

# Proposed Amendments Would Allow DPW to Gut Cash and Medicaid Programs Without Legislative or Public Input

## Senators Should Vote “No” on Amendment A04619 to H.B. 960

- Proposed amendment A04619 to H.B. 960, to be voted on by the Senate Wednesday afternoon (June 29), would give the Department of Public Welfare virtually unchecked authority to cut cash assistance, Medicaid, and welfare-to-work supports.
- The amendment abdicates the General Assembly’s responsibility to make carefully reasoned choices affecting Pennsylvania’s most vulnerable citizens, by allowing DPW to dramatically increase child care co-payments, cut Medicaid benefits, and reduce eligibility for benefits – with no provision for legislative oversight nor any opportunity for public comment.
- This secretive amendment has been sprung on the public in the waning days of the budget debate. This is not how decisions about critical safety net programs should be made.

Specifically, the amendment gives DPW the following authority to make cuts:

### *Section 403.1*

Suspends laws setting up rulemaking processes that give the General Assembly and the public opportunity to comment on proposed rules. Instead, DPW would have unilateral authority to:

- Reduce cash assistance grant amounts (which are already at around 25% of the federal poverty level and have not been increased since 1990);
- Increase co-pays for visits to medical providers without limit;
- Reduce covered medical services under the Medicaid program without limit; and
- Eliminate whole categories of eligibility for Medicaid, adding tens of thousands to the rolls of the uninsured.

### *Section 405.1A*

Allows DPW to eliminate supportive services that help low-income families move from welfare to work, such as vendor payments for books and supplies, transportation to welfare-to-work programs, and more. The amendment thus sweeps away last year’s regulatory reforms developed with input from the General Assembly and public.

### *Section 408.3*

Allows DPW to increase co-payments for child care subsidies to unaffordable levels without public input and formal regulatory review.

### *Section 432.24*

Imposes costly and unnecessary new drug testing requirements for food stamp and cash assistance recipients who have had a felony drug conviction within the past five years.