

**HEARING ON WELFARE IS BROKEN:
RESTORING WORK REQUIREMENTS TO LIFT
AMERICANS OUT OF POVERTY**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WORK AND WELFARE
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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United States House Committee on
Ways & Means
CHAIRMAN JASON SMITH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Chairman Smith and Work & Welfare Subcommittee Chairman LaHood
Announce Subcommittee Hearing on Welfare is Broken:
Restoring Work Requirements to Lift Americans Out of Poverty**

House Committee on Ways and Means Chairman Jason Smith (MO-08) and Work & Welfare Subcommittee Chairman Darin LaHood (IL-16) announced today that the Subcommittee on Work & Welfare will hold a hearing on restoring work requirements to lift Americans out of poverty. The hearing will take place on **Wednesday, March 29, 2023, at 2:00pm in the Sam Johnson room located in 2020 Rayburn House Office Building.**

Members of the public may view the hearing via live webcast available at <https://waysandmeans.house.gov>. The webcast will not be available until the hearing starts.

In view of the limited time available to hear the witnesses, oral testimony at this hearing will be from invited witnesses only. However, any individual or organization not scheduled for an oral appearance may submit a written statement for consideration by the Committee and for inclusion in the printed record of the hearing.

DETAILS FOR SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN COMMENTS:

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All submissions and supplementary materials must be submitted in a single document via email, provided in Word format and must not exceed a total of 10 pages. Please indicate the title of the hearing as the subject line in your submission. Witnesses and submitters are advised that the Committee relies on electronic submissions for printing the official hearing record. All submissions must include a list of all clients, persons and/or organizations on whose behalf the witness appears. The name, company, address, telephone, and fax numbers of each witness must be included in the body of the email. Please exclude any personal identifiable information in the attached submission.

Failure to follow the formatting requirements may result in the exclusion of a submission. All submissions for the record are final.

ACCOMMODATIONS:

The Committee seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you require accommodations, please call 202-225-3625 or request via email to WMSubmission@mail.house.gov in advance of the event (four business days' notice is requested). Questions regarding accommodation needs in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats) may be directed to the Committee as noted above.

Note: All Committee advisories and news releases are available on the Committee website at <http://www.waysandmeans.house.gov/>.

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WELFARE IS BROKEN: RESTORING WORK REQUIREMENTS TO LIFT AMERICANS OUT OF POVERTY

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29, 2023

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WORK AND WELFARE,
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 2:00 p.m., in Room 2020 of the Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Darin LaHood [chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Chairman LAHOOD. Well, good afternoon, everybody. I am Congressman Darin LaHood. I want to welcome everybody to our subcommittee hearing today in the Sam Johnson Room, our first subcommittee hearing for our subcommittee, Work and Welfare. And our title of our hearing today is “Welfare is Broken: Restoring Work Requirements to Lift Americans Out of Poverty.”

And so I want to thank everybody for being here today. I have an opening statement that I am going to give, and then I will turn it over to the ranking member, Mr. Davis, and then I will have our full committee chairman, Mr. Smith, he will have a statement, and then we will introduce our witnesses.

Well, good afternoon and welcome. I want to thank everyone for joining us today on this important hearing on how we can restore work requirements to lift more Americans out of poverty.

I currently represent the 16th district of Illinois, which covers the central and northwestern part of our state. As chairman of the Work and Welfare Subcommittee, I am proud of this committee’s longstanding leadership and multi-year efforts to pass constructive and responsible welfare reform. This subcommittee has consistently enacted policies that reduce poverty by helping families achieve self-sufficiency through the dignity and value of work.

As we all remember, the 1996 Bipartisan Welfare Reform Act, signed by President Bill Clinton with the help of a Republican Congress at the time, converted our nation’s welfare system from an open-ended entitlement which caused rising welfare caseloads, long durations in poverty, and rising single parenthood into a—into the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, also known as TANF, which provides fixed funding to states and, for the first time, required work in exchange for benefits.

The primary goal of the TANF program is to assist families in need with a hand up, providing a safety net of government assistance to find work and pull themselves out of poverty. Since passage

of the 1996 reform bill, welfare caseloads have dropped over 80 percent—and that is a good thing—as families moved into the workforce and left the cycle of dependency. The benefits of the 1996 bipartisan welfare reform have persisted decades after its passage, with children today half as likely to grow up below the poverty threshold.

Not only that, but among single-parent families, deep poverty fell from around five percent before the reform to less than one percent today. Despite these gains, over the years work requirements in TANF have fallen flat because current law includes many loopholes that have been exploited by a number of states across the country.

Likewise, Federal rules on what counts and does not count towards the Federal work participation rate can create obstacles for moving some individuals into the workforce. Even though we know a job is the best way out of poverty, this has led to thousands of TANF recipients having zero hours of “engaged in work” reported to the Department of Health and Human Services. In fact, 57 percent of the work-eligible individuals on TANF recorded 0 hours of work in 2021.

Ways and Means Republicans have dedicated—are dedicated to ensuring that there is accountability for Federal taxpayer dollars across programs, and that states are not able to game the system and avoid engaging their current TANF caseloads in opportunities for work. We want to find solutions to help states, localities, and caseworkers effectively work with low-income families to remove barriers and support self-sufficiency by equipping them with the skills they need to be successful in the labor market.

The timing of this hearing and strengthening TANF work requirements could not be better. Today there are nearly 11 million open jobs across the country, or 1.7 for every worker. Our country’s employers and small businesses are clamoring for workers to fill these roles. Despite a growing economy and workforce participation rate, our workforce participation rate is currently 62.5 percent, still below the pre-pandemic level.

Programs that lack work requirements, such as the temporary work-free cash payments Democrats provided through the Expanded Child Tax Credit last year do nothing to address the underlying problems, and may be holding a family back from success. We cannot have a safety net system that incentivizes government dependency by paying people more not to work.

I am proud that we have the—I am proud that we have a support system in place, but it should be a trampoline, not a generational poverty trap. Ways and Means Republicans are dedicated to helping individuals on the sidelines move into the workforce and attain their full potential. We must reform TANF to uplift recipients to a path of self-sufficiency and bolster our workforce. We cannot afford to relegate an entire generation of workers to the sidelines.

I sincerely hope that we can work together in a bipartisan way, similar to the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, on improving the TANF program to restore the focus on the work participation—work preparation activities, training, support services, and case management that it takes to meaningfully lift Americans out of poverty in a sustained way. This can and should be a bipartisan effort.

I am honored to have our guests here today to share their perspectives and expertise on TANF and moving individuals into our workforce and out of poverty.

Chairman LAHOOD. With that, I am pleased at this time to recognize my colleague from our home state of Illinois, Ranking Member Danny Davis, for his opening statement.

Mr. DAVIS. Well, thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And let me add my words of welcome to our witnesses. It is indeed a pleasure to serve on this committee with you and provide part of the leadership. So, I am certain that we are going to have a very productive period of time.

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program is a program for families with children. Two-thirds of TANF recipients are children, and nearly 70 percent of them are under age 12. Over one-third of TANF children are infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. The primary goal of TANF should be to reduce adversity for poor children by providing stability and support for their families.

Instead of focusing on how to help children, today's hearing topic seems to blame parents, grandparents, and other caregivers for their poverty, and suggests that the solution is work requirements. There are many ways we could strengthen TANF, but placing more burdens and blame on parents, grandparents, and caregivers is not one of them.

TANF fails to help the vast majority of poor families. Only about 1 million families receive TANF income support, and the average monthly benefit in 2021 was \$517, with 14 states paying an average of \$300 or less.

Most families receive child-only TANF. That is an even more paltry sum. This meager support is shameful, given the clear evidence that living in poverty causes both short and long-term health problems for children, damaging their futures, and also leading to unexpected and costly doctor visits that undermine work for their parents, especially for low-level entry jobs.

TANF fails families by imposing crushing administrative burdens designed to kick them off under the guise of accountability. In fiscal year 2021 the single most common reason for TANF case closing was failure to comply with administrative requirements. It was a missed meeting, a late report, or a missed signature, not refusal to work.

TANF fails to remove the barriers faced by millions of family caregivers. Nearly one-fourth of children currently receiving TANF assistance are raised by grandparents. For these families, TANF benefits, however small, can be a lifeline, maybe enough to avoid selling their home or draining their retirement savings.

In Chair LaHood's and my state of Illinois, an estimated 75,000 families with young children are headed by grandparents. But most grandparents-headed families do not receive TANF, despite dire financial need. I hope that we can work together to make it easier, not harder, for kinship families to get help from TANF.

TANF fails to invest in career pathways, and in the last Congress my Republican colleagues opposed our efforts to continue the evidence-based Career Pathway Health Profession Opportunity Grant Program. Witness after witness, both Republican and Democratic, has stressed the critical importance of improving edu-

cational opportunities for TANF recipients, so that they can access higher-caliber, good-paying jobs. But when this committee had a chance to do it, many of my colleagues said no.

If our goal is to address the worker shortage, our peer countries have demonstrated that guaranteed childcare and paid family and medical leave substantially increased workforce participation among women. Parents and grandparents that need help from TANF don't need more penalties, requirements, and paperwork; they need childcare. They need a safe place to live, food to eat, reliable transportation, good education, and health care. If we want to support work, that is where we need to start.

Every American relies on the Federal Government for help sometimes. These investments benefit us all. They can make us the country we want to be, lifting the burdens from vulnerable families so that children can thrive.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you, Mr. Davis. At this time I am very pleased to have our full committee chairman here, Chairman Jason Smith, for an opening statement.

Chairman SMITH. Chairman LaHood, Ranking Member Davis, it is a pleasure to join you for the first hearing of the Work and Welfare Subcommittee in the 118th Congress. This is a first step in ensuring that welfare programs work for America's families by helping lift them out of poverty and instead of keeping them trapped.

I know the reality faced by working-class families in America because I have lived it. My grandparents never had running water. I grew up with my family living in a single-wide trailer, and then we upgraded to a double-wide when I was in high school. My father was a preacher and an auto mechanic. And my mother, she went to work in a factory just so she could provide health insurance for our family.

Families like the one I grew up in and millions of others across America, they do the best they can to stretch every dollar to make ends meet. Millions of families go through rough patches through no fault of their own, and they need help. And when done correctly, welfare can be the bridge to build a better life for families who are struggling.

No one's dream is to spend their lives on government assistance. Parents want to have the opportunity to provide for their families, put food on the table, clothes on their kids' backs, and a roof over their heads. If we don't get welfare right, then we run the risk of trapping people in a generational cycle of poverty that makes a government check more valuable than a job, and robs them from the dignity of work.

We already see what happens when people are discouraged from working. In our country, labor force participation still hasn't caught up to where it was before COVID. There are nearly two jobs currently available for every worker. The simple fact is that work provides people a lifeline and a purpose. It connects them to their communities and rewards achievement. The bipartisan welfare reform of 1996 vindicated that approach. As child poverty fell and case-loads were reduced, welfare was a stepping stone for families, not a dead end.

Today the welfare system needs modernization. According to the Foundation for Government Accountability, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, only about 3 million of the roughly 48.5 million able-bodied adults who received Medicaid, TANF, food stamps, public housing, or child care benefits were subject to any work requirement.

In 2021, the vast majority of states had a 0 percent—a 0 percent—work participation requirement for TANF, meaning many states are not being held accountable for maximizing the number of individuals on their caseloads who are engaged in work.

Government policies have too often encouraged Americans not to work, resulting in increased dependency and millions of unfilled jobs. We should be exploring every possibility to get our fellow Americans back into the labor force, including strengthening work requirements across all government programs. I hope this can be the area where Congress can come together and ensure that our welfare policies will work for a new generation.

Chairman SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you, Chairman Smith. We will now introduce our witnesses here today. I will start from my left and go right.

Our first witness is Mr. Grant Collins, who is the senior vice president for workforce development at the Fedcap Group.

Next, we will have Shakirah Francis, and Shakirah is the employment services social worker supervisor for the Mecklenburg County, North Carolina Department of Social Services Employment Services Division.

Thirdly, we will hear from Ms. Heather Reynolds from South Bend, Indiana. She is the managing director at the Lab for Economic Opportunities at the University of Notre Dame.

Next, we will hear from Jacob Maas from Grand Rapids, Michigan, and he is the chief executive officer at West Michigan Works.

And lastly, we will hear from Ms. Victoria Gray of Arizona, and she is a loving grandmother of 7 grandchildren and 41 foster children.

Welcome to you all.

With that, Mr. Collins, you are recognized for five minutes to deliver your opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF GRANT COLLINS, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, FEDCAP GROUP, NEW
YORK, NEW YORK**

Mr. COLLINS. Good afternoon, Chairman Smith, Chairman LaHood, Ranking Member Davis, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to testify on restoring the work requirement to lift Americans out of poverty.

I lead on workforce development for the Fedcap Group, a company dedicated to improving the economic well-being of those with barriers to work. I am pleased to be here today, as I wish to offer a few insights from my current role and my former role as deputy director of the Office of Family Assistance, the Federal agency that oversees the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program. It was our office that drafted the TANF regulations as a result of the passage of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005.

In particular, I am here to outline some of the current loopholes that impact the program, to provide some insights regarding the approaches we took in 2005 to strengthen TANF, and to share some recommendations.

States must keep at least 50 percent of adults participating in activities like employment, job search, or vocational training. States receive credit toward meeting the 50 percent work rate if they reduce caseloads over time. For example, if a state had a caseload of 10,000 in 1997 and reduced it by 5,000 by 2002, its 2003 work participation requirement would have been 0.

Currently, states have utilized a few ways to meet the work requirement that do little to further the objectives of the TANF program. Some states move selected cases from TANF into solely state-funded programs which are not subject to TANF rules, and states increase their rates by adding already-working families, by adding small amounts of TANF cash assistance to their case so that they can count.

While these practices are allowable, they fail to address those with real barriers in need for assistance. In fiscal year 2021, 57 percent of TANF cases had 0 hours in any work activity for the entire year.

Another key provision of welfare reform is what is called Maintenance of Effort, or MOE requirements. MOE makes sure that states continue to invest their own money in the program. While the Federal Government provides actual cash, currently many more states use eligible TANF expenditures to meet MOE requirements rather than actual spending on TANF work activities and supports.

For example, a state might decide to provide a scholarship fund for low-income families out of their education department. That expenditure may then qualify as state MOE if it is reported as meeting a TANF purpose, even though the scholarships may not go to TANF recipients.

While this practice is allowable, if overused it weakens the Federal-state partnership, as states have little skin in the game when it comes to moving more of the caseload into activities that lead to sustainable employment.

These are only some of the ways around these requirements. It is important to address the full array of current work and MOE requirement loopholes if the goal is to move more to work.

The Bush reforms sought to strengthen the work requirement and the Federal-state partnership. The DRA defined work activities, required work activities to be supervised, and required states address their internal controls via a work verification plan. Specifically, we recalibrated the base year for the caseload reduction credit from 1996 to 2005. Work requirements can be strengthened by recalibrating the base year for the credit on a biannual basis.

Defining work activities to include evidence-based parenting, education, pre-apprenticeships, and apprenticeships can help more families be ready for jobs in the new economy.

A new high-performance bonus focused on outcomes such as job entry, job retention, and earnings increases could provide the impetus for states to continue to work with those who are employed to further improve their economic mobility.

Overall, states should be applauded for their efforts at getting people into work. Under new reforms, our nation's social safety net can become the economic trampoline for thousands of Americans who can succeed in work and exit poverty.

Thank you, Chairman Smith, Chairman LaHood, and Ranking Member Davis for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to answering any questions you might have.

[The statement of Mr. Collins follows:]

Statement of Grant Collins

Senior Vice President, Workforce Development Practice Area for the Fedcap Group

Good afternoon, Chairman Smith, Chairman LaHood, Ranking Member Davis, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to testify on Restoring the Work Requirement to Lift Americans Out of Poverty.

I lead Workforce Development for the Fedcap Group, a company dedicated to improving the economic well-being of those with barriers to employment. I am pleased to be here today, as I wish to offer a few insights from my current role and my former role as the Deputy Director of the Office of Family Assistance, the federal agency that oversees the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. It was our office that drafted the TANF regulations as a result of the passage of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005.

In particular, I am here to outline some of the current loopholes that impact the program, to provide some insights regarding the approaches we took in 2005 to strengthen TANF, and to share some recommendations.

Work requirements were a key part of welfare reform in 1996. States must keep at least 50 percent of adults participating in activities like employment, job search, or vocational training. States receive credit toward meeting the 50 percent work rate if they reduce caseloads over time. For example, if a state had an adult caseload of 10,000 in 1997, and reduced it by 5,000 by 2002, its 2003 work participation requirement would have been zero.

Currently, states have utilized a few ways to meet the work requirement that do little to further the objectives of the TANF program. To meet the work participation rate: (1) Some states move selected cases from TANF into “solely state-funded” programs, which are not subject to TANF rules; (2) Others solely state fund enough cases removed from the TANF program each month to meet their own work requirement; and (3), states increase their rates by adding working families from other programs, which are given small amounts of TANF cash assistance in order to count.

While these practices are allowable, they fail to address those with real barriers and need for assistance. In FY 2021, 57 percent of adult TANF cases had zero hours in any work activity for the entire year.

Another key provision of welfare reform is what is called maintenance-of-effort or MOE requirements. MOE makes sure that states continue to invest their own money in the program. The goals of the work and MOE requirements were to solidify the federal-state partnership, and that both parties were financially invested in helping families become self-sufficient.

While the federal government provides actual cash, currently, many more states use “eligible TANF expenditures” to meet MOE requirements rather than actual spending on TANF work activities and supports. For example, a state may decide to provide a scholarship fund for low-income families out of their education department. That expenditure may then qualify as state MOE if it is reported as meeting a TANF purpose, even though the scholarships may not go to TANF recipients.

While this practice is also allowable, if overused, it weakens the federal-state partnership, as states have little “skin in the game” when it comes to moving more of the caseload into activities that lead to sustainable employment.

These are only some of the ways around work and MOE requirements.

It is important to address the full array of current work and MOE requirement loopholes if the goal is to realize more moving into work.

The Bush administration reauthorization sought to strengthen the work requirement and the federal-state partnership. Our reforms initially focused on universal engagement, partial credits, and a higher participation rate. The overall approach was to have as many people as possible participate, improving their readiness for work for most of the time they were on assistance.

The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA) defined work activities, required that activities be supervised, and required that states address their internal controls via a work verification plan. We placed an emphasis on healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood by providing grants to states and programs.

We took over 5,000 public comments and met with all 50 states, DC, and territories, as we conducted ten listening sessions to hear from them directly regarding reauthorization, before drafting the final rules. We met with leadership from the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA), the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), the National Association of Counties (NACO), and other groups as a part of the consultation process, along with many other advocacy groups and other stakeholders.

Specifically, we recalibrated the base year for the caseload reduction credit from 1996 to 2005. Far too many states effectively had no work requirement to meet due to the dramatic decline in the caseloads since the mid-1990's, and caseload declines had begun to stall around 2002. States were highly successful at getting people to work in those early years and our policy efforts sought to extend those results by strengthening the work requirement. The Bush reform efforts also continued high levels of support for childcare through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF).

The next reauthorization can strengthen work requirements by recalibrating the base year for the credit on a bi-annual basis.

MOE spending can be more directly tied to efforts that reward work and retention, and other work-focused benefits and supports.

More can be done to help those on the caseload, including those with health claims, so they can engage in wellness and other health stabilization activities.

Defining work activities to include evidence-based parenting education, pre-apprenticeships, and apprenticeships can help more families be ready for jobs in the new economy.

States could be further incentivized to focus on outcomes such as job entry, job retention, and earnings increases through enactment of a new high-performance bonus. This could provide an impetus for states to continue to work with those who are employed, to further improve their economic mobility.

Overall, states should be applauded for their efforts at getting people into work. Under new reforms, our nation's social safety net can become the economic trampoline for thousands of Americans who can succeed in work and exit poverty.

Thank you, Chairman Smith, Chairman LaHood and Ranking Member Davis, for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to answering any questions you might have.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you, Mr. Collins. We will turn now to Ms. Francis.

**STATEMENT OF SHAKIRAH FRANCIS, EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISOR, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SER-
VICES EMPLOYMENT SERVICES DIVISION, MECKLENBURG
COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA**

Ms. FRANCIS. Good afternoon, Committee Chairman Smith, Subcommittee Chairman LaHood, Ranking Member Davis, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the current Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program from my perspective as a social work supervisor in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

In my current role I manage a team of social workers with active caseloads. I am also responsible for reviewing, analyzing, and implementing current TANF processes. My remarks today will describe our engagement approach, measurement challenges, and observations based on my frontline and supervisory experience.

The Mecklenburg County Department of Community Resources, through the Workforce Employment Services Program, provides social work services to eligible participants of the TANF program. Our county is in one of the nine states that delegates TANF administration, including maintenance of effort requirements, to counties. Our services include removing barriers to employment, which include assisting with referrals and connection to community resources such as housing, behavioral and physical health, substance use, food, transportation, child care, and other daily needs.

Each participant is engaged in an initial assessment in which a personal information form is used to gather pertinent information regarding the customer's family, educational, health, and employment background. A mutual responsibility agreement is completed with participants that indicates activities the participant is required to complete to achieve—to receive their monthly benefits, and the actions the social worker will take to assist the customer in reaching their full potential in the program. The agreement outlines the required hours the participant must complete each month, which correlates with the required monthly rate. The agreement also specifically spells out the hours required each week, along with the participant's assigned component.

The workforce program currently uses a participation rate to measure the success of participants. The workforce customer must participate in a set number of core components, including independent job search, job readiness classes, vocational training, work experience, and other activities regulated through state and Federal guidelines.

However, measuring our participants' performance by the number of hours completed only provides data for half the story. Focusing on the rate as the only means of measurement for success within the workforce program removes the human aspect of the program. Participants in the program are often overcoming immense obstacles such as trauma, homelessness, mental and physical health concerns, substance abuse issues, and yet are required to fully participate in the program.

The current participation rate does not measure comprehensive family success. It also does not measure a customer successfully completing substance abuse treatment, and family reunification. Nor does the participation rate measure a family securing housing to stabilize their family to be able to work.

These types of actions by a participant indicate successful movement towards self-sustainability. However, individuals do enter the TANF program ready to immediately participate in employment activities with little to no barriers, and may simply need assistance with connecting to job leads and vocational training. However, as mentioned previously, there are several participants who have barriers that need to be addressed prior to becoming employment-ready. Unfortunately, these participants are required to meet the monthly mandatory participation rates, while at the same time having to address their barriers towards stability.

Another struggle within the TANF program is the effectiveness of the TANF components. The components are arranged between countable and non-countable activities. Some of these countable activities can only be used for a short period of time.

Capping the amount of job search/job readiness hours available to a customer does not benefit participants in a downward economy or an individual who has limited educational or employment skill sets.

Statistical measurements of the workforce program would benefit from focusing on tangible successes of participants, rather than a rate. These tangible successes could include the measurement of the number of participants who obtain employment within a set period of time from their entrance into the workforce program. Customers who successfully complete vocational training or increase their educational status while participating in the TANF program should also be considered a successful measurement.

In the sake of time, I will close with an example from our program. A 25-year-old mother of one applied for TANF assistance in January 2022. The customer was seeking financial assistance, assistance securing employment, and child care. The customer had little family support, and reported relocating to the city to find better job opportunities. Her career focus was on health care, customer service, and clerical work. She received assistance from a workforce employment social worker. After assessing her situation, she was assisted with child care, mileage reimbursement, and connected to a mental health professional. Overall, she was successful in addressing her mental health needs, and secured full-time employment, earning \$22 an hour, or \$42,000 per year.

Mr. Chairman and committee members, on behalf of our county manager and board, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

[The statement of Ms. Francis follows:]



MECKLENBURG COUNTY
Department of Social Services
Economic Services Division
The Wallace H. Kuralt Centre

March 27, 2023

United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Darin LaHood
Chairman, Subcommittee on Work and Welfare
Committee on Ways and Means
1139 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman LaHood,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the current Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program from my perspective as a Social Worker Supervisor in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. In my current role I manage a team of social workers with active caseloads. I am also responsible for reviewing, analyzing, and implementing current TANF processes. The following written remarks describe our engagement approach, measurement challenges, observations, and success, based on my front line and supervisory experiences.

Universal Engagement and Process

The Mecklenburg County Department of Community Resources through the Work First Employment Services Program provides social work services to eligible participants of the TANF program. Our County is in one of the nine states that delegate TANF administration, including Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirements, to counties. These services include removing barriers to employment such as assisting with referrals and connection to community resources such as housing, behavioral / physical health, substance use, food, transportation, childcare, and other daily needs.

Each participant is engaged in an initial assessment in which a Personal Information Form is used to gather pertinent information regarding the customer's family, educational, health, and employment

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background. A mutual responsibility agreement (MRA) is completed with participants that indicates activities the participant is required to complete to receive their monthly benefits and the actions the social worker will take to assist the customer in reaching their full potential within the program. The MRA outlines the required hours the participant must complete each month which correlates with the required monthly rate. The MRA also specifically spells out the hours required each week along with the participant's assigned component. For example: on the MRA an L-code (family with children ages 5 and under) plan will denote 30-hours/week of job search / job readiness and notate in the comments what partner agency the participant is assigned to or if they are assigned to individually job search.

