

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. DANIEL THURSZ

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Our Association has a long history of support for the Social Security Act and its old age, survivors', and disability, Medicare, public assistance, and Medicaid titles. Over the quarter century and more of the life of the Social Security Act, we have appeared frequently before Congressional committees to argue for a comprehensive non-categorical program of public assistance which would provide for:

- (1) Adequate assistance payments;
- (2) Elimination of residence requirements;
- (3) Some retention of earned income;
- (4) Elimination of relative responsibilities, except that of spouse for spouse and that of parents for minor children.

We have argued that these revisions in the public assistance titles would move toward making it a reasonably adequate program of supplementation of the basic benefits provided as a matter of right through Title II of the Social Security Act.

Long before the 1966 report of the Advisory Council on Public Welfare, we supported the key recommendation of that report, namely, that the sole basis for eligibility for public assistance should be that of need.

In 1961, our Association welcomed the invitation from the then HEW Secretary Abraham Ribicoff to assist him in developing a series of amendments to the public assistance titles in the Social Security Act, which eventually became the 1962 Public Welfare Amendments to that Act. Our approach, and that of the HEW and the Congress, was not a restructuring of public assistance, but qualitative and quantitative improvements.

Although we sought, as we had over a period of a number of years, some exemption of earnings of employed children and the elimination of the residence requirements, we were not successful. The key recommendation of the 1962 Public Welfare Amendments was directed toward "rehabilitative services to ADC families by trained personnel."

Some of us who were involved in that Advisory Committee argued that a program of public works and subsidized employment should be developed to deal with both the unemployed father on ADC and to obviate the necessity for application for public assistance for unemployed parents. We preferred employment programs to money grants for employables. Circumstances required us, however, to settle for a program of Federal participation in work relief which was not implemented legislatively until the Economic Opportunity Act, outside of the Social Security Act, initiated the community work and training program.

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At our 1964 Delegate Assembly these growing doubts as to the viability of the public assistance program came to a head when there was adopted an income maintenance statement that indicated that the Association "favors a passage and implementation of Federal legislation that would insure (1) income as a matter of right in amounts sufficient to maintain all persons throughout the nation at a uniformly adequate level of living; and (2) the provision of payments in the most dignified and efficient manner possible."

At the same Delegate Assembly, we indicated that "we stand for the abolition of the means test in the archaic form in which it is applied in state and local administration of public assistance," noting further that this means test "nullifies the objectives of guaranteeing to every individual in our society the right to an adequate and certain income, and does violence to basic human values."

In adopting these policies, we recognized that we were now charged with spelling out in considerable detail how we believe we should go about assuring income as a matter of right in amounts sufficient to maintain all persons throughout the nation at a uniformly adequate level of living. We recognized further that while members of our Association supported this declaration as a matter of principle, reservations would develop as we began the outlining of specific details for achieving a program dedicated to this principle.

Over a period of almost two years, we developed what we saw as the elements of an adequate program of income assurance and then, to prepare the participants in our 1967 Delegate Assembly which would be called upon to