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***Empower Missouri Challenges Assumptions  
In Heartland Institute Report Card on Welfare Program***

Empower Missouri finds the Heartland Institute Report Card on Welfare in Missouri to be flawed. In general their scoring system rates states highly for punitive (punishment based) policies. It is easy to kick people off of welfare; it is harder to assist families with challenges out of poverty. Empower Missouri supports investing in the harder, but more compassionate path.

Here are two flaws in the report:

- **Diversion programs:** The report places a big emphasis (100 points) on having a diversion program, and MO gets 0 points for not having one. Yet the states that get 100 points may have very few diversion cases. This an example of a distorted valuation in the report cards scoring system.

Empower Missouri believes there can be value in diversion programs - if implemented well and if appropriate exemptions are in place (for domestic violence victims, for example).

- **Work requirements:** The report values the effectiveness of work requirements (as part of the welfare reform policy score) solely by looking at when engagement in work is required. They give Missouri a 0 saying it is not required for 24 months, **but this is not a correct statement of Missouri policy.**

Missouri's TANF State Plan says: *Unless expressly provided in the plan a parent or caretaker receiving assistance must engage in work activities when the Family Support Division has determined that he/she is ready to engage in work.*

The Missouri Manual says: *Unless exempt or excluded, applicants/participants age 18 or older must engage in work activities once the state determines them work ready or they have received Temporary Assistance for twenty-four (24) months (whether or not consecutive), whichever occurs first.*