Program Measurement Challenges

The Work First program currently uses a participation rate to measure the success of participants within the program. The Work First customer must participate in a set number of core components including independent job search, job readiness classes, vocational training, work experience, and other activities regulated through State and Federal guidelines. Measuring a participant's performance by the number of hours completed only provides data for half the story. For instance, a customer can job search for eighty-six hours a month and meet the rate but remain unable to obtain a job to support their family. Focusing on the rate as the only means of measurement for success within the Work First program removes the human aspect of the program.

Participants in the program are often overcoming immense obstacles, such as trauma, homelessness, mental and physical health issues, substance use issues, and yet are required to fully participate in the program, and meet the rate, immediately after being approved to receive Work First benefits. The current participation rate does not measure comprehensive family success. It does not measure a customer successfully completing substance abuse treatment and family unification, nor does the participation rate measure a family securing housing to stabilize their family to be able to work. These types of actions by a participant indicate successful movement towards self-sustainability.

Many individuals enter the TANF program ready to immediately participate in employment activities with little to no barriers and may simply need assistance with connecting to job leads, vocational training, etc. These individuals once assessed and deemed work ready are placed into activities such as vocational training courses or educational courses to obtain a certification within a specific field. However, as mentioned previously, there are participants who have barriers that need to be addressed prior to becoming employment ready. Unfortunately, these participants are required to meet the monthly mandatory participation rate while at the same time having to address their barriers towards stability. This can be stressful for participants resulting in them being unable to fully participate in the program.

Mandatory Participation Rate Challenges

Having a mandatory participation rate can hinder a family from becoming successful when the focus is only on work related activities and neglects the family's mental and physical well-being. The participation rate does not motivate or encourage our customers to secure jobs with living wages or employment with stability. The participation rate places stress on customers to find a job quickly and

many accept low paying jobs as a short-term solution. This often leads to customers returning to the program after a job loss with more pressure to secure a “job” and less time to participate in job training opportunities through the TANF program.

Component Effectiveness Challenges

Another struggle within the TANF program is the effectiveness of the TANF components. The components are arranged between countable and noncountable activities. Some of these countable activities can only be used for a short period of time. For example: a TANF participant is only allowed to complete two hundred-forty hours of job Search / job readiness activities within a twelve-month period. Capping the amount of job search / job readiness hours available to a customer does not benefit participants in a downward economy or an individual who has limited educational or employment skill sets. Substance Use Treatment (after job search hours are exhausted), General Education Diploma (GED), and other components that will assist families with overcoming barriers to employment are considered non-countable towards the rate. Therefore, families are progressing towards a better outcome by participating in these activities, however, this progress is unable to be used towards participation rate metrics.

Challenges for Social Workers

Social workers are evaluated on a yearly basis. One of the areas that is evaluated is the ability of social workers to get their customers to meet the State and Federal participation rate guidelines. Each month the agency calculates how many TANF participants meet the rate and whether 50% of all families and 90% of two parents have successfully met the rate. Social workers can feel pressured to place customers in other countable activities once the customer has run out of job search / job readiness hours even though the customers may still need assistance in areas that falls within the job search / job readiness component.

To best serve our customers some social workers may resolve to “take a hit” knowing that their customer will not meet the monthly rate, however, the customer is participating in an activity that will eventually lead to stability for the entire family and provide the customer with the ability eventually to fully participate in the Work First.

Observations

Statistical measurements of the Work First program would benefit from focusing on tangible successes of participants rather than a set number or rate. These tangible successes could include the measurement of the number of participants who obtain employment within a set period time from their entrance into the Work First program.

Participants who successfully complete vocational training or increase their educational status while participating in the TANF program would be a more accurate measurement of the success of the program. These efforts directly show that applicants are indeed participating in the Work First program and have obtained a tangible skill that will enhance their employment opportunities while directly correlating to the success of the family. These activities will still allow participants to complete hourly

work requirement however will focus more on their achievement rather than their ability to complete a set rate per month.

Success within the Work First program hinges on the integrated wrap-around services provided to participants. Participants who enter the Work First program are assigned to partner agencies to assist them with such activities as resume writing, learning skills on how to communicate in the workplace, workplace etiquette, money management, self-esteem building, and various other techniques. These techniques assist the participate with understanding workplace expectations.

Within Mecklenburg County, integrated services are provided to county citizens through Community Resource Centers. These Centers provide a central location to access such services as Child Support Services, the Workforce Development program (upward mobility), Veteran Services, Homeless Services, Financial Assistance, Adult and Child protective services, Community Social Work, and Public Health Services.

Other community partners that Work First participants can be referred to include the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Acts program (WIOA) through NCWorks which offers job leads and financial support for participants to obtain certifications in in-demand occupations such as construction, HVAC, fiber optics, medical coding, and other industry leading vocations. These trainings are specific to the needs of the employers within Mecklenburg County and therefore will result in Work First participants obtaining sustainable employment. Work First program also partners with the local Community College which provides a wealth of classes, training, and certificate programs that Work First participants can enroll in and gain direct training that will assist them in obtaining employment.

Although it is known that participating in a vocational training or job readiness program will assist a participant with moving toward self-sufficiency, often participants are unable to participate due to having exhausted job readiness or vocational training hours are placed in an activity that is not beneficial to their financial growth simply to meet the rate.

Success Stories

A 25-year-old mother of one applied for TANF assistance in January 2022. The customer was seeking financial assistance, assistance securing employment and childcare. The customer was approved for \$236 in TANF funding which is the standard monthly benefit for a household size of two. The customer had little family support and reported relocating to the city to find better job opportunities. Her career focus was on health care, customer service and clerical. She received assistance from a Work First Employment social worker. After assessing her situation, she was assisted with childcare, mileage reimbursement and connected to a mental health professional. The customer participated in job readiness and job search assistance through NC Works/EQUUS. She was successful in addressing her mental health needs and secured full-time employment earning \$22 per hours or \$42,000 per year.

A 32-year-old mother of two applied for TANF in 2021. The customer was justice involved and was seeking financial assistance, childcare, employment, and mental health services. She was assessed by a Work First Social worker and assisted with securing childcare, bus passes, and mental health services.

Upon customer's participation in counseling, she secured the strength to seek employment. The customer was connected to the Center for Communities in Transition for specialized assistance for those that are justice involved. This program provided customer with job preparation classes, Working Smart, and networking skills. She successfully secured employment upon graduation from the program as an assistant manager earning \$23 per hour or \$44,160.

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Thank you,



Shakirah Francis

Shakirah Francis

Shakirah Francis is an Employment Services Social Work Supervisor within the Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services Employment Services Division and has been employed with the County since January 2012. Shakirah holds a Bachelor of Social Work Degree from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NC A&T) and a Master of Social Work Degree from the Joint Master of Social Work program between University of North Carolina Greensboro and NC A&T. In her first role with the County, Shakirah worked directly with TANF customers as a Work First Employment social worker assisting families with removing barriers and moving them towards self-sufficiency.

Shakirah was promoted to Quality and Training Specialist within the Employment Services Division in 2016 where she developed trainings, trained new social workers on the Work First Employment Services program while maintaining a Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) caseload. Shakirah was promoted to Social Worker Supervisor in 2022 and supervises social workers. As an Employment Social Work Supervisor, she reviews, analyzes, and revises current Work First processes to ensure the agency continues to meet the needs of participants while simultaneously meeting the goals outlined by State and Federal policies.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you, Ms. Francis. I will now recognize Ms. Reynolds.

**STATEMENT OF HEATHER REYNOLDS, MANAGING DIRECTOR,
LAB FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES AT THE UNIVERSITY
OF NOTRE DAME, NOTRE DAME, INDIANA**

Ms. REYNOLDS. Thank you, Chairman Smith, Chairman LaHood, Ranking Member Davis, and members of the committee. I serve at the Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities, or LEO, at the University of Notre Dame, where we work with innovative service providers to build rigorous evidence around programs designed to move people permanently out of poverty.

Prior to joining LEO, I spent two decades as CEO of Catholic Charities, Fort Worth. The clients we had the honor to serve are who taught me about poverty, struggle, and strength, and also about the incredible disconnect that exists between policy and on-the-ground work.

The TANF program is one in particular that is particularly head-scratching to me. I observed many clients that benefited from TANF and many more working poor that were not qualified. I observed how recipients were required to often do various activities to keep their benefits, but these activities often had little to do with actually getting them into the workforce.

In the research we conduct at LEO, I see studies that show us what works to put people on a pathway out of poverty. These experiences lead me to express three points to you today.

First, TANF needs to be restructured in a way that gives people a way out of poverty. I will never forget Christina, as I sat in on a meeting with her about savings. As her case manager broached the subject, Christina, a single mom with two children, responded, "I am a great saver." Her strategies were sound. Every time she used her debit card, she got \$5 cash back, and put it toward her savings. Her case manager asked where she saved it. "In a plastic piggy bank in the back of my closet." And when her case manager asked how much, she shared, "Oh, \$6,000."

This single mom was a great saver. She worked part-time because she had small children to care for, and no help after fleeing a domestic violence situation. She was going to school supported by Catholic Charities to be ready for a living-wage job once her youngest hit kindergarten. Until then, she couldn't put her money in a bank. Why? It would be an asset, and she would lose all public benefits.

She would have to spend her savings. She would have to try to get back on benefits. And the time lapse would cause her to go into debt. When she did get that living-wage job, she would have no savings, but she would have plenty of debt. She had kept her money in the back of her closet because, for Christina, it was the soundest financial decision she could make. Christina needed TANF dollars, her part-time job, and support from Catholic Charities to stay afloat while she worked to improve her situation.

Second, TANF needs to be designed in a way where financial assistance is flexible and case management is robust. I met Rosa's family when they were about to be evicted. Her husband was making \$24,000 a year. Rosa needed to get to work. Catholic Charities

got Rosa a job and she quit. We got her another job and she quit. Most of us would say maybe Rosa wasn't serious about wanting to work, but Rosa's case manager knew her way too well to believe that.

Rosa was placing her son, or her two-year-old son in a daycare situation that would make most of us moms shudder. It was all she could afford. Her case manager made a deal with Rosa. Rosa would find a safe, reasonably-priced child care center. We would pay for the first three months, and then half the costs of the next three months, as long as Rosa kept that job. This afforded her to accomplish all of her goals: a safe place for her son, the ability to work, and the ability to get six months of paychecks under her belt before the whole childcare bill fell to her.

And guess what? Rosa is a certified IT specialist, promoted three times over the last six years. Her family is thriving, and she has never had to ask for help since. Rosa benefited from flexible funding to help her with her most pressing need: safe, quality childcare so she could increase her financial standing as a family.

And third, we have got to let evidence lead the way. TANF funds are used for many things, including job training, child care, and cash assistance. We don't have great information about which of these efforts work, and in some cases research shows us they don't work. Evidence-building and usage has got to be key in reform.

At LEO, we have over 90 research partners building evidence to help us understand what works. We take the most creative leaders across social services, design studies with them, understanding the impact of their services. These organizations do it because they believe if they can understand their impact, it can be used to scale and replicate their work.

It is your role to pay attention to this evidence and to use it. As policymakers, you need to be shouting from the rooftops—or, said another way, allocating public policy dollars—to allow their evidence-based solutions to scale because they work.

In closing, it is an honor to serve at the University of Notre Dame, who has a clear mandate to be a force for good in our country. The research we are producing continues to tell us the way to move low-income Americans to a life outside of poverty is through flexible financial assistance and case management. The answers are there. We just need you to follow the evidence.

[The statement of Ms. Reynolds follows:]



**Testimony of Heather Reynolds
Michael L. Smith Managing Director
Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities (LEO)
University of Notre Dame**

**Before the U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Work and Welfare**

March 29, 2023

Introduction

Thank you, Chairman Smith, Chairman LaHood, Ranking Member Davis, and Members of the Committee. I serve as the Managing Director of the Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities, or LEO, at the University of Notre Dame, where we work with innovative service providers to build rigorous evidence around programs designed to move people permanently out of poverty. Our mission is to reduce poverty in the United States through evidence-based programs and policies.

Prior to joining LEO, I spent almost two decades as CEO of Catholic Charities Fort Worth. The clients we had the honor to serve are people who taught me about poverty, about struggle and strength, and about the incredible disconnect that exists between policy and on-the-ground work.

The TANF program is one that was particularly head scratching to me in my days as a provider and now in the role I have at Notre Dame. I observed many clients who benefitted from TANF and many more who were working poor and not



qualified. I observed how recipients often were required to do various activities to keep their benefits, but those activities did little to appropriately support them into the workforce. In the research we conduct at LEO, I see studies that show us what works to put people on a pathway out of poverty—often a combination of flexible financial assistance paired with intensive case management.

These experiences lead me to express three main points with you today.

My first point is that **TANF needs to be restructured in a way that does not make people worse off, but instead gives them a way out.**

I will never forget Kristina as I sat in on a meeting with her about savings. As her case manager broached the subject, Kristina, a single mom with two children, responded with “I am a good saver.” Her strategies were sound—every time she used her debit card, she got \$5 cash back and put it towards her savings. Her case manager asked where she saved it. “In a plastic piggy bank in the back of my closet.” And when her case manager asked her how much she had, she shared, “Oh, around \$6,000.”

This single mom was a great saver—no doubt. She only worked part-time because she had small children to care for and no help after fleeing a horrific domestic violence situation. She was going to vocational school, supported by Catholic Charities, to be ready for a full-time job once her youngest hit kindergarten—a job that would pay her a living wage and solve future benefit needs. Until then, she couldn’t put her money in a safe place like a bank. Why? It would be an asset and she would lose all public benefits, including TANF. She would have to spend her savings over the next few months to make up for the loss of benefits. She would have to try to get back on benefits, and the time lapse would cause her to go into debt. When she did get that living wage job, she would have no savings. What she would have would be plenty of debt. She had to keep her money in the back of her closet, because it was the soundest financial decision she could make in her situation.

Kristina needed her TANF dollars, her part-time job, and support from Catholic Charities to stay afloat while she worked to improve her earnings and her family’s stability.

LEO recently completed a study where there were similarities to the services Kristina received. The Bridges to Success program is designed to provide working poor residents of Rochester, New York with economic mobility mentors. These mentors help participants move out of poverty, one issue at a time, by focusing on housing, family support, debt and savings, education, and employment.

Participants set explicit goals and work to achieve self-sufficiency while being provided with financial incentives along the way. This pairing of mentorship and financial help allows the clients to handle today and make measurable steps closer to a life outside of poverty tomorrow.

LEO's rigorous study, a randomized controlled trial of Bridges to Success, measured the impact of the program on the working poor individuals it serves. And participants, compared to a control group, are more likely to be employed, and this result persists over time.

Why does this program get such great results? Because it meets a family where they are today and sequences services in a variety of domains to get them where we want them to be tomorrow. Programs like this understand the fine dance of how to move a family out of poverty.

My second point is that **TANF needs to be designed in a way where financial assistance is flexible and case management is robust.**

I met Rosa's family when they were just about to be evicted. Her husband was working but making only about \$24,000 a year. Rosa needed to get to work.

Catholic Charities got Rosa a job and she quit. We got her another job and she quit. Many would say Rosa wasn't serious about working. But Rosa's case manager knew her too well to believe that. Rosa was placing her two-year-old son in a daycare situation that most of us mamas would shudder at. It was all she could afford.

Her case manager made a deal with Rosa. Rosa would find a safe, reasonably priced childcare center. We would pay for the first three months of childcare, and then half of the next three months, as long as Rosa kept a job. This afforded Rosa

the opportunity to meet all of her goals—a safe place for her son, the ability to work, and the ability to get six months of paychecks under her belt before the whole childcare bill fell to her.

And guess what? Rosa is now a certified IT specialist, promoted three times over the last six years. Her family is thriving, and she never asked for help since. Rosa benefited from flexible funding to help with her most pressing need—safe, quality childcare—so that she could work and increase her family's financial standing.

We have research to back up this flexible, robust approach. LEO recently completed a randomized controlled trial study of the Padua program. Padua is a holistic case management program designed by Catholic Charities Fort Worth to address the unique assortment of barriers faced by families in poverty. Because of small caseloads, they are able to build strong relationships with families. Families have access to strategic, flexible financial assistance that case managers can use to incentivize the behavior that leads them to achieve their goals.

Padua clients were 25% more likely to be employed, and those who were unemployed when offered Padua services earn 46% more. They are 60% more likely to be stably housed 24 months later and experience a sharp decline in credit card debt that persists over time.

My third point is that **we need evidence to lead the way.**

TANF funds are used for many things including job training, childcare, and cash assistance. And unfortunately, we do not have great information about which of these efforts are effective. In some cases, we have research that demonstrates they are ineffective. Evidence building and usage has to be key in any welfare reform efforts.

At LEO, we have over 90 research projects building evidence to help us understand what works. We take the most creative leaders in this space and design research studies, studying the impact of their services. It is hard enough to run a social service agency and then add on top of that a research study. But these organizations do it because they believe if they can understand their impact, it can be used to scale and replicate their work. Many of our provider partners serve

TANF recipients who work, and they also serve poor families who work but do not qualify for TANF. To get people to move out of poverty (whether that includes TANF or not), we need evidence-based programs that work.

It is your role to pay attention to this evidence and to use it. As policymakers, we need you shouting from the rooftops—or said another way, allocating policy dollars to allow evidence-based services to scale, because they work.

Case in point is the Goodwill Excel Center of Central and Southern Indiana, which operates 15 tuition-free, public charter high schools that support adult learners in completing their state-certified high school diploma. The Excel Center provides small classes on a flexible schedule, assistance with transportation, on-site childcare, and life coaching.

It works—and some states are following the evidence. Arizona recently allocated \$12 million to replicate this model in Phoenix. Indiana is currently considering the Governor's proposal to expand Excel Centers statewide with \$14 million appropriations over the next two years.

It's your turn—you want to see people off of government programs and frankly, the majority of people on government programs want to see themselves off of them too. Let's invest where the evidence directs us—the Goodwill Excel Centers are a great example.

Closing

In closing, it is an honor to serve at the University of Notre Dame, which has a clear mandate to be a force for good in our country. The research we are producing continues to tell us that the way low-income Americans achieve a life outside of poverty is through flexible financial assistance paired with mentorship or case management. The answers are there—we just need you to follow the evidence.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you, Ms. Reynolds. We will now recognize Mr. Maas for five minutes.

Thank you.

**STATEMENT OF JACOB MAAS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
WEST MICHIGAN WORKS!, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN**

Mr. MAAS. Great, thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman Smith, Chairman LaHood, Ranking Member Davis, and members of the subcommittee.

West Michigan Works! serves as a local workforce development agency, and our region consists of 7 counties annually serving approximately 3,000 employers and 40,000 job-seekers out of 8 service centers, 3 satellite offices, and many home offices.

I am very passionate about the population we serve, especially in our TANF programs. If there is one thing that I have learned over the years, it is when you directly impact an individual you are impacting their family and you are impacting the community.

I started my career in workforce development 20 years ago as an employer account representative in the Michigan Works! network, working directly with job-seekers who are receiving TANF, preparing them for employment, and with employers who would hire, train, and retain those individuals.

Early in my career I was ill-prepared, as the barriers were far more complicated than college prepared me for. I remember picking up individuals from their homes to get them to work on time when public transportation failed them. I remember going to an individual's home following up on why he did not show up to work, only to find he was dealing with a family crisis, as his teenager ran away from home. I also remember running into individuals at a local Meijer who were thankful for working together, and excited to tell me about their new job. While the circumstances surrounding each of their lives was unique, it was clear to me that they were not looking for a handout, but rather a hand up.

Our TANF program handled all things employment-training-related and gave them the hand up they needed. Those services included orientation to the program, soft skills development, barrier removal, career planning, high school equivalency or GED prep, referrals to short-term training programs, support services, transitional supports, and helping retain employment.

I held several other positions while working in the TANF program, including manager and assistant manager. In 2010, I transitioned to administration of programs, and since then I have served on several statewide committees involving process and policy improvements to our TANF program.

Early in my career our state was at risk of \$36 million in sanctions for not meeting work participation rate requirements. The challenge was that our infrastructure and IT systems were ill equipped to track work participation rates, programs weren't designed to meet work participation rates, and a large number of individuals were enrolled in activities that didn't count towards their participation rate, despite being better suited to help the individual in the long run.

For example, an individual couldn't be enrolled and still can't be enrolled in GED full time. Individuals could only be in training

programs for a short period of time before their hours stopped counting, even if the individual is on track to get their credential and increase their earnings.

We were and are still dealing with difficult rules like having the fifth week of job search not count toward participation hours, and individuals who are referred to us in the middle of the month who have a slim chance of meeting work participation rate for the month. It makes no sense to me that their hours wouldn't be prorated for the month, depending on when they were referred. Bottom line is that work participation rate doesn't work.

Fortunately, in Michigan, due to partnerships we have with our state departments of Labor and Economic Opportunity and Department of Health and Human Services, also known as the PATH Program, we have been able to solve these problems through caseload reduction credits where we can enroll a small percentage of individuals into high school equivalency and GED completion. Implemented in 2020, it provides an opportunity for participants to pursue high school completion or equivalency without facing the adverse effects of not meeting the work participation rate requirement.

The challenge is that, culturally, there is still the mindset that we must meet performance locally. In our region we are dealing with five different DHS directors who are held to the standard of work participation rate, and one person can fail performance for that DHS, especially in our rural counties.

I applaud the committee's challenge of reimagining what TANF can look like. Working directly with the population in a variety of roles, I have learned a few things that I hope you will find useful, and we would like to offer a few suggestions from our organization.

Focus on outcomes, not outputs. Work participation rate doesn't work.

Consider aligning the outcomes with Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act, which is about credential attainment, employment, employment retention, and earnings.

When designing the program we would be comfortable with participation hours, but each individual's needs are going to be unique. Allow the states and local areas the flexibility to enroll them in programs that are best suited for the individuals, and certainly allow high school equivalency, GED, and post-secondary training as options.

And maybe a dream to me, but consider integrating programs. Texas and Michigan have unique models where workforce development boards are delivering Workforce and Innovation Opportunity Act, Wagner-Peyser Trade Act, and welfare reform. A siloed approach to employment training programs creates confusion for employers and job-seekers alike. Just as our employers don't care where our funding streams are coming from, neither do our job-seekers. At the end of the day, our job-seekers just want a decent-paying job, and our employers just want the talent they need to remain competitive.

We have a local success story submitted in my written statement. With that, I just want to open it up for opportunity for questions. Thank you, Chairman.

[The statement of Mr. Maas follows:]



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 is supported by state and federal funds; more details
 at westmiworks.org/about/. TTY 711.

March 27, 2023

Good afternoon Chairman LaHood, Ranking Member Davis, and members of the subcommittee. My name is Jacob Maas and I have the privilege to serve as CEO of West Michigan Works! since its creation in 2015.

West Michigan Works! serves as the local workforce development agency and our region consists of 7 counties; annually we serve approximately 3,000 employers and 40,000 job seekers out of 8 service centers, 3 satellite offices, and many home offices.

I am very passionate about the population we serve...especially in our TANF programs. If there is one thing that I have learned over the years it's that when you directly impact an individual, you impact their family and if you are impacting their family, you are making an impact on the community.

I started my career in workforce development 20 years ago working as an Employer Account Representative in the Michigan Works! network. I was working directly with job seekers who were receiving TANF...preparing them for employment, and with employers who would hire, train, and retain those individuals. Early in my career, I was ill-prepared as the barriers were far more complicated than college prepared me for. I remember picking up individuals from their homes to get them to work on time when public transportation failed them. I remember going to an individual's home following up on why he did not show up to work...only to find that he was dealing with a family crisis -- his teenager ran away from home. I also remember running into individuals at our local Meijer who were thankful for working together and excited to tell me about their new job. While the circumstances surrounding each of their lives were unique, it was clear that they were not there for a handout, but rather a hand up.

Our TANF program handled all things employment and training related and gave them the hand up. Those services included orientation to the program, soft skills development, barrier removal, career planning, High School Equivalency or General Education Diploma, referrals to short-term training, support services, transitional supports, and helping retain employment. I held several other positions while working in the TANF program including manager and assistant manager.



In 2010, I transitioned to the administration of programs and since then I have served on several statewide committees involving process and policy improvements to our TANF program. Early in my career, our state was at risk of \$36 million in sanctions for not meeting work participation rates (WPR). The challenge was that our infrastructure and IT systems were ill-equipped to track work participation rates, programs weren't designed to meet work participation rates, and a large number of individuals were enrolled in activities that didn't count towards their participation, despite being better suited to help the individual in the long run. For example, an individual couldn't be enrolled, and still can't be enrolled, into GED full-time. Individuals could only be in training programs for a short period of time before their hours stopped counting even though the individual was on track to get their credential and increase their earnings. We were, and are still, dealing with difficult rules like having the 5th week of job search not count towards participation hours and individuals who are referred to us in the middle of the month who have a slim chance of meeting work participation for the month. It makes no sense to me that their hours wouldn't be prorated for the month depending on when they were referred. Bottom line is that work participation rate doesn't work.

Fortunately in Michigan, due to the partnership we have with our state departments of Labor and Economic Opportunity and Department of Health and Human Services (known as the PATH Program), we have been able to solve these problems through caseload reduction credits where we can enroll a small percentage of individuals into high school equivalency and GED completion. Implemented in 2020, it provides an opportunity for participants to pursue high school completion, or equivalency, without facing the adverse effects of not meeting the work participation requirement. The challenge is that culturally there is still the mindset that we must meet performance locally. In our region we are dealing with five different DHS directors who are held to the standard of work participation rates and one person can fail performance for that DHS, especially in our rural counties.

