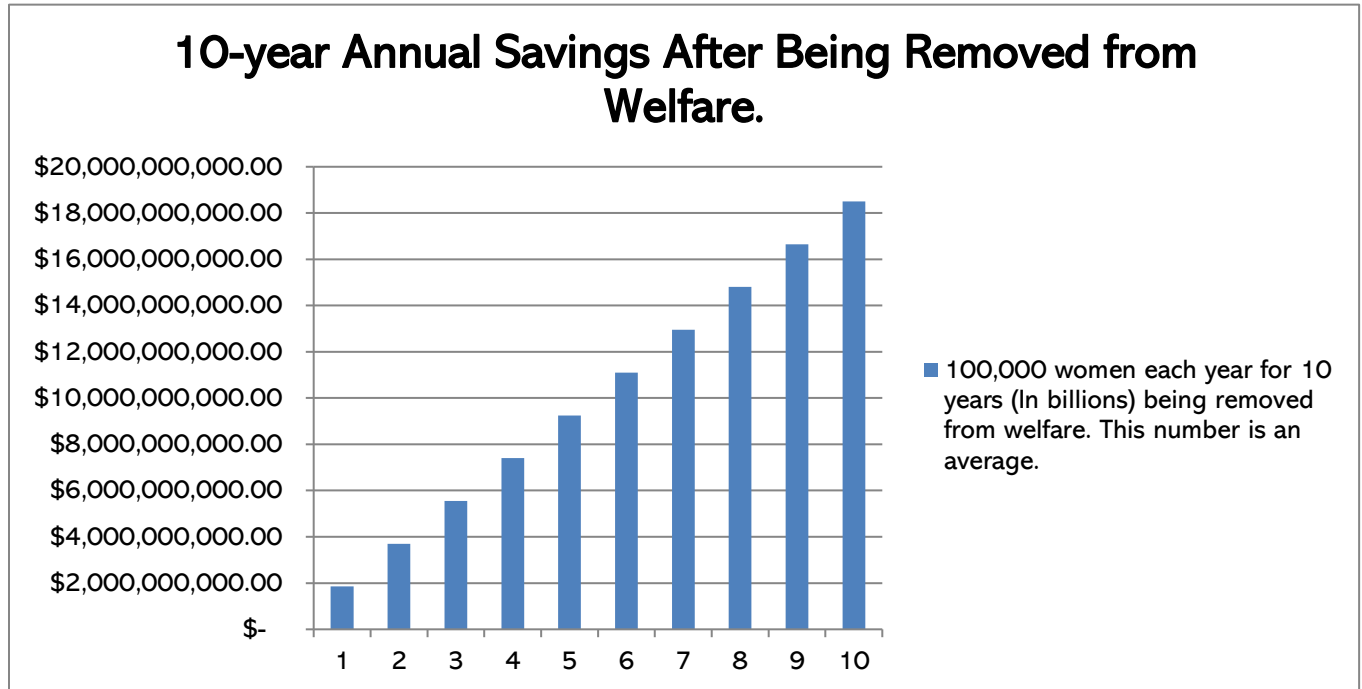
Other Recommendations:

Uniformed Welfare Calculations

A uniformed calculation of income and deductions across social welfare platforms allows low income families to easily qualify for programs that they are eligible for without hassle or deceit. This decreases government overhead and brings continuity between agencies and the policies that run their programs. It also allows for agencies to better decrease family's benefits in the Benefit Disallowance model. Data compiled by the staff of Can I Live, Inc has illustrated that if 1 million women are removed off welfare, the savings at the end of 10 years could be as much as \$101.7 billion, if not more.

See **Table 2** for details.

Table 2



Educate NOT Incarcerate Fathers for Failure to Pay Child Support:

A Need for Fatherhood Training and Support Services

One of the most important factors in terms of the degree to which a single-parent household, headed by a female who lives in poverty, is the level of child support the female receives.

In the debate about how to fight poverty, men are often forgotten in terms of their roles as supportive fathers. Struggling fathers need support services just as well as struggling women to help put them on a path of self-sufficiency. By investing in the personal and economic vitality of struggling fathers, single moms and their children are greatly impacted. When fathers are able to support their children financially, families become more self-sufficient and less reliant on public assistance for survival. Supporting struggling fathers is central to fighting poverty.

The level of support single mothers receive from the fathers of their children is one of the most important factors in determining whether they and their children will live in poverty.

- Can I Live proposes to mandate fatherhood training and workforce development assistance for poor and indigent fathers charged with nonpayment of child support as an alternative to incarceration.

- Can I Live also proposes to eliminate incarceration for poor and indigent fathers unless individuals demonstrate willful intent to avoid supporting children by not participating in workforce development or parenting programs provided through Family Court.

Other Recommendations:

Freeze Child Support for Parents who are considered Wards of the State:

With criminal justice reform on the rise and the need for appropriate and just sentencing, there is no reason why a person charged with illegal possession of a controlled substance should continue to accrue child support when he or she has absolutely no ability to pay from behind bars. This is an unfair burden placed on those who are incarcerated.

Pay for Stay: As long as they have to stay, states should be forced to pay:

In the event, the state believes incarcerated men and women should continue to accrue child support payments, then Can I Live proposes a pay to stay. For as long as incarcerated men and women are forced to stay and carry out unjust sentences, then both state and federal prisons should make Child Support Payments for those hired in work industry/correction enterprise programs who develop products for private industry such as (i.e. Victoria Secret, lens crafters, etc.) If families can work and violate labor laws within the prison walls simply because they are indentured servants of that state, then states should therefore acquire their servant's responsibilities (i.e. their families).

According to the Thirteenth Report to Congress presented by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, when discussing welfare indicators and risk factors—Child Support was the number one indicator in predicting welfare dependency. Families with fewer economic resources were more likely to rely on welfare programs for their support.

For more information about our policy focus, please contact:

RW Jones, CEO/President

Can I Live, Inc

P.O. Box 25502

Alexandria, VA 22313

rwjones@canilive.org | 202.304.6995 (M) | 877-810-1347 (F)

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