PRESS RELEASE

THE W-2 MONITORING TASK FORCE
OF THE MILWAUKEE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
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Updated statistics on the number of families with no job and no welfare reveal system breakdown

Recently released data shows a steady increase in the number of Milwaukee County families with children who receive Food Stamps and report no cash income. The number of families in a situation of severe poverty increased from 2,672 in April of 1998 to 4,128 in April of 2003. In 2004, the number declined slightly to 3,907. What is especially troubling is that as the number of these families increased, the proportion of them helped by W-2 Agencies has declined. No one can explain why these families do not have income from W-2, as it appears they would meet financial eligibility requirements, or what is happening to the children in these homes.

"The data on Milwaukee County families show a deep slide in the number of very poor families helped by the W-2 program. In 1998 more than 50% of families receiving food stamps also received services from the W-2 program. Now, only 27% of very poor families receive W-2. This raises serious questions about how the W-2 program is administered in Milwaukee County," stated Anne DeLeo, co-chair of the Task Force.

Jean Verber, director of the Milwaukee Women and Poverty Public Education Initiative, said the community should be outraged at the new findings. In 1998, Verber conducted a study for Milwaukee County that examined the living situation of some of the then 600 Food Stamp families who had no other source of income. “To have almost 3,000 families living in dire poverty when W-2 Agencies receive millions of dollars to help them is unconscionable. It’s imperative that the W-2 Agencies in Milwaukee County reach out to these families to see what help they need.”

County Supervisor Roger Quindel, who chairs the Task Force, notes that the lack of income for these families presents a danger both for the families themselves, and ultimately the taxpayers of Milwaukee County and the state of Wisconsin.
“If conditions deteriorate in these families to the point that child welfare needs to be called in, then we’ve saved a few hundred dollars of W-2 money and spent ten times that on protective services. W-2 should be completely revamped to provide a real safety net for poor people not just for the service providers,” Quindel stated.

Questions can be directed to Task Force co-chairs:

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