I applaud the committee's challenge of re-imagining what TANF can look like. Working directly with the population in a variety of roles I have learned a few things that I hope you find useful, and we would like to offer a few suggestions from our organization:

1. Focus on outcomes, not outputs. Work participation doesn't work. Consider aligning the outcomes with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act which is about credential attainment, employment, employment retention and earnings.



2. When designing the program, we would be comfortable with a framework of participation hours, but as each individual's needs are going to be unique, allow the states and local areas the flexibility to enroll them in programs that are best suited for the individual and certainly allow HS Equivalency/GED and post-secondary training as options. There is enough data to support that having increased education and skills increases earning potential. We have also experienced tremendous success with apprenticeship programs, and we have received national awards for our work. Just as important though would be activities and time for barrier removal. Finding childcare can take time, dealing with legal issues takes time. We need to be able to have the flexibility to address the barriers before we can even help with a plan for employment.
3. Maybe a dream to me...but consider integrating programs. Texas and Michigan have unique models where the workforce development boards are delivering Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Wagner-Peyser, Trade Act, and welfare reform. A siloed approach to employment and training programs creates confusion for employers and job seekers alike. Just as our employers don't care which funding streams we are using, neither do our job seekers. At the end of the day our job seekers just want a decent paying job and our employers just want the talent they need to remain competitive.
4. Locally we often struggle with the benefits cliff. The fact that individuals can just as quickly be off of benefits as they are on them. We have heard directly from many of our employers, where individuals have turned down a promotion and a raise because of the risk of losing their benefit although not necessarily tied to a TANF benefit. Consider a gradual reduction or a small income deferral period when individuals are transitioning to work and the delays that may occur before the first paycheck.

I'm a firm believer that just as no one organization or person is responsible for the problems we are dealing with, there is no one organization or person who can fix them. Statewide, in addition to working closely with many state departments, we are working locally with our chambers of commerce, employer associations, unions, economic development agencies, individual school districts, schools, community colleges, universities, philanthropic, community and faith-based organizations. So as you can hear...partnerships are key to our overall success!

Local partnerships were key to Jessica Geary's success.

Jessica began working with one of our career coaches in the West Michigan Works! Allegan service center in August of 2022 after being referred to the TANF program through DHHS. She lacked direction and a plan for her future and had significant barriers to gainful employment.



Jessica had many years of experience caring for people, but she did not have a Certified Nursing Assistant credential nor high school diploma so her previous work did not pay well and she had no potential for advancement. Since her last employment, she could not find work and lacked reliable transportation.

Jessica's career coach gave her the support and motivation she needed to enroll in a GED class through Allegan Adult Education and a CNA training program at Lake Michigan College. Her coach helped her schedule public transportation so she could attend the in-person classes. Jessica began her GED class in August of 2022 and when she was close to completing it, she began her CNA training in January 2023.

Despite her challenges, Jessica persisted. She worked hard in classes, was faithful to PATH program requirements and earned her GED and CNA certification by March 2023.

At the same time, Jessica was working with her coach to update her resume and better represent her skills. Her career coach also brought in West Michigan Works! talent development specialist who helped her practice interview skills and this month, after all her hard work, Jessica accepted a CNA position with Kauhale Otsego.

When Jessica shared this wonderful news with her career coach, she also expressed her thanks for West Michigan Works!' support, stating, "I knew I needed to do something with my life and West Michigan Works! helped me find my way. Once I decided I wanted to obtain my GED, CNA license and work for a really great company, West Michigan Works! helped me by removing all of the barriers that were standing in my way."

In closing, thank you for the work you are doing and I look forward to seeing what you accomplish in the near future. Thank you for your time and attention, and I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jacob Maas".

Jacob Maas
Chief Executive Officer

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you, Mr. Maas. At this time we will hear from Ms. Gray for five minutes.

You are recognized. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF VICTORIA GRAY, PHOENIX, ARIZONA

Ms. GRAY. Good afternoon, Chairman LaHood, Ranking Member Davis, and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the commitment to families that you do, and the opportunity to speak to you today about the critical role Temporary Assistance to Needy Families plays in the lives of grandparents and other relatives that are raising children, also known as grandfamilies or kinship families.

My name is Victoria Gray, and I have become an advocate for grandfamilies after discovering firsthand the difficulties that they face as we raised seven grandchildren, some of whom have severe medical and behavior issues. As an advocate and a professional, I serve as the Generations United GRAND Voice, and I am the founder and executive director of the non-profit GreyNickelinc, supporter of kinship families in Arizona. I routinely connect grandfamilies to TANF, which is an essential source of the support for children.

When parents are unable to raise their children, grandparents step up to provide protection, stability, and love. Currently, more than 2.5 million children are raised by grandfamilies. Collectively, we save the county more than—our country more than \$4 billion a year keeping children out of foster care.

My husband and I were both working. We had two teenagers at home. We received a call that our granddaughter, who was medically fragile, was placed into foster care. We stepped up to care for her and received about \$17 a month for diapers. We were not told about TANF at that time. The additional support would have been a huge help to my family. But work requirements are a barrier for families like mine.

My granddaughter was born in 29 weeks at 1 pound, 2 ounces. Her lungs were not fully developed, she had two holes in her heart, a frontal lobe cyst. She has cloudiness of both eyes. We were told she would have limited to no vision. We could not find a child care center that would accept the responsibility or the liability for taking this child in. I had to quit work to care for her.

Later that year, her brother was placed with us. We found out that he was not biologically linked to us, so we became foster parents in order to keep him in the home with his sister. When we did get licensed, we received \$500 a month in foster care for him. We were caring for two siblings in the same house, and both had special needs, but we got vastly less support for our granddaughter because we were related to her.

Grandparents are not expecting to raise a child in retirement, but step up with little to no warning. TANF is one of the few sources of support for children outside of the foster care system. Going back to work can be a huge challenge. Our issue was facing—was finding childcare. Other grandparents suffered with health issues, disabilities, and just finding a job at their age.

Once we learned about TANF, we did apply, but we did not qualify, even after we came from two incomes to one because we made

\$75 a month too much. Many grandfamilies like ours cannot access TANF because of the asset limits. We were essentially penalized for responsibly saving for our retirement. We used our credit cards, our savings account, and some of our 401(k) funding to care for our children. Today, at 86, my husband has to work, and he works as a school crossing guard for us to make ends meet each month. Having spent most of our savings to provide for the children, we now hope that we don't have to ask for financial assistance as we get older.

Many states offer child-only TANF grants, which generally do not consider the family's assets or income. However, the amount is vastly lower. While it is valued and essential, the amount of these grants are largely inadequate to provide for the children's needs. To survive and thrive, families routinely must piece together other assistance from food banks and clothing closets. Often, they simply go without.

Another barrier accessing TANF is a requirement to collect child support. If the state tries to locate the families to collect child support, caregivers have reported that the parents become angry, and they threaten the grandparents that they will remove the children, putting the children back in harm. Some grandparents fear for their own safety, as well, because the parents still have keys to the family home. So grandparents often choose not to pursue TANF, and suffer emotionally and financially for the concerns of the children and themselves.

Please keep the grandfamilies in mind when you move forward with the TANF Assistance for Needy Families. I have included specific recommendations in my written testimony for consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and your consideration on behalf of grandfamilies.

[The statement of Ms. Gray follows:]

Testimony of Victoria Gray
Welfare is Broken: Restoring Work Requirements
to Lift Americans Out of Poverty
United States House Committee on Ways and Means
Wednesday, March 29th, 2:00 PM

Chairman LaHood, Ranking Member Davis, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for your commitment to families and the opportunity today to talk with you about the critical role Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) plays in the lives of grandparents and other relatives raising children, also known as grandfamilies or kinship families.

My name is Victoria Gray, and I became an advocate for kinship/grandfamilies after discovering firsthand the difficulties that they face as I raised seven of my grandchildren, some of whom have severe special medical and behavioral needs. For families like mine, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families is often the only source of support to help meet the children's basic needs, yet barriers like work requirements prevent many of us from being able to access it and the payment amount still leaves most grandfamilies struggling to make ends meet. As an advocate and professional, I serve as a Generations United GRAND Voice Member, and I am the founder of a nonprofit where I serve as Executive Director, GreyNickel Inc. – Supporter of Kinship Families. We provide support to grandfamilies in Arizona during the critical first weeks after the child comes to live with them. I routinely connect grandfamilies to resources and TANF is an essential source of support for the children.

When parents are unable to raise their children, grandparents and extended family step up to care for the children, providing critical protection while reducing the trauma of being separated from their parents. We provide roots and connection to culture, keep siblings under one roof, and most importantly- love. Currently more than 2.5 million children are raised by grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends, and they thrive in our loving care. Yet, grandfamilies often step into their caregiving role unexpectedly and struggle

financially to provide for children they did not plan or expect to raise. By stepping up to care for them, grandfamilies keep vast numbers of children out of foster care. Collectively, we save our country more than \$4 billion a year by keeping children safe, connected to their roots, and out of the system.

So many of the grandparents have spent their lives doing what was needed to support their family and plan for their retirement. Situations changed that for us. My husband and I were both working and still had two teenagers in our home when we received a call that our granddaughter, who was medically fragile, was placed into the foster care system. After several court sessions, we brought her home and received about \$17 a month for diapers from the Department of Child Safety. We were not told about the option to apply for TANF at that time. The additional support would have been a huge help to my family, but work requirements are a barrier to families like mine. I had to quit working to care for her. She was born at 29 weeks at 1 pound 2 ounces. Her lungs were not fully developed. She had two holes in her heart and a frontal lobe cyst. She had cloudiness in both eyes which we were told could result in limited to no vision. We could not find a childcare center that would accept responsibility or liability for her care. Later that year her brother was placed with us with some of the same medical issues, but we learned he was not biologically linked to us, so we had to become licensed foster parents to keep him in the home with his sister. Because we became licensed to care for him, we received a \$500 a month foster care payment for him. We were caring for two children in the same house, both had needs. Yet we got vastly less support for my granddaughter because she was related to us.

It is important to note that foster care maintenance payments are only available to families when the child welfare system is involved and there is a safety concern for the children. TANF is one of the few sources of support for grandfamilies outside of the foster care system. If given a choice, grandparents and other relatives prefer to keep children out of foster care and at home with family.

This is why I fight for grandparents and kinship families. Grandfamilies usually step into their role with little or no warning. We have worked, planned and saved for retirement, but we were not expecting to raise a child in retirement. TANF is critical to help grandfamilies care for the children. Yet we face barriers accessing it.

Going back to work can be a huge challenge. Our issue was finding childcare. Other grandfamilies suffer with health issues and disabilities. Almost half of grandparents raising grandchildren are age 60 and older, and one in four has a disability. Some who try to go back to work are judged because of their age alone which keeps them from securing jobs.

The TANF application was long and difficult to navigate with language that was not clear. Even after our family went from two incomes to one income, we did not qualify. Many grandfamilies cannot access TANF because of asset limits. They are essentially penalized for responsibly saving for retirement or even owning a car. We used our credit cards, savings account and some of our 401(k) retirement funding to care for our grandchildren. Today at 86, my husband works as a school crossing guard for us to make ends meet each month. The TANF would have allowed us to care for the children's needs and still allowed us the retirement we planned for. Having spent most of our savings to provide for the children, we now hope that we don't have to ask for financial assistance ourselves as we age.

To address some of these barriers most states offer something referred to as TANF child only grants which, in most cases, do not consider the family's assets or income, however the amount of that grant is vastly lower and not per child like foster care maintenance payments. While one child may receive \$164 in TANF-child only in Arizona, two children in the same home only receive a total of \$220. This practice of unequal support per-child is reflective of TANF child-only policies around the country. While it is valued and essential, the amount of these grants is largely inadequate to provide for the children's needs. For grandparents raising multiple grandchildren, the inadequate assistance often necessitates foster care placement. In order to thrive, families routinely have to piece together other assistance from food banks and clothing closets. Often, they simply go without.

One additional barrier to accessing TANF, including child-only grants, is the requirement that the grandparent turn over the right to collect child support from the parent to the state. Many grandparents are caring for children through informal arrangements without court or child welfare system involvement. If the state tries to locate the parent to collect support, they fear the parent will become angry and take the child back, placing the child in danger. Some grandparents fear for their own safety as well. Fighting with the biological parents is hard because, unlike foster families, some parents still have keys to the family

home. Many grandparents simply want to help their adult child be able to re-parent. They know if their adult child has some of their income taken, the likelihood of being able to provide a home again for the child is further jeopardized. While states have the flexibility to use a “good cause” exception to waive the child support requirement if the caregiver can demonstrate a reason not to seek child support, few states use it. Instead, grandparents often chose not to pursue TANF and suffer emotionally and financially for the concerns of the children, the parents, and themselves.

Most grandparent caregivers say they never saw themselves raising their grandchildren. Yet we step up and provide the love and care we know our children need. Across the nation TANF is a critical source of support to grandfamilies in our essential role to help our children thrive and grow into productive citizens.

Please consider and keep the Kinship/Grandfamilies in mind when moving forward with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

I make the following recommendations to ensure Temporary Assistance for Needy Families helps provide critical support for grandfamilies raising children.

Encourage States to:

- Reinststate clear exceptions to time limits and work requirements for grandparent and other relative caregivers who are raising young children and/or are age 55 and older. Ensure no work requirements or time limits are placed on child-only grants.
- Eliminate asset limits for grandparent and other relative caregivers to qualify for TANF, as has been done by several states. At a minimum, like common exemptions for college savings, caregivers must be able to keep retirement savings.
- Provide clear directives that child-only TANF grants cannot test caregiver income. These grants are intended for the child based on the income of the child.
- Make clear use of the “good cause” exception to complying with child support enforcement clarifying that caregivers may ask the state not to pursue child support from the parents.

- Improve the adequacy of TANF child-only grants to better meet the needs of children, including by providing the same amount of TANF child-only support for each eligible child in the home.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of grandfamilies like mine.

Chairman LAHOOD. Well, thank you, Ms. Gray, and I want to thank all of our witnesses for the valuable testimony you provided today and the work that you do in your different fields.

At this time we are going to proceed to question-and-answer by our committee members, and I will begin with that session now. Mr. Collins, I am going to start with you.

You mentioned during your time in the Bush Administration that was the last time we had a reauthorization of TANF in 2005, and that was to deal with some of these issues that we talked about today, and to reset the work participation rate. Can you explain what problems prompted these changes, and if you think any of those same solutions would work today?

Mr. COLLINS. Sure, Mr. Chairman. The problem was actually a good one, and that was that states had done a great job of getting people off of the caseload, and they enjoyed a really generous caseload reduction credit. So it essentially brought the 50 percent rate down to 0. So states really didn't have a rate to meet. So that was the challenge.

And I think what we would do today has to include some other pieces of reform. I would recalibrate the work participation rate calculation, the caseload reduction credit calculation more frequently, perhaps even biannually. But today, because of the other things that have happened with TANF, you also have to look at solely state-funded options states have to move people out of the rate.

There are other things that happen with MOE, and there is a bunch of loopholes that you have to close. Doing the rate by itself, recalibrating the caseload reduction credit by itself won't address the issues to make sure more individuals receive TANF assistance.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you for that. I will turn to Ms. Francis next.

To count towards a state's work participation rate, TANF recipients must engage in a minimum number of hours in order to—in either core or supplemental activities. Can you provide examples of how this causes caseworkers to provide workarounds or take a hit on their evaluations when helping recipients get the training they need to enter the workforce?

Ms. FRANCIS. Yes, thank you for that question. Yes, a lot of times our customers come in, and they are required to participate in a certain amount of hours. And job search, job readiness, we know that they only have a set amount of hours that they can complete for the year. And so, if they come in and they used those hours already, but that is the component that they need to be in in order to be successful in our program—so overcome any barriers or things of that nature, once they run out of those hours we can no longer use that component, and they are not counting towards the rates.

And then also we have situations where you might have a adult who comes in over the age of 20 who wants to participate in getting their GED. So we have to put them in another component along with their GED, because over the age of 20 it does not count currently for them. So we have to combine them into another activity, which could be stressful for the customer to try to juggle both of those things at the same time. So it is kind of hard.

And as far as taking a hit from our social workers, sometimes if they are not meeting the rate, we will just keep them in that activity because we know it is going to be beneficial for them in the long run to be in that activity, rather than just pushing them onto something else so that they can meet the rates.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you for that.

Ms. Reynolds, from your experience in research, what is the best measurement tool to help high work barrier individuals enter the workforce, while still holding states, localities, and caseworkers accountable?

Ms. REYNOLDS. Great question, and thank you for that. I would say the most effective thing that we continue to see in study after study after study is the pairing of flexible financial assistance with robust case management, all leading to the outcome of education and upward mobility.

I would say what we see again and again is when the Federal Government block grants dollars out to states and has requirements behind it, like in Family First, like in MIECHV, where we say these programs need to be run with evidence-backed program, we—the poor in our country deserve programs that actually are shown to work, and then those states can distribute those funds to those evidence-based programs, it makes all the difference.

Some specific things we have seen in our research at LEO is Bridges to Success in Rochester, New York. They are getting amazing gains in employment and earnings because of mentorship, sequencing, and incentivizing certain behavior through flexible financial assistance. Padua at Catholic Charities, Fort Worth, we are seeing tremendous gains in employment and earnings of low-income individuals, some who start as the working poor, and some who start not working at all.

And we are seeing awesome results, too, with the Goodwill Excel centers that operate in 15 locations across this country, where we are seeing when you have students, adult students who did not graduate from high school, come get their education, get post-secondary credentialing, all by being wrapped around—all while being wrapped around with supports and case management, that is really the model that is helping individuals move into upward mobility.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you for that.

Mr. MAAS, Michigan is one of the few states to integrate the TANF work requirements with workforce boards and services provided through the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act. You are charged with making that effective at the local level. What do you see as challenges and opportunities for this type of model?

And are there Federal rules or regulations that make this connection difficult to replicate in other states?

Mr. MAAS. It is a great question, Chair. I wish I knew that answer, too. Only joking. All jokes aside, you know, it has worked well for Michigan. I think with our state we have an interagency agreement between the Department of Health and Human Services and our Workforce Development Department.

While I would love to see that federally, obviously we are talking about Federal versus local control in some of our states. You know, now we have seen the model with Texas, and Texas does it well. You know, obviously, Michigan is doing it well. We have had great

partnerships between these two departments, where Michigan Works! has been at the table, our Labor and Economic Opportunity organization has been at the table, and DHS has been at the table.

So it has always worked well for us. And again, focusing on skills and skill development and pushing back on the state a little bit around flexibility for that high school equivalency or GED, as Ms. Francis had mentioned, has been a key component to our success over the last few years. So thank you for that question.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you for that, Mr. Maas. At this time I am going to recognize Ranking Member Mr. Davis for his questions.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank all the witnesses.

Ms. Gray, let me thank you especially for traveling here all the way from Phoenix, and for sharing your experiences with us over the years as you have helped grandchildren and helped others to be able to help grandchildren.

The most common reason that families stop receiving TANF benefits is failing to meet an administrative requirement like filling out a form or attending a meeting scheduled by an agency or a state. Can you tell us what it is like for grandparents when they see the forms or when they are told they have to meet all of these requirements, what their reactions are?

Ms. GRAY. Thank you, Mr. Davis. So for grandfamilies or grandparents, we are talking about a group of people who have spent their lives working, saving for their retirement, and now are faced with raising additional children.

A lot of the families that I work with, when they look at the TANF application where in Arizona it was 58 pages long, and they only really needed, like, 6 or 7 pages, it was very frustrating for them to go through it. The application is long, it is difficult to navigate, and the questions sometimes are not—the families don't understand what they are asking for.

So a lot of times the family will go through and fill in different pages, and be denied simply because they put in the wrong information. Some of the families that I work with in their seventies and eighties are a little illiterate. They don't understand it, and you have to help them fill the forms out. So when they are tasked with doing this, they feel like they can't get it done, and they just stop.

And it is very hard for them to do it while they are still caring for children. Some great-grandparents were placed with three children, and still with the care for them and the daily needs that they needed, they had to go through 58 pages of a TANF application.

Mr. DAVIS. Sixty-eight pages?

Ms. GRAY. It was 58 pages.

Mr. DAVIS. Fifty-eight pages?

Ms. GRAY. Yes, sir.

Mr. DAVIS. That is a lot of pages. Well, let me ask you. Only about 4.5 percent of cases are closed because of a failure to file a child support case or attend school. But I know that child support requirements are the reason some grandparents don't apply at all.

Can you tell us more about the situation where that is a problem, and why it is important to look at the entire family structure when dealing with a case?

Ms. GRAY. Yes, sir. So for the child-only TANF, it still—it includes, like, sometimes the income. That is really not a problem for some, because they are retired. They are living off of 2,000, \$2,500 a month.

But when you look at the overall, if it is your biological child and you are caring for the children out of the state welfare system, you leave yourself open to what a lot of grandparents complained about, being threatened or intimidated: "If you apply for these funds, the state is going to come after us, so we are going to remove the children from you." That only puts the children back in danger again.

So a lot of grandparents will not apply for that, because they don't want to lose the children and have the children be put in a situation that caused them to be removed in the first place.

Mr. DAVIS. If you were giving advice to an agency that administers a program to be helpful, what would you ask or tell them to do?

Ms. GRAY. Yes, sir. So I have heard a lot here about the TANF and the application, and we are talking about a lot of families. We are not talking about 60-year-olds, 70-year-olds. We even have 80-year-old families, who have worked already and just need to experience their retirement.

So one of the things that I would ask that the committee look at is, at these ages, there are those disabilities. They have mobility issues, they can't get around. They have families that are getting knee replacements and hip replacements, and they still have to chase around a two-year-old or a three-year-old, and it causes a lot of problems. I think, if we can take a look at what the grandfamily situation really is, then we can take a look at more of how we can help them.

But these grandfamilies are really suffering, because they are spending the money that they have worked so hard for to keep ends to meet for these children and to keep them safe and stable in their home. So if we could take a look at the resources as far as what would a 60 or 70-year-old family member need to care for a 3-year-old, I think it would add a little more incentive to help these families, because these families are struggling. They are really struggling.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very much, and I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you, Mr. Davis. Consistent with committee practice we will now proceed with two-to-one questioning, and I will recognize Mr. Carey of Ohio.

Mr. CAREY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon.

I want to thank you all, all the panelists, for taking time to come before this subcommittee and testify. Your experiences, your expertise will help inform us as we work to take a look at our current welfare system, make the reforms to help America become more self-sufficient, and transition from Federal assistance into the workforce.

In 2022, TANF funds served over a million families in the U.S., which included 2 million children. In my home state of Ohio, the TANF program serves more than 41,000 families, including 68,000 children. As many of the witnesses mentioned in their testimonies, the current TANF program requires states to track work participation rates, which do not effectively further the objectives of the program, and are not a good measure to success.

Ohio's workforce agencies has worked to innovate and provide assistance to low-income young adults to build careers and break the cycle of poverty. Through the Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program, Ohio utilizes funds from both TANF and Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act to provide workforce-related services to eligible Ohioans who are 14 to 24. This innovative program utilizes performance metrics like education or training after completing the program, and credentials attained rates instead of work participation rates to assess participants.

Listen, I look forward to continuing to discuss how states like mine are innovating these programs, and how we can highlight the best practices to provide a helping hand to Americans on the road to self-sufficiency.

First question, Mr. Maas, back in my home district I hear all the time, all the time from employers, from Intel to LG to Honda, that continue to invest and want to create more jobs in Ohio in and around the district, "How can we reform TANF to help move current and future welfare recipients into the workforce and into those open positions quickly as possible?"

Mr. MAAS. That is a great question, Representative Carey, and thanks for the opportunity to answer.

We are hearing, frankly, across the country and across West Michigan of just the challenge that our employers are experiencing with hiring, attracting, retaining.

You know, individuals in the TANF program that we serve often times have a number of barriers that we need to address first. So working with our state, we made sure that we allowed a barrier removal activity, which was new to us in 2020, to really spend some time deeply in these individuals, removing any barriers that they have. You know, finding childcare takes time. Dealing with legal issues takes time. Dealing with housing issues takes time. And so working with our state, we have added a barrier removal in that activity.

But also it is that skills, Representative. You know, they need to have the skills that our employers need in order to remain competitive and stay within our regions. And so we need activities like GED completion and high school equivalency, because a lot of employers are still requiring it at least to get your foot in the door, but also for advancement for those companies, too. You know, if our goal is to break the generational cycle of poverty, we need those tools in order to help individuals in the long run.

So—and then for us it is short-term training and skills. It sounds like you are doing some great work in Ohio in the partnerships with Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act. You know, my predecessor for region 5 coordinator, Christine Quinn, had always told me, "How do we take best practices and turn them into common

practices?” So how do we take examples like what Ohio is doing and spread them across the country?

So thank you for the question, Representative.

Mr. CAREY. Thank you.

Ms. FRANCIS, as I mentioned earlier, my home state of Ohio has innovated within one of its programs to measure performance outcomes, rather than work participation. In your testimony, you mentioned how the work participation rate takes the human aspect out of casework. Can you explain why this is? And you only have a minute, I apologize. [Laughter.]

Ms. FRANCIS. It is all right. Because we are dealing with individuals who have—they are in homeless situations. They might have mental health or behavioral, physical concerns. They might have substance use concerns. And so when we overlook that, and just putting them into a component, it doesn't end up the way that we would want it to turn out.

