

House Resolution 884

By: Representatives Gaines of the 120th, Jasperse of the 11th, Hilton of the 48th, Greene of the 154th, and Dempsey of the 13th

A RESOLUTION

1 Urging increased state autonomy to allow for the creation of innovative solutions to work
2 disincentives and the reform of social safety net programs; and for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, according to *Area Development*, Georgia ranks first among all states as the best
4 state for business; and

5 WHEREAS, CNBC ranked Georgia number one in the United States for business
6 environment; and

7 WHEREAS, Georgia's economic strength and social capital foster an environment of
8 opportunity that benefits families striving to escape poverty; and

9 WHEREAS, Georgia's uniquely successful approach of integrated welfare program
10 enrollment via the Georgia Gateway has proven effective and paved the way for further
11 enrollment integration; and

12 WHEREAS, the State of Georgia has made concerted and significant efforts to identify and
13 address instances of chronic or inter-generational poverty that still occur among its citizens;
14 and

15 WHEREAS, Georgia's Quick Start job training program has positioned it as a national leader
16 in workforce policies that strengthen upward mobility for impoverished families; and

17 WHEREAS, new independent research from the Sutherland Institute identifies evidence of
18 families receiving public assistance feeling disincentivized from pursuing or accepting
19 opportunities to increase their earned income and improve their financial situation; and

20 WHEREAS, this research finds that 77 percent of respondents to a statewide survey of public
21 assistance recipients report concern that earning additional income would result in a loss of
22 benefits that would worsen their family's financial situation; and

23 WHEREAS, this research further finds that 62 percent of respondents report feeling stuck
24 in a low-income job due to the belief that increased income would cause loss of benefits that
25 would not be worth the additional income; and

26 WHEREAS, this research further finds that 43 percent of respondents report having
27 intentionally limited their earned income due to fear of triggering a "benefits cliff" or
28 "benefits plateau"; and

29 WHEREAS, the Georgia Center for Opportunity has produced a computational model
30 demonstrating the effects of benefits cliffs in every Georgia county via their website,
31 benefitscliffs.org; and

32 WHEREAS, the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta defines this phenomenon as a wage
33 increase that "may result in a family being financially worse off (a benefits cliff) or no better
34 off (a benefits plateau) than before the wage increase"; and

35 WHEREAS, for families who strive to improve their economic conditions, benefits cliffs,
36 benefits plateaus, and other disincentive effects have the potential to trap families in poverty
37 by hindering workforce participation and disincentivizing financial stability; and

38 WHEREAS, the State of Georgia is committed to finding innovative solutions to any
39 disincentive effects to work, family formation, economic independence, or other
40 opportunities that may be present in the social safety net; and

41 WHEREAS, due to federal restrictions, states have limited authority to experiment with
42 federally funded social safety net programs for the purpose of finding innovative reforms that
43 can address benefits cliffs, benefits plateaus, perception gaps, or other obstacles to upward
44 mobility experienced by families receiving public assistance.

45 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
46 the members of this body urge the President of the United States and Congress to grant
47 additional flexibility and autonomy to states to experiment with innovative pilot programs
48 and other reforms to improve social safety net programs by addressing any work
49 disincentives that may exist.

50 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of this body urge the President and
51 Congress to expedite waiver approvals for states pursuing innovative pilot programs or other
52 reforms to the social safety net.

53 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of this body urge the President and
54 Congress to pursue additional flexibility to the states in the form of block grants for a wider
55 array of existing social safety net programs.

56 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of this body urge the President and
57 Congress to streamline and consolidate reporting requirements from the states to the federal
58 government to save taxpayer dollars and yield efficiencies.

59 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of this body call upon the President and
60 Congress to embrace the principles of federalism to further empower states to be the
61 laboratories of democracy and drive innovative reforms and improvements to our nation's
62 social safety net.

63 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
64 and directed to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to
65 Georgia's congressional delegation, the Office of the President of the United States, the
66 Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the United
67 States Senate, the United States Department of Health and Human Services, and the United
68 States Department of Agriculture.