APPENDIX I

Federal Law on Post-secondary Education for Parents Receiving Public Assistance
**Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)**

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), created the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant that funds Michigan’s FIP cash assistance program. Under the TANF program, states have broad discretion to design the eligibility rules for their family cash assistance programs. The federal TANF law does not impose any requirements that directly control the state’s ability to approve or support post-secondary education for FIP recipients and other low income families in Michigan. However, several provisions have had an indirect impact on states’ policies regarding education for cash assistance recipients.

**Counting education as work activity for purposes of meeting work participation requirements under TANF**

PRWORA established work participation rates for states to meet, defined the types of activities that could count as work participation, and provided a caseload reduction credit that allowed states to meet their work participation rates by reducing the number of families receiving cash assistance. The act provided financial incentives for states to meet the participation rate.

The work participation rates and the number of hours that parents must engage in countable activity to be counted toward the rate have increased incrementally since PRWORA’s enactment. In 2001, 45% of families receiving TANF-funded cash assistance must be participating in countable work activities at least 30 hours per week, and in 2002 the rate will go up to 50%.101

Under PRWORA, post-secondary education may be counted as work activity for no more than 12 months, for purposes of determining the state’s participation rate, and it may only be counted if it is “vocational educational training.” The work participation rates and the definition of what would count as work participation under PRWORA may have initially discouraged states from supporting or encouraging post-secondary education for parents receiving TANF-funded cash assistance.

However, because of the dramatic reduction in the number of families receiving cash assistance in Michigan, Michigan has been able to meet its work participation rate requirements based solely on the caseload reduction credit, without regard to the number of
parents who are engaged in activities that count as work participation. Therefore, Michigan would not suffer any financial penalty and would not be out of compliance with the federal work participation rates even if it removed all limits on counting post-secondary education as work.

**Five year lifetime limit on TANF-funded cash assistance**

PRWORA prohibits states from providing funded TANF-funded cash assistance to families for more than 60 months.

Low income parents who pursue post-secondary education as a means of acquiring education and skills needed to achieve longer term self sufficiency may need cash assistance for more than 60 months while they are attending school, particularly if they must first complete secondary education or if they are required to work full or part time while they attend school. Therefore, states that encourage low income parents to pursue post-secondary education may have to use state funds to assist those parents while they are in school. If, however, students are able to complete their degrees in the normal time of 2 to 4 years, they would not exceed the 60 month TANF limit.

**Food Stamps**

Eligibility for Food Stamps, unlike TANF, is tightly controlled by federal law. Federal Food Stamp law contains two provisions which encourage or reward low income parents who pursue education. First, the law exempts parents of very young children and single parents with any child under age 12 from the general rules that prohibits students from receiving Food Stamps unless they are working 20 hours per week. Second, the law exempts individuals who are enrolled in education at least half time from work-related penalties. Taken together, these provisions reflect Congress’s intent to maintain a strong nutritional safety net for low income parents who pursue education as a means to improve the economic well-being of their families.
Qualifying for Food Stamps as a student parent
The federal Food Stamp Act generally prohibits students from receiving Food Stamps if they are enrolled half-time or more in post-secondary education, unless they are working 20 hours a week.\(^{103}\) However, the Food Stamp Act specifically allows parents to receive Food Stamps while they are enrolled in post-secondary education, without meeting a work requirement, if they are:

- Responsible for the care of a child under age 6 OR
- A single parent enrolled fulltime in post-secondary education and responsible for the care of a child under age 12.

Exemption from work-related Food Stamp penalties for student parents enrolled in education
In general, the federal Food Stamp law disqualifies parents from receiving Food Stamps if the parent quits, reduces, or refuses work without good cause.\(^{104}\) However, individuals who are “enrolled at least half time in any recognized school, training program, or institution of post-secondary education” are exempt from work-related Food Stamp penalties.\(^{105}\) Thus, many low income parents in post-secondary education will be exempt from Food Stamp work penalties.
Appendix II

CFITE Low Income Student Parent Survey

Respondent Information
Demographic Details of Survey Respondents

College Enrollment Status
83 Currently enrolled
10  Formerly enrolled
  5  Trying to enroll

Colleges and Universities attended by respondents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Name</th>
<th>University Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baker College</td>
<td>Michigan State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Michigan University</td>
<td>Mott Community College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davenport University</td>
<td>North Central Michigan College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Michigan</td>
<td>Oakland Community College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferris State University</td>
<td>St. Clair Community College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glen Oaks Community College</td>
<td>University of Michigan – Ann Arbor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lansing Community College</td>
<td>University of Michigan – Flint</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Program Length

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Length</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47 2 years or less</td>
<td>Enrolled in 61 different programs or majors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 3 years or more</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Family Composition:
79 Single parents
19 Two-parent households

In all households (single and dual parent)
59 with a child under age 6
7  with a child under age 1
8   with all children over age 12

Type of help received from FIA:
83 Medicaid
65 Food Stamps
33 Cash (Family Independence Program)
44 Child Care Subsidy
Status in Program:
30  In 1st year
63  Within 1 year of graduation
14  In the middle
Appendix III:

CFITE Low Income Student Parent Survey

Instrument
Questionnaire for Low Income Parents:
What’s happened to you when you’ve tried to get higher education?