We need to be able to come up with some type of way that we can measure the steps that they are taking when they are addressing those issues, and that be an outcome that we can use as showing them successfully partnering with our program. But that—we lose that human aspect when we don't include that with—when we are making decisions as far as our customers being successful in the program.

Mr. CAREY. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you, Mr. Carey. I will turn now to Mr. Blake Moore of Utah.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Thank you, Chairman, Ranking Member.

Ms. REYNOLDS, a quick question. I want to jump in, just get—set us some context for today's hearing, and then I have got a few more questions. Overall, TANF as it exists today, what areas can we improve, right? How do we make sure that this is an opportunity to incentivize the dignity of work? Like, just give me your quick thoughts on that.

Ms. REYNOLDS. Yes. What I would say is we need evidence-based programs. So about—right now, 22 percent of TANF dollars are spent on cash assistance to families. The rest are spent on other things like workforce training and so forth. Those dollars that are supporting programs need to be backed by evidence. There is tons of programs that are being developed and already have evidence behind them that they work. Let's invest in those things.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Awesome. So has anybody—out of curiosity, has anybody on the stand here, on the witness stand, has anybody ever used the theory of change model or logic model in—associated with your work? Right?

Like, so I get really kind of geeky about this, and I think back to my old consulting days, where—I mean, we have the whole set, we have the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact, right?

What are we doing to be able to move this down the value chain, so we are actually measuring success, as opposed to just how many hours you are working, what are you doing, what is the—what are the simple things you are doing? That is a part of it. I am never going to say that is not a key part of it. That is a part of the value

chain. But what are we ultimately doing to move that down? I would love to just kind of hear your thoughts.

Ms. FRANCIS, the most—not that Congress isn’t amazing, and it is such a wonderful job, but the most impactful work I have ever done in my life was when I worked with Opportunity Youth prior to this role, and we worked with a big financial organization that was working with YouthBuild that was really trying to, you know, find ways for opportunity—youth, those that are 16 to 24-year-olds, that are neither working nor in school that are actually trying to get into the workforce, and they have to find—and you are right, there is a stratified approach. Some have certain basic needs met. Some have had major tragedy. And we need to meet where they are, so we can lift everybody up.

What, in your opinion, can we be doing to capture the data? Because it is so important to be able to identify data and what—the things we need to be monitoring, so we can move down this value chain. And I will just kind of throw that to the table. Ms. Francis, if you would want to maybe offer some thoughts, because I know you love that stratified approach.

Ms. FRANCIS. To capture the data, I think that we just need a better system of what our customers are actually participating in. We have vocational training, we have all these other instances. But we need—like I was saying before, if they have gone through trauma we need a way to address that. We need a way to measure that.

And our—and where we come from, Mecklenburg County, we have social workers who assess them when they come in the door. And so we know where they are at, what their educational level is, and everything of that, and putting them in the most accurate component that will address those issues for them.

But like you said, yes, we do need to come up with a better, more comprehensive way to measure what is being done by our customers—

Mr. MOORE of Utah. In particular, is there anything the Federal Government is doing right now that actually hinders your ability to meet those individuals where they are at, and help them out?

I mean, is there something we should be moving away from?

Ms. FRANCIS. The rates that—I am sorry, but yes, the rate, because it does not measure. I mean, you can job search for 86 hours for a month, but it does not measure what the customer is actually achieving. It is just a number.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Ms. Reynolds?

Ms. REYNOLDS. Yes. I love your logic model. I geek out on logic models, too.

What I would love to see at the very end of that logic model is families’ dignity restored because they are living a life outside of poverty. And to me, I have seen a lot of our partners—something that matters to me is where it is living-wage income, where they have no harmful debt, and they have appropriate savings, and then ultimately are off of government assistance, as well.

I love how when Chairman LaHood talked about—opened up our hearing, he talked about people trampolining out of poverty. And as I think about my 11-year-old daughter on a trampoline, you look at a child on a trampoline, and they start bouncing, and then it gets higher and higher. And I think what we have to remember is

when we are helping people trampoline out of poverty, they don't get to the end of that logic model overnight. They get a little better, and a little better, and a little better. And then they get that momentum so they can be out and free of government assistance.

And so the more we can do to surround people with the supports they need to meet them where they are at today, and provide them with someone who will do life with them to navigate all of this, I think, can really work.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. Mr. Collins, anything to add on that data perspective or in your work?

Mr. COLLINS. I actually agree with the other panelists.

It is important to move people ultimately to impacts, so that we can measure really what it was that we tried to do in the beginning. And I actually think that Congress can set the table by reframing what good looks like, so that states can build anti-poverty programs instead of anti-penalty programs.

It is important that we improve from where we are. A lot of things got layered in over the last couple of opportunities to sort of look at TANF and reauthorization when I was there then. There is a tremendous amount of flexibility that states have to do various things, and I think we should preserve that element, but find ways to evolve where we are on the accountability side.

Mr. MOORE of Utah. And I will just say I think this is—the really neat thing about this committee, and why I am excited to be on this subcommittee is because, for Ms. Gray's testimony all the way down to Mr. Collins, there is a fundamental problem. If you have ever felt like, you know, additional income is actually going to hurt you, we need to address that.

Ms. GRAY, your testimony is emotional, and I just wanted to thank you for your time and what you have given to your family. And that issue that you brought up is something that I go to my state leaders and work on, and we find ways to actually make reasonable solutions there. So thank you.

Ms. GRAY. Thank you.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you, Mr. Moore. I recognize Ms. Chu for five minutes.

Ms. CHU. Ms. Gray, I want to thank you for your testimony today about the main barriers for families looking to participate in the workforce is access to affordable child care.

Childcare across the nation is extremely costly. In my home state of California, families pay more than \$13,000 annually, which is hard for middle-income families to afford, but even more out of reach for low-income families or those living in poverty.

Now, currently, 30 percent of a state's TANF dollars can be transferred to childcare. But on average, states only spend about 17 percent of those dollars on childcare. You mentioned in your testimony that a lack of childcare options presented a barrier for you to go back to work. How might access to affordable, quality childcare have impacted this decision?

Ms. GRAY. Great question. So for me, it was a medical issue of the child that hindered us from getting the child care. No one wanted to take on the responsibility of a child that had that medical condition. In my testimony that I sent in, it was only half of

what she went through as a child when we took her in. Her medical issues were far more than I stated in the testimony.

So it wasn't that we couldn't get it, it was that the child care system itself—no one wanted to take on the liability or the responsibility of a child that was that sick.

The other thing is, in a lot of the grandfamilies that I work with, we are never told of what our options are. We are not told that this is available. Like in the beginning, my husband and I were not told about TANF. So to know that there is also childcare available under TANF would be a great help for a lot of the families. They don't know it exists.

But we are also talking about 70 and 80-year-olds who have retired and are at home, so they don't really, like, need the childcare. But it is very essential to the caregiver to also have some time, or what we call, like, respite in order for them to get together and refocus in order to care for the children.

As a grandfamily member myself, my goal was always to make it better for my grandchildren, even supporting them no matter which way it took, including depleting our finances.

Ms. CHU. Well, thank you for that.

And we know that the overwhelming majority of TANF recipients are children. That is, child-only cases in which only the child receives benefits, and not any of the adults in the household. And now we have a rising number of grandparent caregivers across the country. And in fact, grandparent households now make up a large share of child only TANF recipients. In your experience, would work requirements such as logging hours of community service or learning new skills for a minimum wage impact your ability to care for your loved ones?

Ms. GRAY. Yes. So for me it would have, because what her medical needs were, my day was spent with cardiology, neurologists, ophthalmologists, infectious disease clinic. This is what we went through. And that is the reason I had to quit, because we couldn't find anyone to care for her at those needs.

So when you are talking about an 80-year-old or a 70-year-old going back to work, we don't have employers that are trying to take in 70-year-olds to hire them. And there is a lot of things that they can do on community service. But for me, and I can only speak for me in this instance, it was hard for me to leave my granddaughter because of her medical issues. There was so much that needed to be done for her on a—daily.

Ms. CHU. Yes. Well, and then finally, let me ask about TANF and foster care. States that implemented full family TANF sanctions for lack of compliance with work requirements actually had an increase of 12.7 percent in children entering foster care.

Now, research shows that access to public benefit programs such as TANF are an important protective factor to keep kids out of the child welfare system and out of foster care. So, I am interested in your thoughts on how cash assistance through TANF can help keep families together and out of the foster care system. Can you share a little bit there?

Ms. GRAY. Yes, ma'am. So in Arizona they had limited the TANF to 24 months, and then down to 12 months. When a grandparent would go to apply for the TANF, they were told that the bio-

logical parents had used the allotted time. So in Arizona they called it the grandparent penalty.

At that point I went to speak to my legislators, and we were able to get that—what they called the grandparent penalty—removed, so that grandfamilies could access that money. It was really kind of tough and hard, because they look at a lot of things, but when they talk about situations they are not looking at the age of the families, and the grandparents are struggling.

Ms. CHU. Yes. But because of that you kept your children out of the foster care system.

Ms. GRAY. Yes.

Ms. CHU. Thank you. I yield back.

Ms. GRAY. Thank you.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you, Ms. Chu. I recognize Mrs. Steel of California.

Mrs. STEEL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, for this—hosting for this hearing, and thank you, all the witnesses, coming out, and this is very important meeting.

By empowering people and connecting them with employers, we are setting up our constituents and communities to be successful. This can be generational change.

When I was an Orange County Supervisor, I led the yearly job and hiring fair, and during the pandemic we still offered it, but virtually. I look forward to working with my colleagues to help people gain skills by updating WIOA, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and TANF.

I just want to ask a few questions to Ms. Francis.

In your testimony, you mentioned the 60 to 40 percentage of people who are ready to work and those with higher barriers to work. Would you share how you and your staff differentiate and approach ready-to-work individuals and higher barrier individuals?

And do you have examples of how your staff handles these higher-barrier cases, and how Federal law might be hindering their efforts?

Ms. FRANCIS. Thank you. Yes. So when a customer comes into our department, we do a full assessment. We assess them for all the needs of the family. We provide a two-gen approach: we are not just looking at the parent, we are looking at the entire family and their needs. And then the social worker will assess from that point what this customer needs for themselves and their family to be stable, because that is one of the main factors that is important, is stability of the family to be able to participate in the TANF program.

And so once they come in and they—we assess them, there are some, like I said before, who have a high school diploma. They might have some other skills, and they just need a step up, like we said, the trampoline. They need a step up in order to get—so we might connect them to trainings, we might connect them to the local community college and things of that nature, just to get a certification or something of that nature.

But then we have other ones who come in, and they are dealing with some amount of issues that are going on. So they might have mental health, they might be homeless, and things of that nature. And when we assess them, we partner with our community part-

ners to provide resources to that family—so the whole entire family, not just the person coming in and applying. And so that is the way that we are able to support the family.

And then we have a social worker who meets with them on a regular and consistent basis to make sure that they are reaching the goals that we have established on our agreement, and that we are providing support to them, as well.

Mrs. STEEL. And then could you share with the committee more about the work and partnership your office with NCW, North Carolina Works? How does this program connect with our WIOA outcome measurement?

Ms. FRANCIS. I would say that—and I apologize, I am not familiar with every component of your question, but I will say that we do partner with WIOA to assist our customers financially to be able to go through training programs.

So our vocational training—so we will send them through WIOA, they provide the funding, their support would connect them to a vocational training, and that is how we support our customers.

Mrs. STEEL. So you are assessing those people that they have ability to work—

Ms. FRANCIS. Yes.

Mrs. Steel.—and they have some problems that they try to advise them that—how are you going to fix it, and then they—you have training program to make them that they get trained and they are going to work.

Ms. FRANCIS. Yes.

Mrs. STEEL. Thank you.

Ms. FRANCIS. Thank you.

Mrs. STEEL. And Ms. Reynolds, are there states that are doing innovative programing with basic TANF assistance that you would point to as uniquely successful?

How could this be replicated in other states?

Ms. REYNOLDS. What I think has been most successful is when the Federal Government has said—given resources to states, and set expectations of the percentage of those resources that need to have rigorous evidence behind them that they work so we understand it is that service, it is that program that makes the difference, not some other economic condition going on. We have seen that with MIECHV, we have seen that with Families First legislation and some success there.

What I would say is, if we could look at the resources that states have and then disperse those resources to often times private providers across the state who have evidence-backed programs that we know work like Goodwill Excel centers, I think we would be making tremendous gains.

Mrs. STEEL. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, my time is up. I yield back.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you, Mrs. Steel. I recognize Mr. Smucker of Pennsylvania for five minutes.

Mr. SMUCKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss steps that we can take to improve TANF, and ensure that it is effective for supporting those that need it.

I want to first say thank you to each of you who, in different ways, are ensuring that you are helping those who need help in the

community. And I think we are all grateful to live in a country where there is a safety net, there is help for people who need it, and that people care enough about their neighbors to ensure that that is provided.

I do also want to say that, you know, I think we all believe that the best path out of poverty is a great-paying job, and a family-sustaining job. And that should be the goal of all of our programs. And I know that you all believe that, as well.

I was interested in some of the discussion. I think Ms. Francis and Ms. Reynolds sort of talked about some of this—in fact, probably all of my questions have already been touched on, but specifically how we can find the right balance between—you mentioned, Ms. Reynolds, case management.

I think it is really important that, at a local level, not only are case managers able to make the decisions that best channel the resources for a particular family or person in need, but also then that there is a coordination among various agencies or services that are available, and I am sure each of you are doing that.

But what is the right balance on that? Because on the other hand, you know, from the perspective of a policymaker at the Federal level, when dollars are going out to states we want to ensure that there is some accountability there. So, you know, for instance, we want—you know, we want connection with a job, but we also want the caseworker to not just be incentivized to find the first job—maybe we do, but really, we want a job that is family-sustaining. And so, it needs to be outcome-based, rather than just incentivized on process.

And so, you know, that idea of Federal accountability versus flexibility, what is the best balance? How can we think about that as we are reauthorizing or improving TANF?

Ms. REYNOLDS. Yes. So the way I would specifically answer that is I think intensive case management that is one part, like, connection, meeting today's needs, and the other part about goal planning for tomorrow and trampolining out of poverty has got to be the right balance.

The way I would encourage a drive to accountability is to measure what matters, and measure what you are saying, that a good-paying job—because you are right, that is the best anti-poverty strategy there is. But allow for time for it to get there.

One of our studies on Padua, Catholic Charities Fort Worth, the average amount of time it takes someone to go through that is about two to two-and-a-half years. It doesn't happen overnight. And so what we have to remember is that people who are trying to get out of poverty don't usually start at a place with a master's degree. Often times they are starting at a place where they are under-educated and need the skills to qualify for these wonderful jobs. And so giving that time is important.

I do want to also note, one of the great things about building evidence is you can also do some cost estimating to really understand the ROI of those particular services. And so in the case I just explained, the great thing is people who came into the program employed, eight years afterwards the cost to provide that service was made up for. For those who come into the program unemployed, five years after they complete the program it made up for it.

So often the return, the return on investment of these programs, can be strong. We just have to have a little longer vantage point.

Mr. SMUCKER. Thank you. And the other thing I just want to mention—and I only have a minute left—is also WIOA, or some were referring to it as the W-I-O-A, or the Workforce Innovation Opportunities Act. I also—I serve on the Education and Workforce Committee, as well. And reauthorization of WIOA is something that we hope to do this particular year—or session, at least. And there are some performance accountability indicators built into WIOA that I think there ought to be, you know, maybe something, some kind of interconnectivity between the two.

And so, you know, I don't know if anybody would want to speak to that. For instance, there is an indicator of effectiveness track if WIOA is meeting the critical workforce needs of the business community by measuring retention with the same employer. There are other measures which address WIOA's efforts to provide quality services to all employers and sectors within a state, local economy.

What would be the impact if we took some of those same methods or measures and apply them to TANF?

You know, would this—you know, could we learn from that, and could we tie them together in a way to hold states accountable?

Mr. MAAS. I mean, Representative, I love where your head is at, and I appreciate you looking at WIOA reauthorization. We are hopeful that you get something done, too, this year.

You know, for me, it is—it works well for our state, because our business solutions team is working with both TANF recipients and Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act recipients. So it makes a lot of sense, from our standpoint, to use those measures. It is a little easier for our state, then, right?

The challenges with other states is you might have multiple people all reaching out to employers saying, "Hey, I have this person, let me help you, you know, get them placed, and I have other resources to help offset with on-the-job training and other tools." The challenge with some of those business metrics, too, is there is no dedicated funding stream for business solutions, either.

So, you know, I think, when I look at some of those key metrics that we want to track, it is the credential rate, it is entered employment rate, and ultimately, it is earnings, right? We want these people to have good jobs, and jobs that are going to sustain their family and be self-sustaining and break the generational cycle of poverty.

And so I think, ultimately, you know, it comes down to some of those job metrics. But I truly appreciate where your head is at, and willingness to serve on both of these committees.

Mr. SMUCKER. Yes, thank you. I know I am out of time, and I appreciate the chairman—the time, but hope to continue to have those discussions going forward.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you, Mr. Smucker. I recognize Ms. Moore of Wisconsin.

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, and I just really appreciate everything that the witnesses have said today.

I would be so very easy to just say amen and yield back, because I agree with many of the things that you all have said. [Laughter.]

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. My time is limited, so just let me get straight into things.

First of all, I just want to respond, Mr. Chairman, to some of the things that I have heard you say, and the chairman of the full committee say, and just sort of set the record straight on a couple of things.

First, it is sort of the misnamed nature of this committee, that somehow restoring the work requirements are going to lift people out of poverty. I didn't hear a single one of these witnesses affirm that. They, in fact, have talked about the many barriers that they have, and the structure of the program being such that it doesn't enable people to get out of poverty.

Mr. Davis made a point earlier that I just think is worth reiterating, as 77 percent of the people who are under the TANF program now are children, and 68 percent of those are under the age of 12. So, I don't know who it is we are imposing these work requirements on.

We have heard testimony from all of our witnesses here, I think from Ms. Francis, that some of the countable activities that might help people get out of poverty activities, you know, like being able to go to the local vocational school to maybe become an LPN or something.

If that took you two years, Ms. Reynolds and Ms. Francis, would that be allowed under the current TANF rules? No, it would not. And that would certainly be an activity that would help you trampoline out of poverty, to get a credential or certification, as Mr. Maas sort of indicated here.

I have heard you talk about the case management and, Ms. Francis, you have social workers, people with MSWs? I don't know how that is scalable with the—you know, unless you use resources from your own state with the TANF dollars. It just is not feasible to give the whole population that kind of life coach helping them get in school and make sure they get their degree. And I don't see that as really being the case.

I think it is more in line with what Mr. Collins has shared with us, and that is simply that states have flexibility to do what they want to do with the money. And instead of giving that kind of wrap around support, they give themselves bonuses, they give themselves a higher pay, they build—and, I don't know why people are ragging on poor Brett Favre. I mean, he is not the only person who did that. You know, he does not deserve to be ragged on like that.

I have had communities in my district where they did, underground improvements for luxury apartments with TANF dollars. And so, I think that there is a disincentive in this program to actually help the people, because private agencies can use the money as they want.

We don't allow people to get education and training. I was there at the scene of the crime in Wisconsin, when they ended welfare as we know it. And I know that 10,000 women dropped out of school the day we passed it.

Okay. So, forget about helping lift people out of poverty through education. You know, quite frankly, the 11 million jobs that are open, let me just tell you something. I only have 57 seconds. Let me tell you a little story. The last time I was arrested, I was ar-

rested for protesting for a \$15-an-hour wage. And then after that I went to sit with the good old boys on the south side of my district, and they said, "Congresswoman, we don't—you know, with all due respect, we ain't going to work for no \$15 an hour. We got car notes, house mortgages, kids in college. We are not going to do that."

In order to qualify for TANF, you have to make something like 50 percent under minimum wage. You could work for \$7.25 an hour, 52 weeks a year, 40 hours a week, and that would disqualify you to get Medicaid in my state. There is no incentive to—what is the incentive to work, if all it does is create a situation where you are ineligible for support?

So, this program only works for those people that we supply and provide the low-wage workforce with its essential workers, employers that—their business plan relies on part-time people, people who—they can give them any kind of schedule they want, you work 4 hours today, 12 tomorrow. It incurs no cost for the business. They will take minimum wage, any old job.

I can tell you we should do what Bill Clinton said we should do, and that is we should end welfare as we know it. We should do that, people. We should give people the Child Tax Credit. These witnesses have already told you. This woman here says she is an expert at Notre Dame. When you give people money, most of them will figure out how to take care of their kids.

I want to—my time is expired, and I know you are going to gavel me. I don't get the magic minutes here. So, I want to put some things in the record without objection, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Gray, before I go, I just want to look at this application that you claim you had to fill out—and put this in the record—for you to get assistance, and just ask you a couple of real quick questions. You had this 30-page Arizona Department of Economic Security to fill out, and you had to have court-ordered child support paid, turn that over to them, child—adult dependent care expenses, medical expenses, what your mortgage payments were, your utilities, and other housing costs. Is that true?

Ms. GRAY. Yes.

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. All right. So, I want to put this in the record, without objection.

Chairman LAHOOD. Without objection, it is entered into the record.

[The information follows:]

Arizona Department of Economic Security/Family Assistance Administration (DES/FAA)
Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS)

Application for Benefits

Tear off and keep pages A through H for your records.

What is this application for?

Use this application to see if you and members of your household qualify for:

- Free or low-cost insurance from AHCCCS
- Help with your Medicare costs
- Nutrition Assistance
- Cash Assistance/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Tuberculosis Control
- A new tax credit that can help pay your health insurance premiums

See page B for a description of each program.

Who can use this application?

An application may be completed by you or anyone you choose who knows or can get the information needed to complete the application for you and your household members. You can use this application to apply for anyone in your household, even if they already have benefits, including health insurance.

Your household includes:

- Your spouse, if married
- Your children under age 22 who live with you
- Your partner who lives with you (but only if you have a child together who needs health insurance or Cash Assistance)
- People you claim on your income tax return even if they do not live with you
- Relatives in your care who are under the age of 19 and live with you
- People who you live with that purchase and prepare food with you

If you want to select a representative to complete your application, complete the Authorized Representative form on page 1 of the application.

Where else can I apply?

You can apply faster online at www.healtharizonaplus.gov.

You can also apply in person at any local Department of Economic Security (DES)/Family Assistance Administration (FAA) office.

You can find a list of local FAA offices at www.azdes.gov/faa or call our 24 hour Interactive Voice Response system at 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).

What information do I need to complete this application?

For everyone in your household, you may need:

- Birth dates
- Social Security numbers
- Employer and income information for everyone in your household
- Resources (e.g., bank account, cash, property)
- Expenses
- Information for any current health insurance
- Information about any job-related health insurance available to members of your household
- Other information needed to complete your application

Note: You can file an application with only your name, address, and the signature of a responsible household member or your authorized representative. This will hold your date of application but eligibility cannot be determined until you complete a full application and an interview, if needed.

Why do we ask for so much information?

We ask about income and other information to make sure you and members of your household get the correct benefits for your household.

We will keep all information you provide private, as required by law.

What happens next?

Send your completed, signed application to the address on Page 17 or take it to your local DES office. If you do not have all of the information available, you can still submit your application and we will help you get the rest of the information.

What if I need help?

If you need help filling out this application, please tell us. If you need a language interpreter or accommodations for a disability, please check the kind of help you need on page 1 of the application.

Online: www.healtharizonaplus.gov





Phone: 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587)

In person: Visit www.azdes.gov/faa to find the office closest to you.


Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healtharizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).

Program Information:

You can use this application to apply for one or more programs. Each program has a symbol. On the application, look for the symbol for the program(s) you want to apply for and answer those questions. These are the symbols you will see on this application:

-  = Health Insurance Costs (AHCCCS Medical Assistance, Medicare Savings Program, Tax Credits)
-  = Nutrition Assistance
-  = Cash Assistance
-  = Tuberculosis Control

What is AHCCCS Medical Assistance?

-  AHCCCS stands for Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System, and it is the State of Arizona's Medicaid program. AHCCCS can provide medical benefits and help with Medicare costs to Arizona residents who meet certain income and other eligibility standards.


AHCCCS Medical Assistance covers the following medical services:

- Prescription Medication*
- Doctor's Office Visits**
- Laboratory and X-ray Services
- Hospital Services
- Dialysis
- Medical Supplies
- Medically Necessary Transportation
- Medically Necessary Specialist Care
- Behavioral Health Care
- Immunizations (shots)
- Chemotherapy
- Emergency Medical Care
- Rehabilitation Services
- 90 days of nursing care services


* AHCCCS prescription coverage is limited for people who have Medicare.

** Wellness visits for people age 21 and over are not covered.


What is Medicare Savings Program?

-  Medicare Savings Program may pay:
 - Medicare Part A premium
 - Medicare deductibles and copayments
 - Medicare Part B premium
 - Automatic Extra Help for Medicare Part D prescription expenses


What are Nutrition Assistance benefits?

-  Nutrition Assistance benefits help low-income families or individuals buy food for a healthier diet. If you have little or no money, you may be eligible for Emergency Nutrition Assistance benefits. Be sure to answer the Emergency Nutrition Assistance benefits questions on page 2 of this application.


What is Cash Assistance?

-  Cash Assistance gives temporary cash benefits to low income families. Parents or relatives of dependent children who are in their care may be eligible. Some families may qualify for a one-time lump sum cash assistance payment. We will determine if you qualify for this payment option.

What is Tuberculosis Control?

-  Tuberculosis Control gives cash support to individuals who are determined unable to work by the Department of Health Services as a result of communicable Tuberculosis.

What if I am not eligible for AHCCCS Medical Assistance?

-  If you are not eligible for AHCCCS Medical Assistance, you may be eligible for federal tax credits to help with your health insurance premiums. If you are not eligible for any programs through AHCCCS, we will send your information to the federal Health Insurance Marketplace to see about health insurance tax credits.

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healtharizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).

How does AHCCCS Medical Assistance work?



If you are approved for AHCCCS Medical Assistance, you will receive your health care from an AHCCCS health plan unless:

- You are American Indian and you choose American Indian Health Program as your health plan.
- You are just asking for help with your Medicare costs. If you are approved for one of the Medicare Savings Programs (QMB), AHCCCS may pay your Medicare premiums and Medicare coinsurance and deductibles.
- AHCCCS can only pay for your emergency services because of your status with United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). If you are approved for emergency services only, you may receive medical services from any provider (doctor, hospital, etc.) that has an agreement to bill AHCCCS for covered emergency services.

How much does AHCCCS Medical Assistance cost?



Premiums:

- Most people do not have to pay a monthly premium for AHCCCS Medical Assistance.
- Some people with income too high to qualify for AHCCCS Medical Assistance with no monthly premium may be able to get it by paying a monthly premium. If you have to pay a premium, the premium amounts are:
 - \$10 to \$35 for customers on the Freedom to Work program.
 - \$10 to \$70 for customers on the KidsCare program.

Co-payments:

A co-payment is the amount you pay a health care provider when you receive a medical service. Your co-payment amount will vary depending on which AHCCCS program you are enrolled in and the services you need. For some AHCCCS programs, the provider can deny services if the co-payments are not made. Co-payments for services are:

- \$2.30 to \$10.00 for prescriptions
- \$0 to \$30.00 for non-emergency use of an emergency room
- \$3.40 to \$5.00 for outpatient visits for evaluation and management services including doctor's office visits
- \$2.30 to \$3.00 for physical, occupational or speech therapy

Remember to report any changes in income because this may change your co-payment amount.

The following people are never asked to pay co-payments:

- Children under age 19
- People determined to be Seriously Mentally Ill (SMI) by the Arizona Department of Health Services
- Individuals through age 20 eligible to receive services from the Children's Rehabilitative Services (CRS) program
- People who are temporarily residing in nursing homes or residential facilities such as an Assisted Living Home and only when the acute care member's medical condition would otherwise require hospitalization. The exemption from co-payments is limited to 90 days in a contract year
- People who receive hospice care

Co-payments are never charged for the following services for anyone:

- | | | |
|--|--|----------------------------|
| • Hospitalizations | • Emergency services | • Family planning services |
| • Services paid on a fee-for-service basis | • Pregnancy related health care including tobacco cessation for pregnant women | |

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healtharizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).

Do I need a Social Security number?



Federal law requires you give a Social Security number (SSN) for anyone who wants to get AHCCCS Medical Assistance, help with Medicare costs, Nutrition Assistance, Cash Assistance, and/or Tuberculosis Control (42 U.S.C. § 1320b-7; 42 U.S.C. § 405(c)(2)(C), 7 U.S.C. §§ 2011-2036, and Social Security Act (SSA) of 1935 (Section 1137) as amended by P.L. 98-369).

- If you or anyone you are applying for does not have a Social Security number, we will refer you to the Social Security office to apply for one. Immigrants who are not legally able to get a Social Security number are not required to give one or apply for one. Any person you are applying for who is legally able to get a Social Security number but does not have one or does not apply for one will not be eligible for benefits.
- If you are not applying for benefits for yourself, you do not have to give us your Social Security number. However, it may reduce the total amount of Nutrition Assistance and/or Cash Assistance benefits for the person you are applying for because we will not include you in the benefit amount.
- We will not use your SSN as your DES or AHCCCS identification number.
- We will not give any Social Security numbers to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

We use your information, including Social Security number, to:

- Verify identity
- Verify citizenship and immigration status
- Verify income and resources
- Prevent duplicate benefits
- Establish and enforce child support
- Computer match with state, local and federal agencies and our other programs to verify information
- Collect money we overpaid you in the form of benefits
- Share with other government agencies and their contractors to assess Nutrition Assistance and/or Cash Assistance program management and compliance
- We may give your information to law enforcement officials for the purpose of arresting persons fleeing to avoid the law

If we are not able to find proof of the information you have given us through the sources available to us, then you must provide proof of the information for us to decide if you are eligible.

DES and/or AHCCCS will keep your information for at least 7 years.

Do I have to give information about my citizenship and immigration status?



- To get the most help, you need to give us information about citizenship and immigration status for each person who is applying for help.
- Giving us the citizenship and immigration status for all people who are eligible for benefits allows us to include them in the Nutrition Assistance and/or Cash Assistance benefit amount. When you do not give us this information, it will not affect the eligibility of the people you are applying for who have given us verification of their citizenship or qualified non-citizen status, but it may affect the amount of the benefits for these people.
- If you choose not to give us information regarding immigration status but still want AHCCCS Medical Assistance, you may only be eligible for emergency medical services.
- You do not need to give us information about citizenship and immigration status for any person who is not applying.
- You do need to give us information on income, resources, or other information for those who have not given us citizenship or immigration status information to complete the application process.
- Under federal law, certain non-citizens such as refugees or political asylees may qualify for Medical Assistance, Nutrition Assistance, and/or Cash Assistance. For those non-citizens, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) guidelines state that use of these benefits will not affect your ability to become a Lawful Permanent Resident.
- If you are not applying for any benefits or if you chose not to provide citizenship or immigration information, we will not try to find out this information from USCIS.
- We will not report you, a family, or a household member to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) unless you inform us that you, your family or a household member is in the U.S. illegally.
- Households with different immigration statuses may apply for benefits on behalf of US Citizen children and other eligible family members.

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healtharizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).

Will I have to do an interview?



When applying for AHCCCS Medical Assistance and/or help with Medicare costs, an interview is not needed. When applying for Nutrition Assistance, Cash Assistance, and/or Tuberculosis Control you or your representative must complete an interview in person or by phone. If you need special accommodations for an interview, please tell us on page 1 of the application so we can be ready for your interview.

How long does it take to find out if I am eligible for benefits after you receive my application?



For AHCCCS Medical Assistance and/or help with Medicare costs, we will make a decision within 45 days.

- If you are pregnant, we will make a decision within 20 days.
- If you need a disability determination report, we will make a decision within 90 days.



For Nutrition Assistance, we will make a decision within 30 days.
• If you are eligible for Emergency Nutrition Assistance, we will make a decision within 7 days.



For Cash Assistance, we will make a decision within 45 days.
• If you are a relative or legal guardian applying only for children who are not your own, we will determine if the children qualify within 20 days.

How will I know if I am eligible?



- If you are approved for benefits, you will receive a letter explaining the benefits you are eligible for and the amount of benefits you will get.
- If you are denied, we will send you a letter explaining the reason for our decision.

How can I get my benefits when my application is approved?



If you are approved for AHCCCS Medical Assistance and/or help with Medicare costs, you will get an approval letter. You will get your AHCCCS ID card from your enrollment plan 10 to 14 business days after you get your approval letter. If you need medical services before you get your AHCCCS ID card, contact your enrollment plan.



- If you are approved for Nutrition Assistance, Cash Assistance, and/or Tuberculosis Control:
- You will get an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. This card works like a debit card. You will get a pamphlet with instructions on how to use your card.
 - Your benefits are put on your EBT card after approval. It can take up to 48 hours for the benefits to be available. You can call the Customer Service number on the back of the card to check the balance of your benefits.
 - If you are eligible for Emergency Nutrition Assistance, you may get an EBT card at your local DES/FAA office.
 - If you qualify for Nutrition Assistance benefits, you can use the EBT card to buy approved food items. If you qualify for Cash Assistance benefits, you can use your EBT card to get cash or buy non-food items at any store where EBT cards are accepted. You may also withdraw your Cash Assistance benefits at ATMs, but there may be a fee.

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healtharizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).

What is expected of me?



For all programs:

- You must provide DES and/or AHCCCS with the needed information to correctly determine your eligibility and authorize DES and/or AHCCCS to investigate and contact any sources necessary to confirm the accuracy of the information for your eligibility.
- If you are approved for benefits, you will get a letter telling you what changes you must report. You MUST report your changes timely.

Program-specific expectations:

If applying for help with AHCCCS Medical Assistance, help with Medicare costs, and/or Cash Assistance, you must take necessary steps to obtain any annuities, pensions, retirement and disability benefits to which you may be entitled, including, but not limited to, Social Security benefits, Railroad retirement, Veterans benefits and unemployment compensation.



For AHCCCS Medical Assistance and/or Cash Assistance, you must give us any information you have about an absent parent. If you have reason for not providing this information (such as adoption pending, abuse, incest, neglect, etc.) you may claim good cause. You must cooperate with the Division of Child Support Services (DCSS) to establish paternity, unless you can prove good cause.



All adult household members and minor parents who are eligible for Nutrition Assistance and/or Cash Assistance benefits must be fingerprint imaged. Exceptions may apply.



For Nutrition Assistance and/or Cash Assistance you must tell us and provide proof to receive deductions, for the following expenses: court ordered child support paid, child/adult dependent care expenses, medical expenses, transportation costs to and from the provider of medical care or daily care of a child/adult dependent, rent or mortgage payments, utility or other shelter costs.

What are my rights?



You have the RIGHT to:

- Courteous and professional treatment.
- Be treated fairly and equally regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, or political beliefs.
- Apply for benefits and be given a letter that tells you if you are eligible or not, and/or get a letter before your benefits are reduced or stopped.
- Review DES and AHCCCS policy manuals that show the rules and regulations of AHCCCS Medical Assistance, Medicare Savings Program, Nutrition Assistance, Cash Assistance, and Tuberculosis Control if you want to know the reason for our decision.
- Talk about your case with a worker or supervisor.
- Have all information you give regarding your eligibility kept private according to state and federal law.
- Ask for a fair hearing if you disagree with your application being denied, your benefits ended, or are being reduced, or if a decision is not made on your application within the allowable number of days and the delay is due to DES or AHCCCS.
- Look at your file before a fair hearing.
- Bring an attorney or any other person to a fair hearing.
- You have the right to file for Nutrition Assistance benefits separately or at the same time you apply for other programs listed on the application. All Nutrition Assistance applications, regardless of whether they are joint applications or separate applications, must be processed for Nutrition Assistance purposes in accordance with procedural, timeliness, notice and fair hearing requirements. No household shall have its Nutrition Assistance benefits denied solely on the basis that another program applied for has been denied. A separate determination for Nutrition Assistance must be completed. When another program that is applied for is denied a new application for Nutrition Assistance shall not be required. Eligibility shall be determined based on Nutrition Assistance processing time frames from the date the joint application was initially accepted by the State agency.

To file a discrimination complaint, contact:

U.S. Department of Health and Human
Services Director, Office for Civil Rights
Room 515-F
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

1-202-619-0403 (voice)
1-800-537-7697 (TTY)

For help filling out the form, you may call:
1-866-632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service)
1-800-877-8339 (Local or Federal relay)
1-866-377-8642 (Relay voice users)

Form:

http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Director, Office of Adjudication
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-9410

Fax: 1-202-690-7442

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healthearizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).

What are the Rules and Penalties?



If you, your representative, or any household member hides information or gives false information on purpose to get or continue to get Nutrition Assistance and/or Cash Assistance benefits that you are not entitled to, that person will be subject to:

- Criminal Prosecution
- Fines
- Imprisonment
- Other penalties provided for by state and federal laws

If you get Nutrition Assistance and/or Cash Assistance, you must follow the rules below:

- Do not make false statements or hide information. If you are not truthful, you may have to pay back DES for benefits you receive and you may be taken to court.
- Do not do anything dishonest to get benefits that you are not supposed to get.
- Do not buy, sell, trade, exchange or otherwise transfer your or someone else's Nutrition Assistance benefits or EBT card.
- Do not buy containers with deposits for the purpose of discarding the product and returning the containers to get cash refund deposits.
- Do not sell products bought with Nutrition Assistance benefits to exchange them for cash or items other than eligible food.
- Do not buy products originally bought with Nutrition Assistance benefits to exchange those products for cash or items other than eligible food.
- Do not steal Nutrition Assistance or Cash Assistance benefits.
- Do not use your Nutrition Assistance benefits to buy non-food items such as alcohol and tobacco.
- Do not alter an EBT card.
- Do not use someone else's EBT card unless you are an authorized user approved by DES.

If you knowingly break the rules and get Nutrition Assistance and/or Cash Assistance benefits, we will disqualify you from getting benefits for:

- 12 months for the first violation
- 24 months for the second violation
- Permanently for the third violation

You or a household member will not be eligible to get Nutrition Assistance and/or Cash Assistance benefits if you or the household member:

- Is a fleeing felon or probation/parole violator.
- Has been convicted of using or getting Nutrition Assistance benefits in a transaction involving the sale of firearms, ammunition or explosives. This person can never get Nutrition Assistance benefits again.
- Has been found guilty of using or getting Nutrition Assistance benefits in a transaction involving the sale of a controlled substance. This person is not eligible to get Nutrition Assistance benefits for 2 years for the first violation and permanently for the second violation.
- Has committed and was convicted of a federal or state felony on or after August 23, 1996 for the possession, use or distribution of a controlled substance.
- Has been found by a court of law to have given false identification or residence information in order to get benefits in more than one case. This person is not eligible to get benefits for 10 years.
- Refuses to sign and comply with the Personal Responsibility Agreement (PRA). We give you the PRA during the interview process.
- Is an adult recipient (18 years or older) of Cash Assistance when any of the following apply:
 - The recipient does not return the completed Illegal Drug Use Statement. We send the Illegal Drug Use Statement by U.S. Mail after Cash Assistance has been approved.
 - The recipient fails to take a required drug test.
 - The recipient fails the drug test.

You must pay DES back for any Nutrition Assistance and/or Cash Assistance benefits you received for which your household was not eligible. You can make a repayment agreement. If you do not keep your repayment agreement, we may reduce your Nutrition Assistance and/or Cash Assistance benefits, take your income tax refunds, or take other legal action, including taking the amounts from your earnings.



The following additional penalties apply to the Nutrition Assistance Program:

- An additional disqualification, of up to 18 months, may be ordered by a court.
- Any participant or household member who makes false statements or hides information can be fined up to \$250,000.00, imprisoned for up to 20 years, or both.
- You and/or your household members may be subject to further prosecution under federal laws.

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healtharizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).

How to Choose an AHCCCS Health Care Plan:



You need to choose a health plan that services your county.

- All AHCCCS health plans provide the same covered medical services.
- Review the health plans for your county listed below. American Indians may choose American Indian Health Program or an AHCCCS health plan.
- Before you choose a plan, check with your doctor, pharmacy, or hospital to see if they work with the plan that you want. If you want more information about the doctors, specialists, or hospitals that work with a health plan that serves your county, call the number listed below for the health plan.

If you do not choose a health plan, one will be assigned to you. If you have been enrolled in an AHCCCS health plan within the past 90 days, you may be enrolled with your previous health plan.

Enter the health plan choice on this application.

APACHE COUNTY

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan 1-800-348-4058
Health Choice Arizona..... 1-800-322-8670
American Indian Health Program 1-800-654-8713

If your zip code is 85943, you must choose from the health plans listed under Navajo County.

COCHISE COUNTY

University Family Care 1-800-582-8686
UnitedHealthcare Community Plan 1-800-348-4058
American Indian Health Program 1-800-654-8713

COCONINO COUNTY

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan 1-800-348-4058
Health Choice Arizona..... 1-800-322-8670
American Indian Health Program 1-800-654-8713

If your zip code is 86336 or 86340, you must choose from the health plans listed under Yavapai County.

GILA COUNTY

Health Choice Arizona..... 1-800-322-8670
University Family Care 1-800-582-8686
American Indian Health Program 1-800-654-8713

GRAHAM COUNTY

University Family Care 1-800-582-8686
UnitedHealthcare Community Plan 1-800-348-4058
American Indian Health Program 1-800-654-8713

If your zip code is 85843, you must choose from the health plans listed under Cochise County.

GREENLEE COUNTY

University Family Care 1-800-582-8686
UnitedHealthcare Community Plan 1-800-348-4058
American Indian Health Program 1-800-654-8713

LA PAZ COUNTY

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan 1-800-348-4058
University Family Care 1-800-582-8686
American Indian Health Program 1-800-654-8713

MARICOPA COUNTY

Health Net of Arizona 1-888-788-4408
Care 1st Arizona..... 1-866-560-4042
Health Choice Arizona..... 1-800-322-8670
UnitedHealthcare Community Plan 1-800-348-4058
Mercy Care Plan..... 1-800-624-3879
Maricopa Health Plan 1-800-582-8686
American Indian Health Program 602-417-4000

MOHAVE COUNTY

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan 1-800-348-4058
Health Choice Arizona..... 1-800-322-8670
American Indian Health Program 1-800-654-8713

If your zip code is 86434, you must choose from the health plans listed under Yavapai County.

NAVAJO COUNTY

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan 1-800-348-4058
Health Choice Arizona 1-800-322-8670
American Indian Health Program 1-800-654-8713

PIMA COUNTY

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan 1-800-348-4058
Health Choice Arizona 1-800-322-8670
Care 1st Arizona..... 1-866-560-4042
University Family Care 1-800-582-8686
Mercy Care Plan..... 1-800-624-3879
American Indian Health Program 1-800-654-8713

If your zip code is 85645, you must choose from the health plans listed under Santa Cruz County.

PINAL COUNTY

Health Choice Arizona 1-800-322-8670
University Family Care 1-800-582-8686
American Indian Health Program 1-800-654-8713

If your zip code is 85242 or 85220, you must choose from the health plans listed under Maricopa County.

If your zip code is 85292 you must choose from the health plans listed under Gila County.

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

University Family Care 1-800-582-8686
UnitedHealthcare Community Plan 1-800-348-4058
American Indian Health Service 1-800-654-8713

YAVAPAI COUNTY

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan 1-800-348-4058
University Family Care 1-800-582-8686
American Indian Health Program 1-800-654-8713

If your zip code is 85342, 85358 or 85390, you must choose from the health plans listed under Maricopa County.

If your zip code is 86351 you must choose from the health plans listed under Coconino County.

YUMA COUNTY

UnitedHealthcare Community Plan 1-800-348-4058
University Family Care 1-800-582-8686
American Indian Health Program 1-800-654-8713

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healtharizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).

Arizona Department of Economic Security Family Assistance Administration (DES/FAA)
Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS)

For Agency Use Only

Date:

Group Number:


Application for Benefits

Contact Information:

 Tell us how we can contact an adult member of your household.

Name (First, Middle, Last): _____	
Home Address: _____ Apt. #: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____	
Mailing Address (if different): _____ Apt. #: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____	
Do you live in a shelter? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If 'Yes,' what kind of shelter? _____	
Phone Number: _____	This number is: <input type="checkbox"/> Home <input type="checkbox"/> Cell <input type="checkbox"/> Work <input type="checkbox"/> Message <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
Other Phone Number: _____	This number is: <input type="checkbox"/> Home <input type="checkbox"/> Cell <input type="checkbox"/> Work <input type="checkbox"/> Message <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
What is the preferred SPOKEN household language? <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
What is the preferred WRITTEN household language? <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
I would like to get information about this application by:	
Email: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Email address: _____
Text: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Number to text (standard text rates apply): _____	
If 'Yes' is not marked for Email or Text, all information for this application will be sent via U.S. Mail to the mailing address provided.	
I need the following help with this application (check all that apply):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Reading/understanding this application	<input type="checkbox"/> Filling out this application <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> American Sign Language	<input type="checkbox"/> Braille <input type="checkbox"/> Language Interpreter Language: _____
I need the following accommodations for this application (check all that apply):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Hearing <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking <input type="checkbox"/> Seeing <input type="checkbox"/> Writing <input type="checkbox"/> Walking <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	

Authorized Representative:

 This section is OPTIONAL. You may authorize someone else to represent you in the application process. DES and/or AHCCCS cannot release any information about your eligibility without your written consent.

Representative's Name: _____ Is representative your legal guardian? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Representative's Mailing Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____	
Representative's Phone Number: _____ This number is: <input type="checkbox"/> Home <input type="checkbox"/> Cell <input type="checkbox"/> Work <input type="checkbox"/> Message <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
Representative's Other Phone Number: _____ This number is: <input type="checkbox"/> Home <input type="checkbox"/> Cell <input type="checkbox"/> Work <input type="checkbox"/> Message <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
What is the representative's preferred SPOKEN language? <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
What is the representative's preferred WRITTEN language? <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
My representative would like to get information about this application by:	
Email: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Email address: _____
Text: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Number to text (standard text rates apply): _____	
If 'Yes' is not marked for Email or Text, all information for this application will be sent via U.S. Mail to the mailing address provided.	
By signing below, I, the customer, give permission for the person listed above as my representative to act on my behalf in the process of qualifying me for help with insurance costs, help with Medicare costs, Nutrition Assistance, Cash Assistance, and/or Tuberculosis Control. I, therefore:	By signing below, I, the representative, agree to act on the customer's behalf. I also agree to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give permission for my representative to complete and sign my application. Give permission for my representative to provide any documents requested, including personal information. Give permission to my representative to sign on my behalf to permit other people, businesses, or agencies to give personal information about me to DES and/or AHCCCS, including protected health information needed to determine if I am disabled. Agree to give information about my personal circumstances to my representative. Agree to allow my representative to assign all my rights to medical reimbursement claims to AHCCCS on my behalf. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide only truthful and complete information under penalty of perjury. Fill in and sign needed forms. Obtain and give to DES and/or AHCCCS all information needed to determine if the customer can qualify for help with healthcare costs, help with Medicare costs, Nutrition Assistance, Cash Assistance, and/or Tuberculosis Control, such as the customer's Social Security number, income, assets, citizenship, residency, medical insurance, and information about the customer's spouse, minor children, and parents (if the customer is a minor child). Tell DES and/or AHCCCS right away if the customer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has an increase or decrease in income; Has an increase or decrease in assets; Changes ownership of assets, including opening or closing financial accounts; Has a change in address; or Has a change in health insurance or the amount of premiums paid.
If I am determined eligible, this authorization will stay in effect until I or my representative tells you to stop it. This authorization will expire when my application for assistance is withdrawn or denied, or when my eligibility ends. However, this authorization will continue during any time while I am contesting my eligibility in an administrative hearing or court proceeding.	
Signature of Applicant: _____	Signature of Representative: _____
Date: _____	Date: _____

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healthearizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).

Release of Information to Hospitals/Hospital Agents/Organizations/Agencies:

You may give permission to DES and AHCCCS to release information about applicant eligibility. AHCCCS and DES cannot share any information about applicants without the applicant's written permission. This section is OPTIONAL.

Name of Hospital/Hospital's Agent/Organization/Agency: _____			
Contact Person: _____		Phone Number: _____	
Mailing Address: _____		City: _____	State: _____ Zip Code: _____
I give permission for DES and/or AHCCCS staff to tell the hospital, hospital agent, organization, or agency listed above: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That I have applied for help with insurance costs; • The information or proof needed to see if I can get help with insurance costs; and • If approved for help with insurance costs, the effective date of my eligibility, the redetermination due date, and the category of assistance for which I was approved. If denied for help with insurance costs, the reason I was denied. 			
Signature of Applicant: _____		Date: _____	

Access to Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Account:



This section is OPTIONAL. If you are applying for Nutrition Assistance, Cash Assistance, and/or Tuberculosis Control, you may choose a person, called an Alternate Cardholder, to get your benefits for you. If you need an Alternate Cardholder, choose a person you trust. Remember, lost or stolen benefits will not be replaced.

EBT Representative's Name: _____		EBT Representative's Date of Birth: _____	
EBT Representative's Mailing Address: _____		City: _____	State: _____ Zip Code: _____
EBT Representative's Phone Number: _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Home <input type="checkbox"/> Cell <input type="checkbox"/> Work <input type="checkbox"/> Message <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
EBT Representative's Other Phone Number: _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Home <input type="checkbox"/> Cell <input type="checkbox"/> Work <input type="checkbox"/> Message <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
Signature of Applicant: _____		Date: _____	

Someone Who Knows You Well:



We often need to contact people or organizations that can verify information to determine your eligibility for public assistance. When we contact these people or organizations we tell them your name, our title and that we work for the Department of Economic Security (DES). We are prohibited by law from telling them anything about you or about your assistance case. Please provide contact information below.

Name of someone who knows you well: _____		Relationship to you: _____	
Mailing Address: _____		City: _____	State: _____ Zip Code: _____
Daytime Phone Number: _____			
Name of Landlord: _____		Are you related to the Landlord? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, how? _____	
Mailing Address: _____		City: _____	State: _____ Zip Code: _____
Daytime Phone Number: _____			

Emergency Nutrition Assistance:



Is anyone in your household applying for Emergency Nutrition Assistance? If YES: fill out this section. If NO: go to page 3.

What is the total amount of income, before deductions, you expect to get this month?	\$ _____
What is the total amount of cash on hand and money in your checking and savings account?	\$ _____
What are the total monthly housing costs (rent or mortgage, taxes, homeowner/rental insurance, etc.)?	\$ _____
What are the total monthly utility costs (gas, electric, water, etc.)?	\$ _____
What is your monthly telephone cost?	\$ _____
Does anyone receive Tribal Food Distribution?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is anyone a migrant or seasonal farm worker?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Did anyone get Nutrition Assistance benefits from any other state?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
If Yes, who received? _____	When? _____ State: _____

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healtharizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).