This questionnaire is being distributed by the Center for Civil Justice with help from local agencies, community colleges, and universities. The Center for Civil Justice is a non-profit law firm working to expand educational opportunities for low-income parents. Completing this form will help us gather information about your experiences as a student parent with the Family Independence Agency (FIA) and Work First (WF).

Responding to this questionnaire is voluntary. If you do not wish to answer a particular question, please skip it.

The first part of this questionnaire asks you questions that simply require you to check yes or no or circle a phrase. The second part gives you space to elaborate on your experiences. It will take only 5 – 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

We designed the survey procedures to ensure your anonymity. All reports will be based on data aggregated so that it will not be possible to identify any individual respondent.

All material will be kept confidential.

If you have questions about the questionnaire or would like to talk about the questions asked, contact the Center for Civil Justice, 320 S. Washington, 2nd Floor, Saginaw, MI 48607; email jdoig@ccj-mi.org; (800)724-7441.

I. General Information
Today’s date: _____/_____/_____
Circle your college enrollment status: currently enrolled / formerly enrolled / trying to enroll
Name of university or college: _____________________________________________
Your year in program and length of program (e.g. 2nd year of 2-year program, 1st year in 4-year program): What Year are you in? _______ Total Program Length: __________
Your major or program: _____________________________________________
Age(s) of your child(ren): ____________________________________________
Are you in a one- or two-parent household? _____One-parent _____Two-parent
Type of help received from FIA: (check all that apply): _____Medicaid, _____ Food Stamps _____ cash (Family Independence Program), _____ child care subsidy

II. Your experiences with FIA — the Family Independence Agency
How many hours per week has your FIA caseworker said you must work in order to receive benefits? _______ hours per week

How many hours per week do you work? _____ hours at $____ per hour

A. Information about Education

(2) Has your FIA caseworker volunteered any information about counting education hours, including any required internships you might have, towards meeting your work requirements? _____Yes _____No

(3) Have you asked FIA about your options for counting hours in class towards work requirements? _____Yes _____ No

(4) Has your FIA worker told you that you can use 10 hours of class time and 10 hours of study time combined with 10 hours of employment to meet your work requirements in full, under certain circumstances? _____Yes _____No

Has your FIA worker told you that you can use a full-time internship to meet your work requirements in full, under certain circumstances? _____Yes _____No

B. Information about child care

(6) Have you been able to get FIA child care payments to cover your hours at work? _____Yes _____No

(7) Have you been able to get FIA child care payments to cover your hours in class? _____Yes _____No

(8) Have you been able to get FIA child care payments to cover hours traveling to and from work, school, and child care? _____Yes _____No

(9) If you have work-study: Have you ever had a problem using hours spent in a work study job to meet your work requirements? _____Yes _____No

   If yes, when did this happen? ________________________________

III. Questions about Work First “Orientation”

(10) Have you attended a joint FIA/Work First orientation? _____Yes _____No
(11) Approximately when did you last attend a joint FIA/Work First orientation?
_________________________

(12) What comments, if any, were made at the orientation about using education and
training to meet work requirements? Check all that apply
    _____ No information given in presentation
    _____ Information given about possibility of counting some hours in last year of a 2-
year or 4-year program
    _____ Information about counting full-time internships as meeting requirements in full
    _____ Information about fully meeting requirements by working 10 hours per week
while pursuing education (10/10/10 program)
    _____ Presenters said education is disallowed

(13) If you were in school, were you told that you did not have to miss school to attend
orientation?   ____Yes ____No

IV. Questions about your experience with Work First or Job Search
(Work First is the program that runs job readiness and job search programs for FIP
recipients)

(14) At Work First, how many hours per week were you told you have to work? ______
hours per week

(15) Did a Work First staff member volunteer any information about counting your education
hours towards your work requirement?___Yes ___No

(16) Have you asked about counting your education towards work requirements? ___Yes
____No

(17) Did Work First staff inform you that you could meet requirements in full by combining a
job of 10 hours per week with education, in some circumstances? ___Yes ____No

(18) Did Work First staff inform you that a full-time internship could meet work requirements
in full, in some circumstances? _____Yes____No
(19) Did your worker approve your education program? ____Yes ___No

(20) Did your worker write your education program into your Individual Service Strategy (ISS) document? ___Yes ___No _____Don’t know

(21) Did your Work First worker ever tell you that work study jobs could not count towards your work requirement? ___Yes ___No

V. Questions about leaving school
(22) Did you ever have to drop out of college for any of the following reasons (check all that apply):
    _____ I could not find adequate and reliable child care
    _____ FIA denied or took too long in processing child care payments
    _____ I could not meet work requirements and go to school at the same time
    _____ FIA or Work First said I was not eligible for benefits if I attended college
    _____ Work First would not approve my education program

VI. Questions about your general experience

(23) What general message have you received about education from Orientation, FIA, and Work First?
(24) Please tell us anything else you can about your experience trying to go to school while on assistance. What do you feel are the biggest obstacles you have faced, and what has helped you?

What is the most important thing that FIA or Work First could do to help you go to, or stay in a higher education program?

Please return by February 15, 2001 to either the person that gave this questionnaire to you or to the Center for Civil Justice, 320 S. Washington St. 2nd Floor, Saginaw, MI 48607.

Thank you very much.