Personal Information:



Tell us about each person in your household, starting with you. See page A for a definition of whom you must include. If you are a representative, tell us about who you are representing and others in the household.

Name Last, First M.I. (Include Maiden, Alias, Suffix and other names)	Applying for?					Relationship to Main Contact (1.) (spouse, child/step child, parent, grandchild, niece/ nephew, legal guardian, other (please describe))	Marital Status (never married, married, divorced, or widowed)	Date of Birth	Social Security Number (If not applying, optional)	Sex (Male or Female)
	Help with Health Insurance	Help with Medicare costs	Nutrition Assistance	Cash Assistance	Tuberculosis Control					
1.						Main Contact				
2.										
3.										
4.										
5.										
6.										



Citizenship: Complete ONLY for each person applying. If a person is not applying for benefits, skip this section for that person. For those applying, you may need to provide proof of citizenship.

Is the MAIN CONTACT a U.S. citizen or U.S. national? See page D for more information. ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Choose not to answer

If the MAIN CONTACT is NOT a U.S. citizen, what is his/her immigration status?

<input type="checkbox"/> Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR)	<input type="checkbox"/> Battered Spouse, Child or Parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Removal/Suspension of Deportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Lawful Temporary Resident	<input type="checkbox"/> Cuban-Haitian Entrant	<input type="checkbox"/> Registry Applicants
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Immigrant Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Deferred Action Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Applicant
<input type="checkbox"/> Asylee	<input type="checkbox"/> Deferred Enforced Departure	<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Protection Status (TPS)
<input type="checkbox"/> Refugee	<input type="checkbox"/> Legalization under LIFE Act	<input type="checkbox"/> Victim of Trafficking
<input type="checkbox"/> Conditional Entrant granted before 1980	<input type="checkbox"/> Legalization under IRCA Applicant	<input type="checkbox"/> Withholding of Deportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Order of Supervision	<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant for Asylum, LPR, TPS, or
<input type="checkbox"/> I do not want to provide	<input type="checkbox"/> Paroled into United States	Withholding Deportation

What immigration document does MAIN CONTACT have? Immigration Document Number: _____
☐ Permanent Resident card ☐ I-94 ☐ Visa Has MAIN CONTACT lived in the U.S. since August 22, 1996? ☐ Yes ☐
☐ Foreign Passport ☐ None ☐ Other: _____

Is PERSON 2 a U.S. citizen or U.S. national? See page D for more information. ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Choose not to answer

If PERSON 2 is NOT a U.S. citizen, what is his/her immigration status?

<input type="checkbox"/> Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR)	<input type="checkbox"/> Battered Spouse, Child and Parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Removal/Suspension of Deportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Lawful Temporary Resident	<input type="checkbox"/> Cuban-Haitian Entrant	<input type="checkbox"/> Registry Applicants
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Immigrant Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Deferred Action Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Applicant
<input type="checkbox"/> Asylee	<input type="checkbox"/> Deferred Enforced Departure	<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Protection Status (TPS)
<input type="checkbox"/> Refugee	<input type="checkbox"/> Legalization under LIFE Act	<input type="checkbox"/> Victim of Trafficking
<input type="checkbox"/> Conditional Entrant Granted before 1980	<input type="checkbox"/> Legalization under IRCA Applicant	<input type="checkbox"/> Withholding of Deportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Order of Supervision	<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant for Asylum, LPR, TPS, or
<input type="checkbox"/> I do not want to provide	<input type="checkbox"/> Paroled into United States	Withholding Deportation

What immigration document does PERSON 2 have? Immigration Document Number: _____
☐ Permanent Resident card ☐ I-94 ☐ Visa Has PERSON 2 lived in the U.S. since August 22, 1996? ☐ Yes ☐
☐ Foreign Passport ☐ None ☐ Other: _____

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healthearizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).

Is PERSON 3 a U.S. citizen or U.S. national? See page D for more information. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Choose not to answer		
If PERSON 3 is NOT a U.S. citizen, what is his/her immigration status?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR)	<input type="checkbox"/> Battered Spouse, Child or Parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Removal/Suspension of Deportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Lawful Temporary Resident	<input type="checkbox"/> Cuban-Haitian Entrant	<input type="checkbox"/> Registry Applicants
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Immigrant Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Deferred Action Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Applicant
<input type="checkbox"/> Asylee	<input type="checkbox"/> Deferred Enforced Departure	<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Protection Status (TPS)
<input type="checkbox"/> Refugee	<input type="checkbox"/> Legalization under LIFE Act	<input type="checkbox"/> Victim of Trafficking
<input type="checkbox"/> Conditional Entrant granted before 1980	<input type="checkbox"/> Legalization under IRCA Applicant	<input type="checkbox"/> Withholding of Deportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Order of Supervision	<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant for Asylum, LPR, TPS, or
<input type="checkbox"/> I do not want to provide	<input type="checkbox"/> Paroled into United States	<input type="checkbox"/> Withholding Deportation
What immigration document does PERSON 3 have?		Immigration Document Number: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Permanent Resident card	<input type="checkbox"/> I-94 <input type="checkbox"/> Visa	Has PERSON 3 lived in the U.S. since August 22, 1996? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Passport	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
Is PERSON 4 a U.S. citizen or U.S. national? See page D for more information. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Choose not to answer		
If PERSON 4 is NOT a U.S. citizen, what is his/her immigration status?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR)	<input type="checkbox"/> Battered Spouse, Child or Parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Removal/Suspension of Deportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Lawful Temporary Resident	<input type="checkbox"/> Cuban-Haitian Entrant	<input type="checkbox"/> Registry Applicants
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Immigrant Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Deferred Action Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Applicant
<input type="checkbox"/> Asylee	<input type="checkbox"/> Deferred Enforced Departure	<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Protection Status (TPS)
<input type="checkbox"/> Refugee	<input type="checkbox"/> Legalization under LIFE Act	<input type="checkbox"/> Victim of Trafficking
<input type="checkbox"/> Conditional Entrant granted before 1980	<input type="checkbox"/> Legalization under IRCA Applicant	<input type="checkbox"/> Withholding of Deportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Order of Supervision	<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant for Asylum, LPR, TPS, or
<input type="checkbox"/> I do not want to provide	<input type="checkbox"/> Paroled into United States	<input type="checkbox"/> Withholding Deportation
What immigration document does PERSON 4 have?		Immigration Document Number: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Permanent Resident card	<input type="checkbox"/> I-94 <input type="checkbox"/> Visa	Has PERSON 4 lived in the U.S. since August 22, 1996? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Passport	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
Is PERSON 5 a U.S. citizen or U.S. national? See page D for more information. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Choose not to answer		
If PERSON 5 is NOT a U.S. citizen, what is his/her immigration status?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR)	<input type="checkbox"/> Battered Spouse, Child or Parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Removal/Suspension of Deportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Lawful Temporary Resident	<input type="checkbox"/> Cuban-Haitian Entrant	<input type="checkbox"/> Registry Applicants
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Immigrant Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Deferred Action Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Applicant
<input type="checkbox"/> Asylee	<input type="checkbox"/> Deferred Enforced Departure	<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Protection Status (TPS)
<input type="checkbox"/> Refugee	<input type="checkbox"/> Legalization under LIFE Act	<input type="checkbox"/> Victim of Trafficking
<input type="checkbox"/> Conditional Entrant granted before 1980	<input type="checkbox"/> Legalization under IRCA Applicant	<input type="checkbox"/> Withholding of Deportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Order of Supervision	<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant for Asylum, LPR, TPS, or
<input type="checkbox"/> I do not want to provide	<input type="checkbox"/> Paroled into United States	<input type="checkbox"/> Withholding Deportation
What immigration document does PERSON 5 have?		Immigration Document Number: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Permanent Resident card	<input type="checkbox"/> I-94 <input type="checkbox"/> Visa	Has PERSON 5 lived in the U.S. since August 22, 1996? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Passport	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
Is PERSON 6 a U.S. citizen or U.S. national? See page D for more information. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Choose not to answer		
If PERSON 6 is NOT a U.S. citizen, what is his/her immigration status?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR)	<input type="checkbox"/> Battered Spouse, Child or Parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Removal/Suspension of Deportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Lawful Temporary Resident	<input type="checkbox"/> Cuban-Haitian Entrant	<input type="checkbox"/> Registry Applicants
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Immigrant Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Deferred Action Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Applicant
<input type="checkbox"/> Asylee	<input type="checkbox"/> Deferred Enforced Departure	<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Protection Status (TPS)
<input type="checkbox"/> Refugee	<input type="checkbox"/> Legalization under LIFE Act	<input type="checkbox"/> Victim of Trafficking
<input type="checkbox"/> Conditional Entrant granted before 1980	<input type="checkbox"/> Legalization under IRCA Applicant	<input type="checkbox"/> Withholding of Deportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Order of Supervision	<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant for Asylum, LPR, TPS, or
<input type="checkbox"/> I do not want to provide	<input type="checkbox"/> Paroled into United States	<input type="checkbox"/> Withholding Deportation
What immigration document does PERSON 6 have?		Immigration Document Number: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Permanent Resident card	<input type="checkbox"/> I-94 <input type="checkbox"/> Visa	Has PERSON 6 lived in the U.S. since August 22, 1996? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Passport	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healthearizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).



Federal Income Tax Filing: Tell us NEXT YEAR'S tax filing information for everyone applying

Main Contact	Plan to file Federal income tax return? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Filing Status: <input type="checkbox"/> Head of Household <input type="checkbox"/> Qualifying Widow(er) <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married-Filing Separate Return <input type="checkbox"/> Married-Filing Joint Return - spouse's name:	
	Will claim dependents on own tax return? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, list dependents' names:	Claimed as dependent on someone else's tax return? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, name of tax filer claiming this person:	
Person 2	Plan to file Federal income tax return? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Filing Status: <input type="checkbox"/> Head of Household <input type="checkbox"/> Qualifying Widow(er) <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married-Filing Separate Return <input type="checkbox"/> Married-Filing Joint Return - spouse's name:	
	Will claim dependents on own tax return? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, list dependents' names:	Claimed as dependent on someone else's tax return? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, name of tax filer claiming this person:	
Person 3	Plan to file Federal income tax return? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Filing Status: <input type="checkbox"/> Head of Household <input type="checkbox"/> Qualifying Widow(er) <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married-Filing Separate Return <input type="checkbox"/> Married-Filing Joint Return - spouse's name:	
	Will claim dependents on own tax return? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, list dependents' names:	Claimed as dependent on someone else's tax return? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, name of tax filer claiming this person:	
Person 4	Plan to file Federal income tax return? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Filing Status: <input type="checkbox"/> Head of Household <input type="checkbox"/> Qualifying Widow(er) <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married-Filing Separate Return <input type="checkbox"/> Married-Filing Joint Return - spouse's name:	
	Will claim dependents on own tax return? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, list dependents' names:	Claimed as dependent on someone else's tax return? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, name of tax filer claiming this person:	
Person 5	Plan to file Federal income tax return? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Filing Status: <input type="checkbox"/> Head of Household <input type="checkbox"/> Qualifying Widow(er) <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married-Filing Separate Return <input type="checkbox"/> Married-Filing Joint Return - spouse's name:	
	Will claim dependents on own tax return? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, list dependents' names:	Claimed as dependent on someone else's tax return? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, name of tax filer claiming this person:	
Person 6	Plan to file Federal income tax return? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Filing Status: <input type="checkbox"/> Head of Household <input type="checkbox"/> Qualifying Widow(er) <input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married-Filing Separate Return <input type="checkbox"/> Married-Filing Joint Return - spouse's name:	
	Will claim dependents on own tax return? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, list dependents' names:	Claimed as dependent on someone else's tax return? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, name of tax filer claiming this person:	



Food Preparation: Tell us how your household buys and prepares food.

Does anyone at your address buy and prepare his/her own food separate from others in the household? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, tell us about the people who buy and prepare their own food:

Name (First & Last):	Age:	Relationship to MAIN CONTACT:	Does this person pay expenses?	What expenses?
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healtharizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).



Prior Medical Expenses:

	Who?	Month(s)?
Does anyone applying for benefits also need help with medical bills in any of the last three months? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
Does anyone in this application have Medicare and want help paying their Medicare Part B premium for any of the last three months? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		



Temporary Absence: Tell us about any people who are temporarily living outside of your home that are expected to return.

Name (First and Last)	Date Left	Expected Return Date	Temporary Address	Why are they out of the home?



Residency for All Applicants: Tell us about residency. You may need to provide proof of residency.

Is each person applying for benefits a resident of Arizona? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If No, who is not? _____
Did any of the persons applying for benefits move to Arizona within the last four months? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____ Date moved: _____



Questions for All Applicants: Answer the following questions for anyone who is applying for benefits.

Is anyone applying for benefits currently in jail, prison or detention center? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____ Is this person currently serving a sentence based on being convicted of a crime? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Expected release date: _____
Has anyone applying for benefits been released from a jail, prison or detention center within the last four months? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____ Release date: _____

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.heathearizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).



Race/Ethnicity: Select one or more answers for each person applying for benefits (optional).

Race														If Hispanic/Latino, check ethnicity:									
Person	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian Indian	Black or African American	Chinese	Filipino	Guamanian or Chamorro	Japanese	Korean	Native Hawaiian	Other Asian	Other Pacific Islander	Samoan	Vietnamese	White	Mexican	Mexican American	Chicana/o	Puerto Rican	Cuban	Other			
Main Contact																							
Person 2																							
Person 3																							
Person 4																							
Person 5																							
Person 6																							

American Indian and Alaskan Native Persons: Complete this section if anyone applying is an American Indian or Alaska Native.

Person	Enrolled in Federally Recognized Tribe	Name of Tribe	Received services from • Indian Health Service; • a tribal health program; • urban health program; or • through a referral from one of these programs?	If no, is the person eligible to receive services?
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

Person	Living on a Reservation?	Name of Reservation	Tribal Census Number
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healtharizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).



Help with Health Insurance Costs, Help with Medicare Costs, and Cash Assistance

Questions: Complete this section for anyone who is applying for help with insurance costs and/or help with Medicare costs, and/or Cash Assistance.

Is anyone you are applying for pregnant?	Who?	Number of Babies Due	Expected Due Date
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			

For anyone applying under age 19, are both of his/her parents living in the home? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If No, complete the information below:

Child's Name	Parent's Name (First, Last)	Social Security Number	Date of Birth
	Mailing Address	City, State	Zip Code
	Phone Number:	Reason parent is absent: <input type="checkbox"/> Deceased <input type="checkbox"/> Out of Home	
Child's Name	Parent's Name (First, Last)	Social Security Number	Date of Birth
	Mailing Address	City, State	Zip Code
	Phone Number:	Reason parent is absent: <input type="checkbox"/> Deceased <input type="checkbox"/> Out of Home	
Child's Name	Parent's Name (First, Last)	Social Security Number	Date of Birth
	Mailing Address	City, State	Zip Code
	Phone Number:	Reason parent is absent: <input type="checkbox"/> Deceased <input type="checkbox"/> Out of Home	
Child's Name	Parent's Name (First, Last)	Social Security Number	Date of Birth
	Mailing Address	City, State	Zip Code
	Phone Number:	Reason parent is absent: <input type="checkbox"/> Deceased <input type="checkbox"/> Out of Home	


Has anyone ever received Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Who? _____
Does anyone have Medicare Coverage?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Who? _____ Medicare Claim or Railroad Retirement Number <input type="checkbox"/> Part A – Hospital Insurance <input type="checkbox"/> Part B – Medical Insurance <input type="checkbox"/> Part D – Prescription Drug Plan
		Who? _____ Medicare Claim or Railroad Retirement Number <input type="checkbox"/> Part A – Hospital Insurance <input type="checkbox"/> Part B – Medical Insurance <input type="checkbox"/> Part D – Prescription Drug Plan
		Who? _____ Medicare Claim or Railroad Retirement Number <input type="checkbox"/> Part A – Hospital Insurance <input type="checkbox"/> Part B – Medical Insurance <input type="checkbox"/> Part D – Prescription Drug Plan
		Who? _____ Medicare Claim or Railroad Retirement Number <input type="checkbox"/> Part A – Hospital Insurance <input type="checkbox"/> Part B – Medical Insurance <input type="checkbox"/> Part D – Prescription Drug Plan





Foster Care and Adult with Child: Answer the following questions for anyone who is applying for benefits.

Was anyone in Arizona Foster Care on his/her 18 th birthday?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Who? _____
Was anyone in Arizona Tribal Foster Care on his/her 18 th birthday?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Who? _____ What Tribe? _____
Does any adult live with at least one child under age 19 and is the main caretaker of the child?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Who? _____

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healthearizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).

 Potential Benefits: Tell us about everyone applying to help determine if he/she may be eligible for additional benefits.		
Has anyone you are applying for, their spouse or deceased spouse, worked for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A government agency • An employer with a pension plan? 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____ Employer name: _____ Dates of employment: _____
Is anyone you are applying for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person who served in the U.S. military, • The spouse of a person who served in the U.S. military, • The widow or widower of a person who served in the U.S. military, or • The child of a person who served in the U.S. military? 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, provide the following information: Veteran's Name: _____ Veteran's Social Security Number: _____ Service Serial Number: _____ Branch of service: _____ Veteran's Date of Birth: _____ VA Claim Number: _____ Dates of service: _____

 Expenses: Answer the following questions if anyone in your household is applying for Nutrition Assistance and/or Cash Assistance.		
Do you or anyone in your household pay for the care of a child or disabled adult in order to work, look for work, attend training school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, amount: \$ _____
Do you or anyone in your household have transportation costs to travel to/from the person or agency that provides after school care or adult daycare?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, amount: \$ _____
Do you or anyone in your household pay court-ordered child support?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who pays? _____ Amount paid: \$ _____ How often paid? _____

 **Employment:** Tell us about everyone's employment, including self-employment and rental income. You may need to provide proof of income. If self-employed, please attach the most current federal tax forms: 1040, SE and applicable schedules such as C, C-EZ, E, F and K1. If you do not have tax forms, attach proof of business income and expenses for at least the last and current calendar month.

Does ANYONE work?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, give employment information below:
Who	Employer's Name and Phone Number:	How often paid? Weekly, Biweekly, Semi Monthly, Monthly	Gross Earnings Per Pay check and date (before deductions):
			How many hours worked per week?
Did anyone leave a job in the last thirty (30) days?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____	
Is ANYONE self-employed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____ Type of work: _____ Annual gross income (before business expenses): \$ _____ Annual business expenses: \$ _____	
Has business been in existence for 12 months?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If No, date business started: _____	
Is more than one person self-employed?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____ Type of work: _____ Annual gross income (before business expenses): \$ _____ Annual business expenses: \$ _____	
Has business been in existence for 12 months?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If No, date business started: _____	

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healtharizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).



Other Income: Tell us about other income everyone receives. You may need to provide proof of income.

Type of Income:	Who Receives?	Amount	How often received?	Who pays the income?
Is anyone in the household an owner or member of a franchise, corporation or limited liability corporation?				
Social Security Benefits				
Supplemental Security Income (SSI Cash)				
Retirement/pension				
Unemployment				
Disability/worker's compensation				
Child Support <input type="checkbox"/> Court Ordered <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____				
Spousal Maintenance (Alimony)				
Veterans benefits				
Gifts, contributions or loans				
Tribal money <input type="checkbox"/> Gaming <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____				
Rental income				
Per capita payments from natural resources, usage rights, leases or royalties				
Payments from natural resources, farming, ranching, fishing, leases or royalties from Indian trust land				
Money from selling things that have cultural significance				
Other: _____				
Check here if no other income <input type="checkbox"/>				



Expected Income Changes:

In the next twelve (12) months, does anyone in the household expect income changes because of seasonal work or contract employment? Please tell us only about the changes that happen regularly.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If Yes, who? _____
	How many sources are expected to change? _____
	Name of sources _____
	Amount expected to make in the next 12 months \$ _____
Does anyone in the household expect changes in income for any other reason in the next twelve (12) months?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If Yes, who? _____ Please explain: _____



Allowed deductions from taxes/income: Tell us if anyone has the following expenses that can be taken for taxes. Do not include self-employment expenses.

Expense	Who has the expense?	Amount	How Often?
Deductions from pay for expenses like retirement and insurance taken out before taxes			
Student Loan Interest			
Spousal Maintenance (Alimony)			
Other (Type) _____			

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.heathearizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).



Questions for All Applicants: Answer the following questions for everyone who is applying for benefits.

Is any adult you are applying for not able to work because of a medical or mental condition that has lasted or may last 12 months, or might result in death?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____ Date of last day worked? _____ Expected return date: _____
Does any child you are applying for have a physical or mental condition that is disabling and has lasted or may last 12 months, or result in death?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____ When did the condition begin? _____
Is anyone you are applying for under age 65, have a disability expected to last at least 12 months and is working?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____
Does anyone you are applying for need help with activities of daily living (bathing, dressing, etc.) through personal assistance, services, nursing home, or other medical facility?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____
Does anyone you are applying for have a legal guardian?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____ Name of legal guardian: _____
Are you or anyone you are applying for on strike?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____
Are you or anyone you are applying for a boarder?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____



Nutrition Assistance and Cash Assistance: Answer these questions for anyone who is applying for Nutrition Assistance and/or Cash Assistance.

Is anyone you are applying for a migrant or seasonal farm worker?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, farm worker type: _____
Is this person under contract/agreement to begin employment within 30 days?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Is this person working a minimum of 30 hours a week?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	



Nutrition Assistance and Cash Assistance Questions: Answer these questions if the MAIN CONTACT is applying for Nutrition Assistance and/or Cash Assistance. Everyone may still be able to get benefits if he/she has a felony drug conviction. See page G for more information.

Has anyone you are applying for been determined to be blind or have a disability by: • the Social Security Administration (SSA), or • the Veterans Administration (VA)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____
Has anyone you are applying for had a felony conviction for possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance on or after August 23, 1996?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	City/state of conviction: _____ Date of conviction: _____ Type of conviction: _____
Is anyone you are applying for: • Running from the law on any felony charges, or • In violation of probation or parole?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____
Has anyone been found to have committed a Nutrition Assistance and/or Cash Assistance Intentional Program Violation in Arizona or any other state?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____ What state? _____

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.heathearizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).



Questions for All Applicants: Answer the following questions for everyone who is applying for benefits.

Is anyone on this application attending school?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, complete grid below:			
Who	Name of School	Address	Full/Part Time	Grade Level	Start Date	Graduation date



Expenses: Answer the following questions if anyone in your household is applying for Nutrition Assistance and/or Cash Assistance.

Are you living in HUD housing?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Amount \$ _____
What are your monthly housing costs for:	Rent \$ _____, Mortgage \$ _____, Taxes \$ _____, Homeowner/rental insurance \$ _____, Other \$ _____.	
What are the total monthly utility costs for:	Gas \$ _____, Electric \$ _____, Water \$ _____, Other \$ _____.	
Are the persons you are applying for living in government-assisted housing?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Are the persons you are applying for homeless?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	



Other Benefits and Expenses: Answer the following questions about receiving benefits from other states and expenses for anyone disabled or over age 60.

Has anyone on the application received Nutrition Assistance from another state?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____ What type of benefits? _____ When did benefits stop? _____ Name of state/county: _____
Has anyone on the application received Cash Assistance benefits from another state?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____ When did benefits stop? _____ Name of state/county: _____
Is anyone on the application living in an assisted living facility or group home?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____
Is anyone disabled or over age 60, does he/she have any paid or unpaid medical expenses, even if he/she has medical insurance (example: travel expenses to and from medical provider, doctor visits, prescriptions, lab work, etc.)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____ Average Total Monthly Medical Expenses \$ _____



Cash Assistance Questions: Answer these questions for everyone who is under age 19 and applying for Cash Assistance.

Do all children you are applying for who are under the age of 19 have current immunizations (shots)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If No, who does not? _____
Has anyone you are applying for received Cash Assistance this month?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____ When did benefits stop? _____ Name of city/state: _____ What type of benefits? _____

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healthearizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).



Resources: Answer the following questions if anyone in your household is applying for Nutrition Assistance and/or Cash Assistance.

Does anyone you are applying for have any type of bank account?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, total value: \$ _____ Who owns? _____ If Yes, total value: \$ _____ Who owns? _____ If Yes, total value: \$ _____
Does anyone you are applying for have any: • Cash • Uncashed checks • Money on a pre-paid debit card	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Does anyone you are applying for have any: • Retirement account • Annuity	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, total value: \$ _____ Who owns? _____ Name of financial institution: _____ If Yes, total value: \$ _____ Who owns? _____ Name of financial institution: _____
Do you or anyone in your household own or have their name on: • stock • bond • money market account, • Certificates of Deposit (CDs) • trust funds • life insurance	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, total value: \$ _____ Who owns? _____ Name of financial institution: _____ If Yes, total value: \$ _____ Who owns? _____ Name of financial institution: _____
Does anyone you are applying for own the home where they live?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, total value: \$ _____ Who owns? _____ Where? _____
Does anyone you are applying for own any vehicles? (cars, trucks, boats, RVs, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, total value: \$ _____ Who owns? _____ How many vehicles? _____
Does anyone you are applying for own any other land or buildings anywhere?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, total value: \$ _____ Who owns? _____ Where? _____



No Income: If no one has income, explain how you pay your bills below:

<input type="checkbox"/> Living with friends	<input type="checkbox"/> Using money from savings or checking accounts	<input type="checkbox"/> Living off credit cards
<input type="checkbox"/> Working odd jobs	Monthly income: \$ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
Are you: <input type="checkbox"/> Getting loans from people <input type="checkbox"/> Someone is giving me money <input type="checkbox"/> Someone is paying bills directly <input type="checkbox"/> Working in exchange for rent		
If Yes, complete grid below: Name of person helping: _____ Telephone number: _____ Email: _____ If loan, amount: \$ _____ When does it need to be paid back? _____ If gift, amount: \$ _____ If paying bills, which ones? _____ If working in exchange, amount of rent: \$ _____		



Medical Assistance Questions: Answer the following questions for everyone applying for help with health insurance costs and/or help with Medicare costs.

Do any applicants have an injury or illness due to an accident or medical malpractice?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____
Are any applicants currently admitted to a hospital?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If Yes, who? _____

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healthearizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).



Health Insurance Coverage: Answer the following questions if anyone in your household is applying for help with health insurance costs, help with Medicare costs, and/or Cash Assistance.

Do any applicants have health insurance other than AHCCCS or Medicare? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If 'Yes,' give the following information:

Name of Insured	Name of Insurance Provider	Policy Number	Coverage Effective Date

Does any child under age 19 in this application qualify for health benefits (even if they choose not to enroll) through the State of Arizona because:

☐ Yes ☐ No If Yes, who? _____

- A parent or step parent (in or out of the home) works for an employer (State or other public agency) that offers health insurance coverage through the State of Arizona and is eligible to get health insurance coverage; or
- The child or child's spouse works for an employer (State or other public agency) that offers health insurance coverage through the State of Arizona and is eligible to get health insurance coverage?

Have any children under the age of 19 lost health insurance coverage in the last 90 days? If 'Yes,' give the following information: ☐ Yes ☐ No

If YES, name of child(ren) who lost health insurance coverage:

Name of Policy Holder	
Name of Insurance Company	
Group Number	
Policy Number	
Insurance Company Phone Number	
Coverage End Date	
Why did the health insurance coverage stop?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Cost too much <input type="checkbox"/> Coverage was through Medicaid/CHIP, or through Advance Premium Tax Credits (APTC), or Cost Sharing Reductions <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce or death of parent <input type="checkbox"/> Employer stopped offering coverage for dependents <input type="checkbox"/> Job changed or ended <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
If the health insurance cost too much:	
<input type="checkbox"/> The monthly premium to cover one person is: \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> The monthly premium to cover the family is: \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Was approved for APTC because employer-sponsored insurance was determined to be unaffordable.	

Do any children under the age of 19 you are applying for have a chronic illness? (Medical condition that requires frequent and ongoing treatment and that if not properly treated will seriously affect the person's overall health).

☐ Yes ☐ No If Yes, who? _____



Health Plan Choice: Please see page H for enrollment plan choices for everyone applying for Medical Assistance.

Name	Health Plan Choice
Person 1	
Person 2	
Person 3	
Person 4	
Person 5	
Person 6	

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healtharizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).



Health Insurance Tax Credits:

If you are not eligible for help with health insurance cost, you may be eligible for federal tax credits to help with your health insurance premiums. If you are not eligible for any programs through AHCCCS, we will send your information to the federal Health Insurance Marketplace to see about health insurance tax credits.



Insurance from Jobs: Tell us about health insurance that may be offered through a job.

Is anyone eligible for health insurance coverage offered by an employer, or will you become eligible for coverage in the next 60 days?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> I do not know If YES: answer the questions below. If NO or I DO NOT KNOW: go to the next page.
--	--

Tell us about the job that offers health insurance coverage. If there are plans offered by more than one employer and you need more space, please attach additional pages. If you need help with the information, contact the employer.

Employee Name: _____ Employee Social Security Number: _____
 Employer Name: _____ Employer Identification Number (EIN): _____
 Employer Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____
 Whom may we contact about employment health insurance coverage at this job? _____

If you are in a waiting or probationary period for insurance offered by an employer, when can you enroll in coverage?

Who is eligible for coverage from this job? _____

Does the employer offer a health plan that meets the minimum value standard*? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I do not know
 If YES: answer the questions below. If NO or I DO NOT KNOW: go to the next page.

*An employer-sponsored health plan meets "minimum value standard" if the plan's share of the total allowed benefit costs covered by the plan is no less than 60% of such costs.

For the lowest-cost plan that meets the minimum value standard* offered only to the employee (do not include family plans):

If the employer has wellness programs, provide the premium that the employee would pay if he/she received the maximum discount for any tobacco cessation programs, and did not receive any other discounts based on wellness programs:

How much will the employee have to pay in premiums for that plan? \$ _____ ☐ I do not know
 How often will the employee have to pay the premium?
☐ Weekly ☐ Twice a month ☐ Every 2 Weeks ☐ Monthly ☐ Quarterly ☐ Yearly ☐ I do not know ☐ Other: _____

What changes will the employer make for the new plan year (if known)?

☐ Employer will not offer health coverage
☐ Employer will start offering health coverage to employees or change the premium for the lowest-cost plan available only to the employee that meets the minimum value standard.
 How much will the employee have to pay in premiums for that plan? \$ _____ ☐ I do not know
 How often will the employee have to pay the premium?
☐ Weekly ☐ Twice a month ☐ Every 2 Weeks ☐ Monthly ☐ Quarterly ☐ Yearly ☐ I do not know ☐ Other: _____
☐ I do not know



Renewal of Tax Credit Coverage in Future Years:

To make it easier for the Federal Facilitated Marketplace to determine my eligibility for help paying for health coverage in future years, I agree to allow the Marketplace to use income data, including information from tax returns. The Marketplace will send me a notice, let me make changes, and I can opt out at any time.

Yes, renew my eligibility for the next: ☐ 5 years ☐ 4 years ☐ 3 years ☐ 2 years ☐ 1 year

No, do not use information from tax returns to renew my coverage ☐

Go to the next page to sign the application.

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healthearizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).

Sign the Application:



The application is not valid until it is signed. All unrelated adults without a child in common must sign the application. Otherwise, the application must be signed by one of the following:

- The applicant or the applicant's designee (we must have documentation showing this person is authorized to act on the applicant's behalf); or
- The applicant's spouse, if married and living within the same household; or
- The parent/legal guardian of a minor child.

Penalty Warning

The information provided on this form may be verified by federal, state, and local officials. If any information is inaccurate, you may be denied benefits. You must not knowingly withhold or give false information with the intent to receive or to continue receiving DES and/or AHCCCS benefits to which you are not entitled. You will be required to pay back to DES and/or AHCCCS any benefits you receive as a result of withholding or giving false information and you will be subject to criminal prosecution. It is fraud for any person to knowingly withhold information with the intent to receive or continue to receive benefits to which he/she is not eligible. Any person found guilty of fraud may be subject to fines, criminal prosecution, imprisonment or other penalties as provided for by applicable State and Federal laws.

Release of Information

I authorize DES and/or AHCCCS to investigate and contact any sources necessary to establish eligibility and the accuracy of financial information that pertains to AHCCCS eligibility.

Assignment of Rights to Other Benefits for Medical Care

I understand that if I am or members of my household are approved for DES and/or AHCCCS benefits, DES and/or AHCCCS can collect payment from any other parties who may be responsible for paying for my/our health costs. This includes:

- Private or employer-sponsored health insurance (not including Medicare)
- Persons, such as an absent spouse or parent, who are legally responsible for providing medical support
- Private or employer-sponsored disability insurance
- Private or employer-sponsored accident insurance
- Insurance claims, jury awards, or legal settlements resulting from injuries

I understand that DES and/or AHCCCS cannot collect more than the costs paid by DES and/or AHCCCS. I also understand that I must give information about other responsible parties and take any action needed to receive medical support. This includes establishing paternity of my children, unless I can prove good cause not to do so.

I understand that DES and/or AHCCCS and/or their contractors will release information to DES/Division of Child Support Services (DCSS), for a parent of a child who does not live in the home and the child has AHCCCS or private health insurance. DCSS may use this information to get a medical support order.

Assignment of Rights to Other Benefits for Cash Assistance

State and federal law (A.R.S. 46-407) provide that the legal rights to child support and spousal maintenance must be assigned to the State of Arizona for all persons receiving Cash Assistance. I understand:

- While receiving Cash Assistance, the State has the right to keep child support or spousal maintenance collections, including support or spousal maintenance that was owed while Cash Assistance was paid.
- When Cash Assistance stops, current support payments will be paid to me. The state may continue to collect any assigned back payments for support (assigned arrears) owed before and during the time I received Cash Assistance.
- Child support payments will be used to pay back the state for Cash Assistance paid to me or anyone on my application.
- The State will not keep more from my collected current support or assigned arrears than the total amount of Cash Assistance I received.
- Also the State will not keep any arrears that are more than the total amount of Cash Assistance I received.

Declarations and Statement of Truth

By signing this application:

- I agree I have read and understand the rules and penalties on page G included with the application. I have read and understand my rights and responsibilities, and provided Social Security numbers for each applicant that has a Social Security number.
- I agree I have read and understand the assignment or rights to other benefits for Medical Care above.
- I agree I have read and understand the assignment of support rights for Cash Assistance above.
- I agree that certain Nutrition Assistance and/or Cash Assistance household members will cooperate with the work programs, which includes looking for work and accepting training and/or a job. If anyone does not, or will not, look for work, attend training, or accept a job, my benefits may be reduced or stopped.
- I agree to cooperate with Arizona or Federal personnel in the completion of a quality control review on my eligibility for benefits.
- In the event DES or its agents engage in child support enforcement activities involving me, I understand the Assistant Attorneys General and Deputy County Attorneys handling the cases represent DES, and not me or my children.
- If my child support case goes to court, I understand certain personal information contained in this application or my DES records may be released to the court and other parties to the case and becomes a public record document.
- I also hereby agree to accept service of process by first class mail with regard to any paternity or child support proceeding initiated by DES and its agents.
- I understand that my records will be kept confidential and will only be released for purposes authorized by federal and state law.
- I understand that I may be required to pay a premium if enrolled in the KidsCare or Freedom to Work program.

I swear under penalty of perjury that the statements and documents provided about myself and persons in my home, that relates to my eligibility for benefits, is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, and that I have not withheld any information. I swear under penalty of perjury that any photocopied information I have provided are the same as the original documents.

Signature of Applicant: _____ Date: _____
 Signature of Spouse: _____ Date: _____
 Signature of Other Adult in Household: _____ Date: _____
 Signature of Authorized Representative: _____ Date: _____
 Signature of Witness (if signed with mark): _____ Date: _____

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healthearizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).

Voter Registration:



Tell us if any person over the age of 18 listed on this application would like to register to vote.

If you are not registered to vote where you live now, would you like to apply to register to vote here today? Please go to the last attached page of this application, which is the "Offer of Voter Registration" form. Read the information, check "Yes" or "No", and then sign and date the form where indicated.

Applying to register or declining to register to vote will not affect the amount of assistance that you will be provided by this agency.

If you do not check either box, you will be considered to have decided not to register to vote at this time.

If you would like help in filling out the voter registration application form, we will help you. The decision whether to seek or accept help is yours. You may fill out the application form in private.

If you believe that someone has interfered with your right to register or to decline to register to vote, your right to privacy in deciding whether to register to vote, or your right to choose your own political party or other political preference, you may file a complaint with the State Election Director, Secretary of State's Office, 1700 West Washington, Phoenix, AZ 85007, 602-542-8683.

You may also get a voter registration form at www.azsos.gov/election/voterinformation.htm.

Submit the Application:



Submit your completed and signed application along with any supporting documents to the:

Arizona Department of Economic Security
Family Assistance Administration
P.O. Box 19009
Phoenix, Arizona 85005-9009

If any additional information is needed, you will be contacted.
You will be notified of our decision.

This institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age, sex and in some cases religion or political beliefs.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture also prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination with USDA, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healthearizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).

Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish).

For any other information dealing with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) issues, persons should either contact the USDA SNAP Hotline Number at (800) 221-5689, which is also in Spanish, or call the State Information/Hotline Numbers line (the listing of hotline numbers by State can be found online at http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/contact_info/hotlines.htm).

To file a complaint of discrimination regarding a program receiving Federal financial assistance through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), write: HHS Director, Office for Civil Rights, Room 515-F, 200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201 or call (202) 619-0403 (voice) or (800) 537-7697 (TTY).

USDA and HHS are equal opportunity providers and employers.

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program • Under Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI & VII), and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title II of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act (GINA) of 2008; the Department prohibits discrimination in admissions, programs, services, activities, or employment based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetics and retaliation. The Department must make a reasonable accommodation to allow a person with a disability to take part in a program, service or activity. For example, this means if necessary, the Department must provide sign language interpreters for people who are deaf, a wheelchair accessible location, or enlarged print materials. It also means that the Department will take any other reasonable action that allows you to take part in and understand a program or activity, including making reasonable changes to an activity. If you believe that you will not be able to understand or take part in a program or activity because of your disability, please let us know of your disability needs in advance if at all possible. To request this document in alternative format or for further information about this policy, contact your local office manager TTY/TDD Services: 7-1-1. • Free language assistance for DES services is available upon request. • Disponible en español en línea o en la oficina local.

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healtharizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).

NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. AHCCCS does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. AHCCCS provides free aids and services to people with disabilities to communicate effectively with us, such as qualified sign language interpreters and written information in other formats (large print, audio, accessible electronic formats, and other formats). AHCCCS provides free language services to people whose primary language is not English, such as qualified interpreters and information written in other languages. If you need these services, contact the Health-e-Arizona Plus Customer Support Center at 1-855-432-7587 (TTY: 711).

If you believe that AHCCCS failed to provide these services or discriminated in another way on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex, you can file a grievance with the AHCCCS General Counsel. You can file a grievance in person or by mail, fax, or email. Your grievance must be in writing and must be submitted within 180 days of the date that the person filing the grievance becomes aware of what is believed to be discrimination. Submit your grievance to: General Counsel, AHCCCS Administration, Office of Administrative Legal Services, MD 6200, 701 E. Jefferson, Phoenix, AZ 85034 Fax: 602 253 9115 Email: EqualAccess@azahcccs.gov. You can also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, electronically through the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal, available at <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf>, or by mail at U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 200 Independence Avenue, SW; Room 509F, HHH Building; Washington, D.C. 20201; or by phone: 1-800-368-1019, 800-537-7697 (TDD). Complaint forms are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html>.

AVISO DE NO DISCRIMINACIÓN

Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) cumple con las leyes federales de derechos civiles aplicables y no discrimina por motivos de raza, color, nacionalidad, edad, discapacidad o sexo. AHCCCS no excluye a las personas ni las trata de forma diferente debido a su origen étnico, color, nacionalidad, edad, discapacidad o sexo. AHCCCS proporciona asistencia y servicios gratuitos a las personas con discapacidades para que se comuniquen de manera eficaz con nosotros, como los siguientes intérpretes de lenguaje de señas capacitados y información escrita en otros formatos (letra grande, audio, formatos electrónicos accesibles, y otros formatos). AHCCCS proporciona servicios lingüísticos gratuitos a personas cuya lengua materna no es el inglés, como los siguientes intérpretes capacitados y información escrita en otros idiomas. Si necesita recibir estos servicios, comuníquese con Health-e-Arizona Plus Customer Support Center at 1-855-432-7587 (TTY: 711).

Si considera que AHCCCS no le proporcionó estos servicios o lo discriminó de otra manera por motivos de origen étnico, color, nacionalidad, edad, discapacidad o sexo, puede presentar un reclamo a AHCCCS General Counsel. Puede presentar el reclamo en persona o por correo postal, fax o correo electrónico. Su querella deberá presentarse por escrito en plazo de 180 días a partir de la fecha en la que la persona que se querelle se percate de lo que le parezca ser discrimin. Remita su querella a: General Counsel, AHCCCS Administration, Office of Administrative Legal Services, MD 6200, 701 E. Jefferson, Phoenix, AZ 85034 o envíela por fax a: 602 253 9115 o envíela por correo electrónico (Email) a: EqualAccess@azahcccs.gov. También puede presentar un reclamo de derechos civiles ante la Office for Civil Rights (Oficina de Derechos Civiles) del Department of Health and Human Services (Departamento de Salud y Servicios Humanos) de EE. UU. de manera electrónica a través de Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal, disponible en <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf>, o bien, por correo postal a la siguiente dirección o por teléfono a los números que figuran a continuación: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 200 Independence Avenue, SW; Room 509F, HHH Building; Washington, D.C. 20201; 1-800-368-1019, 800-537-7697 (TDD). Puede obtener los formularios de reclamo en el sitio web <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html>.

Do you need help with this application? Visit www.healtharizonaplus.gov or call 1-855-HEA-PLUS (432-7587).

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OFFER OF VOTER REGISTRATION FORM

The *Offer of Voter Registration* form is the next (last) sheet. Please read it, answer “Yes” or “No”, sign where it says “Signature of Client”, and date it.

NVRA-5 (English)

OFFER OF VOTER REGISTRATION

Applying to register to vote or declining to register to vote will not affect the amount of assistance that you will be provided by this agency.

If you are not registered to vote where you live now, would you like to apply to register to vote today? ☐ Yes ☐ No

IF YOU DO NOT MARK EITHER BOX, YOU WILL BE CONSIDERED TO HAVE DECIDED NOT TO REGISTER TO VOTE AT THIS TIME.

If you would like help filling out the voter registration application form, we will help you. The decision whether to seek or accept help is yours. You may fill out the application form in private. You may take the form with you and mail it to the county recorder yourself or you may complete the registration here and deposit it in the box provided.

If you choose to register to vote here, the information regarding the agency where the registration took place will remain confidential and will be used only for voter registration purposes. If you choose not to register to vote at this time, that information will remain confidential and will be used only for voter registration purposes.

Signature of Client (or initials of staff person) _____ Date _____

If you believe that someone has interfered with your right to register to vote or to decline to register to vote, your right to privacy in deciding whether to register to vote or in applying to register to vote, or your right to choose your own political party or other political preference, you may file a complaint with:

State Election Director
Secretary of State's Office
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, Arizona 85007
(602) 542-8683

FA-001 (11/2016)

NVRA-5 (Spanish)

PROPOSICIÓN DE EMPADRONAMIENTO

La cantidad de ayuda que esta oficina le va a proveer no será afectada por su decisión de empadronarse para votar o de no empadronarse para votar.

Si usted no está empadronado para votar donde usted actualmente vive, ¿le convendrá solicitar empadronamiento para votar hoy día aquí mismo? ☐ Sí ☐ No

SI USTED NO MARCA NINGUNA DE LAS RESPUESTAS, SE CONSIDERARÁ QUE USTED HIZO LA DECISIÓN DE NO EMPADRONARSE PARA VOTAR HOY DÍA.

Si usted necesita ayuda para completar el formulario de solicitud de empadronamiento, nosotros estamos dispuestos a ayudarlo. La decisión de procurar o aceptar ayuda es suya. Se le permite completar el formulario de solicitud en privado. Usted tiene la opción de llevarse el formulario consigo y regresarlo por correo al registrador del condado o usted puede completar su empadronamiento aquí y depositarlo en el depósito que se proporciona.

Si usted se decide a empadronarse para votar, la información tocante la oficina donde se efectuó el empadronamiento permanecerá confidencial y se usará únicamente para los propósitos de empadronamiento de votantes.

Firma del Cliente (o iniciales del miembro del personal) _____ Fecha _____

Si usted cree que alguien se ha impedido con su derecho de empadronarse para votar o de no empadronarse para votar, su derecho a privacidad en decidiendo de empadronarse o en solicitar empadronamiento para votar, o su derecho de seleccionar su propio partido político u otra preferencia política, usted puede entablar su queja con:

State Election Director
Secretary of State's Office
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, Arizona 85007
(602) 542-8683

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Okay.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you, Ms. Moore.

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Thank you so much. And with that, I would unwillingly yield back, because I have so many questions to ask you all. [Laughter.]

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. But I do want to end by thanking you for your appearance here today.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you very much. I recognize Mr. Smith of Nebraska.

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Certainly, thank you to all of our witnesses. I apologize I had to step out briefly. But this is important stuff, and so I appreciate you sharing your perspective.

And I had the honor and privilege of chairing this subcommittee previously, and we held the multi-hearing series on TANF. And that series actually led to legislation that I was happy to introduce, the Jobs for Success Act, when it was introduced for the first time. And we—many of the factors we considered back in 2018 still remain true now.

Overall, workforce participation rate is below 63 percent and remains well below what it was when we had the 2008 financial crisis. Employers everywhere desperately need workers, and starting wages for people returning to the workforce actually reflect that, as well. Unfortunately, many of the problems with TANF, which had arisen over the past two decades, I think they still remain.

The good news is, however, is that we found several potential areas, I think, for bipartisan agreement back in 2018. We can do more to ensure TANF is focused on helping those most in need. We can ensure states do more to help get Americans—getting—to help get Americans off the sidelines by working with them one on one whenever possible to connect them with employers who need them. And we can do more to ensure states are empowered to help people successfully remain in the workforce when—after they get that full-time job.

So it is not just about getting a job and staying in place. It is about an upward trajectory that I think we all can agree would be better in many ways, but primarily for the individual in need.

Mr. Collins, could you go into details for the committee on some of the games that states might play to meet their work participation rate, and how exactly does the small check scheme work, and what states are the biggest offenders?

Mr. COLLINS. Okay.

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Not to put you on the spot. [Laughter.]

Mr. COLLINS. So, assume you were a state that had a rate to meet. The first problem is that, because of the generosity of the caseload reduction credit, most states really had a, effectively, zero rate to meet, but some did actually have a rate to meet.

What they were able to do is to, at their discretion, remove from the TANF participation denominator adults likely to un-meet the rate by what we call solely state-funding those cases. So they could just pull them out of the denominator, which would just increase the numerator as a result. The state could choose to solely fund enough cases to meet the rate in a month, or they could do it at

the end of the year, and just go back and sort of buy out a number of cases so they would actually meet the rate.

So there is three different ways a state could use the solely state-funded option.

As far as the small check scheme, it is almost in the reverse. A state would be able to find a TANF profile case, an adult working already with a child, and then bring them on the caseload by providing a very small amount of TANF, 20 or \$30 a month. That would be enough to put them in the rate. So on the one hand, you solely fund out and then you can do a token TANF payment to put more in the rate.

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. And I think it is safe to say that, in any of those cases, individuals are not necessarily helped.

Mr. COLLINS. Absolutely. The concern—yes.

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. And certainly not a brighter future—

Mr. COLLINS. No.

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska [continuing]. For individuals facing scenarios like that. So I appreciate that insight.

Mr. Maas, in your testimony you spoke about how the work participation rate doesn't always align with a client's needs. What are some of the problems with the work participation rate, and do you have some specific examples?

Mr. MAAS. Yes. I think probably one of the biggest examples is the success story that I submitted in my written testimony.

So we had an individual that lacked a high school diploma, or GED. She lacked transportation and some of the basic services that we can provide, and we were able to enroll her into GED, and we did it full-time. So she met her requirements as to what we were asking her for. But technically, we failed performance for that individual. And we not only failed it for her, but we failed it for her husband, because she came to us as a two-parent family. So he also was enrolled in GED.

But we know that, with these supports and by doing something that felt ethically right, even though we were failing some of the local performance, we were able to get her her GED. We were able to get her a certified nursing assistant, and we were able to get her a job, which is probably most important, right?

And so, you know, with that she is now working full-time, and the employers filled a much-needed position as a certified nursing assistant, which a lot of our employers are struggling with today. So, you know, that is just one example.

There are other examples around job search and the fifth week not counting towards participation. I am not sure why that happens, or how it happens, but we get flagged in our system what week the fifth week is. On the short months it becomes very challenging for that, and then also individuals that get referred to us mid-month, if they start the middle of January, we are going to have a hard time meeting those hours for the month, so that person is probably going to count against our performance too, even though they have done everything that we have asked them to do during the short window that we have had it.

So I don't know why things aren't prorated. You know, it is a little above my head or pay grade, or maybe my knowledge base. I

feel like you need a PhD to understand these work requirements, and I do not have one, unfortunately.

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you, Mr. Smith. I recognize Ms. Tenney of New York.

Ms. TENNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, the Ranking Member. This is great.

You are a tremendous witnesses. I have been involved in a lot of this as a state legislator and in New York, where we have particular issues, and we really appreciate your input on how to solve this problem. I was on the Social Services Committee, and we never really solved it. In fact, I just read an inspector general's report for New York State that gives us lousy scores.

But I want to talk about a couple quick things, if I can. Number one is—every one of us have touched on this, but the real problem with employers—and I am an employer in New York State, and if I walk into any store, any shop, any business, any manufacturing firm, everybody needs employees. It is a huge problem.

New York is lagging behind all the other states, pretty much, except, I think, for six in labor participation. In fact, we are down 104,000 jobs as of where we are—stand today. And if we kept pace with the rest of the country, on average, we should have—in our last data, the Bureau of Labor Statistics would have had 320,000 more private-sector jobs. So we have an issue getting people to work, but we recognize this is not such an easy climb.

And I love my colleague Ms. Moore's reference as calling us life coaches, or calling you life coaches in what you do in TANF, but I do think—and I want to address this to Mr. Collins, because I know a number of you have already kind of jumped on this.

But, you know, you made some really good statement in your early testimony, and you talked about, you know, this state of TANF being an anti-poverty versus an anti-penalty reform. And it really struck my interest, because, you know, it is the outcomes versus process issue. And I am a former divorce lawyer. So I will tell you, lawyers in divorce law, it doesn't matter what the outcome is; as long as they can milk the file and keep it going as long as possible, they make a lot of money. And I am getting the impression this is how TANF works in some cases.

Like a state like New York, you know, the incentive is not to get the person to gainful employment and success, it is just to keep the hours going and not really get, you know, get an outcome. So can you explain to me a little bit about that process, and how we can maybe give flexibility to the states, how we can give incentives based on outcomes and getting people to gainful employment, at least on the road to gainful employment?

And I know you are an expert on this.

Mr. COLLINS. Great. Thank you, Congresswoman.

So the first thing I would want to let everybody know is that states right now, as I mentioned before, have a very small actual work requirement. So, the concern that I have with that is that most states meet their rate by actually having people in work. And that sounds odd. What I mean by that is, if you are not in work, there is probably no other activity that you are doing that counts towards the rate.

So states have a tremendous amount of flexibility to do whatever activities they deem necessary to move somebody to self-sufficiency, including all of the pre-work that you have to do with individuals that are homeless, or individuals who have challenges with substance abuse treatment. There is a tremendous amount of state flexibility currently there for states to be able to take advantage of that.

Ms. TENNEY. Well, let me ask you this. Is it true that one of the biggest limitations of the work rate is that states don't need to move TANF recipients into actual paid employment to meet the rate?

Mr. COLLINS. So there is 12 allowable activities. Almost 90 percent of participation comes from putting people in jobs. So my concern is slightly different.

I want to make sure that everybody gets an opportunity to be helped into work. And the challenge is right now that is not going on. What is counting are people in work, and only people in work. So if you have a pathway that you need to go through before that, my challenge is let's get everybody in the game, so that we can get them where they need to be.

So the—my, really, point is that the flexibility is tremendous. And I think what we need to do is we need to tighten some of that in terms of an accountability measure to make sure that states are doing what I just mentioned.

Ms. TENNEY. Great, thank you.

Mr. MAAS, I just wanted to mention—I go back to my life coach example from Ms. Moore, but I used to work for a group, a volunteer, called the Work—the Women's Employment Resource Center, which was once called the Displaced Homemakers. We had to modernize our terminology, but it was a great group, and it was—they actually did act as life coaches, and we worked with women to bring them up to speed.

And I was just going to ask you if you could talk about a little bit of your interaction with workforce development boards in getting people to that point where they can actually identify employers, employees, and work with people who are desperate to find good employees, so that we can get them on the path to success.

Mr. MAAS. Yes, we are really fortunate. We have a women's resource center in West Michigan, too—

Ms. TENNEY. Oh, great.

Mr. MAAS. So that is interesting. So they have been great to partner with early on in my career.

But we have a business solutions team that works both with TANF and WIOA, Trade Act, as well as Wagner-Peyser participants. And so, you know, we are able to leverage those relationships with those employers, that it doesn't matter which funding stream the person came from, but it is more about that relationship with that employer. So it has worked really well for us.

The challenge, as I mentioned, there are very few states across the country that are integrated like our state is. Obviously, we would love to see more. It is my own bias. You know, our board is heavily focused on outcomes of getting people jobs and getting them placed into meaningful employment. And I know there are other boards across the country. I think there is 550 across the

country that are doing similar work, and great work in each of your states.

So thank you for that question.

Ms. TENNEY. Thank you. My time is out, and I wish you could all come and do a roundtable discussion in New York.

And I want to just especially say thank you to Ms. Gray for fostering all those children. We are really lucky to have you, and so are they.

Ms. GRAY. Thank you.

Ms. TENNEY. So thank you for your warmth and your compassion for these people. I appreciate it.

I yield back.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you, Ms. Tenney. I recognize Mr. Evans of Pennsylvania.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Chairman, my life coach, Ms. Moore—

[Laughter.]

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Thank you, Mr. Evans. He is yielding to me.

Listen, I am not going to take all of your time. I just want to just double back on a couple of things.

In 2021 we heard all of you all reference that as being sort of a point at which most states had, like, zero caseload reduction. Now, that was during COVID, remember? I mean, I remember because my oldest son almost died of COVID on January 1st, 2021. People hadn't had any vaccines. So, I just want to put this in some context when we start talking about—and we suspended time limits and stuff because people couldn't go to work. It was kind of hard to go find a job during COVID. I just want to clean that up before we leave.

Also, you know, Mr. Collins talked about, you know, allowable activities. And so, I just want to know, Mr. Maas and Ms. Francis, you guys got dinged on your workforce participation when you helped that woman become a CNA and her husband. You got dinged, didn't you?

Mr. MAAS. Just a little bit. You know—

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. You didn't meet—

Mr. MAAS. I am happy to take those bumps and bruises.

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. You didn't meet your expectations because you actually helped somebody out of poverty, and you got dinged for it, is that right?

Mr. MAAS. We have enough across the region to be able to still meet work participation rate—

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. But, I mean—

Mr. MAAS [continuing]. As an organization.

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin [continuing]. Manipulated, and it kind of got around, and—

Mr. MAAS. Well, we have had a great partnership with the state representative that allowed us that flexibility. And that is where they use those caseload reduction credit in what I would say a good way, right?

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. But if you did that too much, you would mess up.

Mr. MAAS. Oh, I would get in real trouble, Representative.

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. You would be in real trouble if too many people got on that trampoline and got out of poverty.

Thank you, and I yield back to Mr. Evans.

Mr. EVANS. Thank you.

Ms. Gray, to what extent did TANF help you feed and care for your grandchildren and foster children? Can you please expand how TANF worked—work requirements made giving more difficult—getting more difficult for you and your husband (sic)?

Ms. GRAY. Yes, sir, thank you. We never received TANF. In the beginning we weren't told about TANF. And then, when we applied, we made \$75 too much. So with that went our credit cards, our savings account, and going into our retirement fund.

Mr. EVANS. From your own experience, and from what you have heard from the other grandparents, caregivers, can you please speak to the burden of managing complicated paperwork, stated scheduled meetings, and other challenging requirements while trying to provide a safe, nurturing home for your grandchildren and foster children?

Ms. GRAY. Yes, sir. So we are talking about grandparents that are in their seventies and eighties. They have mobile issues. Some of them can't get around. And so when it comes time for a meeting, they have to get to the meeting. They also usually have to bring the children with them.

And so that creates that problem, because child care is not available. So when they are doing that, they are already in this mode that I can't do it, I am just going to have to not make the meeting, and those type of things. A lot of meetings were done during COVID virtually, which did help a lot of families make those meetings. But the thought of getting the children together to go to a meeting or finding someone to watch them was very hard.

Reading through the TANF paperwork, there were forms and things that they were asked to fill out, and some of the things were hard to do if it was related to getting the parents for child support, when they know that the family has already—the biological parents have already, like, threatened to come and get the kids.

So there were a lot of things that the grandparents go through that is very hard. They are torn between the love of their child and the love of their grandchildren. But in the long run, they are retired. They have done the work that they need to do, and they weren't looking to take in children.

And in a lot of cases—like, one of my grandmothers, she was a great-grandmother. They placed a set of twins, 15 weeks old and the 18-month-old brother with her. And she lived on a second floor with no elevator. There was so many things that hindered her from getting out and doing the things that needed to be done.

And a lot of the requirements don't make sense for—when you talk about TANF—don't make sense for grandfamilies. There needs to be a special section that helps grandfamilies.

Mr. EVANS. I thank you. I yield back.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you, Mr. Evans. I recognize Dr. Wenstrup of Ohio.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for being here. It is wonderful to hear all that you do. I can tell you, as a physician, there is nothing more rewarding

than taking care of someone in need, and that is what all of you are doing.

You know, in Washington you hope that the name of a program or the name of a bill lives up to its billing, right? And so temporary, one, is the first word, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, right? Very appropriate.

And, you know, look, all families all look different. They are not all the same. And not only that, every member of the family has different needs. And I think that that is sometimes what we miss out on this.

Mr. Collins, you hit on something just as I came back in about the opportunity. You know, it is one thing to have a requirement, but the requirement is nothing if there is not an opportunity. And so how do we enhance the opportunities?

And that is what I have always been about. You know, it is nice, you can just say, well, you are required to go get a job. Well, that is easier said than done. You know, there is—it is just not that simple for somebody who is starting out in poverty, and then suddenly they need transportation to get to a job, they—there are all these factors that we all know come into play, and they are the barriers.

So I think, if we can focus more on opportunities or at least allow at a local level that you can enhance opportunities for people, then the requirement, I think—I like what you said, if you—if I understood, Mr. Collins. It is like the requirement should be that you participate in the pathway to an opportunity, then to a job. That should be the requirement, and will I agree with that 100 percent. Merely just saying it here doesn't mean it happens. We do that a lot here in Washington.

Anyway, so—and it is not just the requirement, it is the result. And how do you—what does success look like? You know, that is the key. And, you know, I have got some great caseworkers in my district, and they are like, "If they just left me alone to do what these people need, this family needs, this child, this individual or family, I can do so much more." And sometimes they have the opportunity, sometimes they just do it anyway and beg forgiveness later, right?

You know, I meet a family with six kids living in a one-room cabin, and he says, "I can't take that third shift job, because I got nowhere to sleep when I come home." Okay? Do we need paperwork here to fix that, or can somebody who is looking that family in the eye take care of that situation? In that case she was able to, and they went to work.

So there is the—what does assistance look like, I think, is a case-by-case basis, and not something we can define right here in Washington, D.C. And that is where I think, as we go forward and we want to make adjustments to this program, we enhance that.

And also, is there a way to reward the success we are all talking about, which is somebody getting into a job no longer needing assistance?

And by the way, when you get a job, we don't want to make it so that you are worse off than you were before you got the job, as far as financially and what your family can eat.

So I think we need to focus on a lot of local flexibility for case-workers. And you know, like I said, needs differ. Whether it is getting your high school degree to be able to get that job, let's make that happen. You know, if it is transportation, let's find a way to make that happen. Whether it is childcare, let's find a way to make that happen. So I would be glad to hear from any of you to help us as we might change the parameters so that you all can be successful.

And you know, you are all wonderful people, but, Ms. Gray, I don't think I have met a living saint in my life, but you are right up there.

Ms. GRAY. Thank you, sir.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Collins.

Mr. COLLINS. Yes, sir. Thank you, Congressman. I think we need—there is more that we can do to reward work. Given all of the tools that are now in play, I think different than in 2005, states, I think, are trying to avoid penalties. They need to build an anti-poverty program and, in so doing, find more ways to reward work, spend more resources on rewarding work, and helping people, you know, ladder-up once they get in.

For example, income credits, there might be asset-building match-savings programs that can be added to when individuals go into work. And I think that is where we are. It really is about improving it, and adding that kind of accountability from the Federal level to allow states and counties, really, to innovate and to think through what is best for that family right there on the front lines.

Ms. REYNOLDS. And I would just add, ideally, that would be backed by evidence. You are a physician, and often, I would guess, when you treat your patients you make sure you treat them in a way that the evidence backs up that treatment, that pill, that drug, that surgery is going to align.

And unfortunately, in too many of our anti-poverty programs across this country, we don't treat our poor people that way. We don't give them the dignity to give them services that actually work and have that causal evidence like you would in the medical community. And we should demand that of our states.

Ms. GRAY. I would just like to say that our grandfamilies, some of them are not in poverty. They have worked, they have saved, they are now living the life that they want to live in retirement. And then they get a phone call, and they are placed with children in their care. They are making \$2,500 a month, and getting denied from TANF because they responsibly saved their money for their retirement. And now what do they do? They are at an age where they are not always employed, or get employment. Or if they are able to, they are medically disabled or they have got health issues and they cannot work.

So the program needs to take into consideration that every family is not the same, and that these families that were grandfamilies that saved and put their life together are now moving into poverty simply because they are now willing to take care of their children, and keep them out of the state's care.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Thank you all very much. Very helpful.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you, Dr. Wenstrup.

Our last member is Mrs. Miller of West Virginia, who is not on the subcommittee, but thought this committee's topic today so important that we welcomed her to the subcommittee today.

So welcome, Mrs. Miller.

Mrs. MILLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I used to be on this committee. [Laughter.]

Mrs. MILLER. So my heart is still here with so many of the issues and the years that I spent in the State House dealing—I am from West Virginia. I understand poverty. I understand, and I love the word “dignity,” because it is so important with what we are doing.

And I can repeat, there have been no significant changes in TANF since 2005. And you would think that we would have been further along, but we have had lots of issues, and we have had COVID come through. So this hearing, I think, is in the right step for the right direction in addressing the loopholes and the gaps. And it is our duty to help Americans in poverty to move out of it, to move—to have that feeling, that self-satisfaction. And so I do believe in—welfare-to-work is an important step, and we have just got to find effective policies and proposals to remove those barriers that you all have been talking about.

I just reintroduced my legislation that I had had in before, called the Accelerating Individuals into the Workforce Act—now of 2023, which would reserve up to \$100 million from the TANF Contingency Fund to subsidize the wages of TANF recipients for up to 12 months while they are trying to work by incentivizing their employers, like paying for part of their salary of—to these TANF recipients. The new employees will then receive on-the-job training, valuable experience.

Business owners also understand that it is expensive to train people to work. And so this is—it is a wonderful addition to the valuable experience that they will have in giving them a career. And so my legislation would invest in the well-being of the families in the TANF program by creating a direct pathway to employment for opportunities and success.

So Ms. Francis, Mr. Collins, any of you, can you speak to the importance of the public-private partnerships in helping welfare recipients move into jobs, retain work, and increase their—to increase their earnings over time?

Ms. FRANCIS. Thank you for that question. I think what you brought up was a perfect example of how we could collaborate with jobs. We need to be putting our individuals, our customers into higher-paying positions. We all—we know that minimum wage cannot support a family, and I do believe that employers will be more willing to accept people onto their payrolls if they were—if they did have an incentive to add those people on.

And if someone can be trained on the job, get that skill, they are not going somewhere else but they can get it on the job, they know that they are going to have that position, something that they can carry on forward or move up in that position, I think that that would be something that would be very beneficial to our customers.

Mrs. MILLER. Thank you.

Mr. COLLINS. Yes. The beauty of the block grant is that the State of West Virginia can do what the state needs to do, and pro-

vide opportunities that way. And each and every other state has that same opportunity. So I think that is important to preserve.

I would also always say that there needs to be from this body some level of accountability that drives more people through those pathways than the current framework does. The current framework allows way too many loopholes that don't give states enough pressure to get as many people through whatever activity that a case manager deems as important for them to do.

So I think we need to close some of those loopholes up so that there are more opportunities to get people to higher-paying jobs that—the employers that need those employees right now.

Mrs. MILLER. Either of the other—any of you. And I do want to talk to grandma at the end. [Laughter.]

Ms. REYNOLDS. I was just going to add, once you get your act passed into law we would be more than happy at Notre Dame to study the impact of it so you can build evidence, so we can decide should it be expanded over time.

Mrs. MILLER. Yes.

Mr. MAAS. Is a great question, Representative, and thanks for being here.

I would echo a lot of the statements that have already been provided. You know, early on in my career I worked directly with employers and offered on-the-job training contracts and helping, you know, take the risk on hiring somebody with maybe a little lower skill set than what the employer had. And it always has been and still continues to be a valuable tool in our toolbox when working with employers and getting those job-seekers connected to employment.

So thank you for being here.

Mrs. MILLER. And I just want to say bless you, Ms. Gray. In our state, sometimes we even have great-grandparents——

Ms. GRAY. Yes.

Mrs. MILLER [continuing]. That are taking care of kids because, you know, we have had drug addiction and various things that have directly affected the family unit. And so you are so brave and so loving, and I just want to say thank you.

Ms. GRAY. Thank you.

Mrs. MILLER. I turn it back to you, boss.

Chairman LAHOOD. Thank you, Congresswoman Miller.

Well, that concludes our question-and-answer from our members here.

I want to just mention one thing. We have heard a lot about grandfamilies today. And just to remind folks that grandfamilies don't have work requirements in TANF. They are considered child-only. We aren't proposing work requirements for grandparents, I just wanted to make that clear.

Let me just say in conclusion, as I have listened to the testimony of all five of you today and the questions and answers here today, it has really been remarkable. You have been here for over two hours, but your testimony and the question-and-answers, I think, have been very compassionate and informative and instructive in many ways, and helps guide all of us here as we look at policy solutions on how we reform TANF, and what we can do to make the program better, because we are always looking at how do we make

government more effective, efficient, and accountable. That is really what today is all about. And you guys were a big part of that.

So again, thank you. We are grateful.

I would just lastly say welfare reform was based on one simple idea shared by people of all political stripes: the belief that the best way out of poverty is a job, and that reducing poverty should be about helping people move from welfare to work.

And so, as we conclude today, again, we are grateful, and thank you for your testimony, and look forward to working with you.

Please be advised that members have two weeks to submit written questions to be answered later in writing. Those questions and your answers will be made part of the formal record here today.

I want to thank Dr. Davis for your work with us on this subcommittee.

And with that, the committee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:03 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS FOR THE RECORD

Committee Testimony



April 6, 2023

United States House of Representatives
The Honorable Darin LaHood
Chairman, Subcommittee on Work and Welfare
Committee on Ways and Means
1139 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman LaHood,

My name is Clarence H. Carter and I have the honor of serving in the cabinet of Tennessee Governor Bill Lee as the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services. Thank you for the opportunity to add my comments to the record for the hearing held on March 29.

I offer this testimony as someone who has spent more than 30 years serving as a senior administrator in the public human services space. In my career, I have had the opportunity to work with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF) at every level of government. At the state and local level, I previously served as the Director of the Arizona Department of Economic Security, the Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Social Services, and the Director of the Washington D.C. Department of Human Services. Prior to my current appointment I served as the Director of the Office of Family Assistance, the program office within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services tasked with administering TANF.

As such, I begin with an unequivocal statement; the twin pillars of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 of work for receipt of benefits and time limits is the right and proper foundation for the public policy construct to support economically vulnerable families with children.

For purposes of this testimony, it is the application of the work component of TANF to which I direct my comments. I will further confine my remarks to two aspects of the work component. The TANF program specifically (and the broader suite of the more than 80 federal programs authorized to address economic, social and developmental vulnerability) is in desperate need of repair. It is far from our best effort to serve those in our society experiencing significant challenges to making their lives work.

While TANF's emphasis on work is foundational to creating a pathway to economic freedom for its recipients, the way in which our current policies attempt to meet this imperative is extremely flawed.

In my testimony I will begin with my work in Tennessee and expand to observations in other relevant parts of my journey in this space.

WORK PARTICIPATION RATE

The work participation rate is how we calculate the application of the work component of the statute.

The single parent work participation target begins at 50 percent. This translates to those on the roles where work would be a requirement (after applying exemptions) the state is required to engage half in work activities (another maddening concept). After applying a generous caseload reduction credit, the target is established.

The following graphic will highlight the Tennessee TANF work participation rate target for the past five years.

All Families: 50% Requirement

FFY	TN target after caseload deduction credit	All Families WPR achieved	Target Met
2017	0%	35.6%	Yes
2018	0%	31.2%	Yes
2019	0%	33.2%	Yes
2020	0%	33.6%	Yes
2021	0%	24.8%	Yes

As illustrated above, the work participation target in Tennessee for the past 5 years has been effectively zero. Having served in this capacity in several jurisdictions and worked with colleagues across the country, I can confidently say that this experience is not unique to Tennessee.

So, law, regulation and policy has enshrined that Tennessee, and many other states, essentially have had to do nothing to meet a foundational objective of the 1996 welfare reform law. It's important to add that Tennessee has not rested on that target but endeavored to engage many of its TANF work eligible consumers in a meaningful way. However, no one could argue that the current construction of the work participation rates is effectively accomplishing the goals of the hard-fought reforms of nearly three decades ago.

PENALTY

Even with the significant watering down of the work component, there are still states that have failed to reach their targets. When this occurs there is a penalty mechanism that is engaged. Unfortunately, this penalty mechanism is ineffective at encouraging states to engage their clients in work related activities.

In my first week heading the Office of Family Assistance I was presented a sanction letter for my signature. The sanction was for a violation that had occurred 6 years prior. Interestingly, the

letter wasn't even imposing a sanction, it was simply informing the state that the matter had not yet been remediated and the next phase of the sanction process was commencing. This letter was not an anomaly, but the regular course of business when it came to the sanctioning process.

The ultimate penalty for a sanction is reducing the state's annual grant. During my tenure as Director of the Office of Family Assistance there was not a single instance in which such a penalty was imposed upon a state for failing to meet their work participation target.

My point here is not to take money away from states and families that are in desperate need of economic assistance, it is instead to put teeth into an essential component of the program.

CONCLUSION

In closing, the current construction of the work requirement (a pillar of the statute) has been effectively gutted. If it is our intention to truly support work as part of lifting economically vulnerable families beyond those circumstances, we must do a much better job than our current policy construct.

This testimony, while targeted, is not even close to exhaustive of the challenges of our efforts to, in the words of former President Clinton "end welfare as we know it". It is my hope that this is the beginning of a dialogue to strengthen our approach to grow those who suffer with economic, social, and developmental vulnerabilities beyond those challenges in their lives. I applaud the subcommittee for taking on this important and relevant challenge. Tennessee stands ready to assist and we would be honored to contribute to the dialogue of this process.

Respectfully,



Clarence H. Carter
Commissioner
Tennessee Department of Human Services

April 12, 2023

Subcommittee Hearing on Welfare is Broken: Restoring Work Requirements to Lift Americans Out of Poverty.

House Committee on Ways and Means, Chairman Jason Smith and Work & Welfare Subcommittee Chairman Darin LaHood.

Comments related to hearing on March 29, 2023:

Oregon Department of Human Services
Self-Sufficiency Program Design
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Program Manager
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The Oregon Department of Human Services, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program offers a family assessment to families who apply for TANF. The intent of the assessment is to determine barriers families may be facing as well as goals they would like to work toward. The overarching mission of the ODHS is to focus on the whole well-being of all people and families. When families apply for TANF they are either underemployed or no longer employed. They are living well below the federal poverty level and frequently need housing stabilization, behavioral health services due to trauma, substance use disorder treatment, additional on the job training, education, etc. before they are at a place where they can locate and maintain a living wage job.

The current policies set forward under Code of Federal Regulations, 45 Public Welfare, as cited below do not support full family well-being, or ensuring families are able to achieve economic stability and mobility.

1. Work Participation Rate (WPR): Oregon recommends that WPR change so states can focus on assisting individuals to obtain economic stability and mobility. To best help families reach their educational goals to obtain meaningful employment 45 CFR 261.2 and CFR 261.33 would remove language that limits vocational education to a period of 12 months per individual. By removing this limitation states can count additional hours that are truly assisting families towards their WPR. Additionally, we recommend the WPR percentages be adjusted to levels in

which states could focus on working with families so they can engage in activities that will lead them to long lasting well-being, economic mobility and stability removing them from the federal assistance cycle.

2. Core countable activities and hours: To best support families in achieving economic mobility and stability, and in moving them away from federal subsidies and out of poverty, Oregon recommends the following changes to 45 CFR 261.31, 261.32, CFR 261.34, CFR 261.35.
 - a. Reduce the mandatory hours that individuals must complete to meet participation requirements. This will allow states to properly assist families with other areas of their well-being and participation in life skill activities.
 - b. Remove the limitation of four consecutive weeks for Job Search and Job Readiness activities. This will allow states to count continuous hours towards their WPR while individuals continue to prepare for and seek employment.
 - c. Remove the core/non-core countable hour restrictions that state the first 20 of the required 30 hours, 30 of the required 35 hours, and 50 of the 55 required hours must come from core countable activities, the remaining hours can come from non-core countable. Essentially get rid of core vs non-core and make them all countable. While also expanding on the allowable countable activities.

Oregon does not currently utilize the caseload reduction credit. Our focus on family well-being lends us to improve our policies to ensure families are able to stay on TANF to receive the services they need and to fully address any barriers that may limit their opportunities to achieve success in locating long-term living wage employment. Overcoming barriers such as trauma, abuse, behavioral health concerns, substance use disorder take time and cannot generally be completed in six weeks per fiscal year, which is all that can be considered countable toward the WPR, unless the state is considered needy which is then 12 weeks per fiscal year.

In conclusion we believe making work participation requirements more stringent will not assist families in moving out of poverty, it will only continue the revolving door of federal assistance.



**U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Work & Welfare**

*Written Comments for Hearing, “Welfare is Broken: Restoring Work
Requirements to Lift Americans Out of Poverty”*

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Neal, Subcommittee Chairman LaHood, Subcommittee Ranking Member Davis, and Members of the House Committee on Ways and Means, thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record.

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) is a coalition of hundreds of private and public agencies that since 1920 has worked to serve children and families who are vulnerable. Our expertise, leadership and innovation on policies, programs, and practices help improve the lives of millions of children across the country. Our impact is felt worldwide.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit our recommendations on the future of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant. TANF is important to child welfare for three reasons: its role in providing support to relative caregivers, its significant financial support to wrap-around child welfare services, and its potential to address child poverty, which research has shown is a risk factor in abuse and neglect.

TANF and Child Welfare

TANF, like its predecessor, the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, provides an important source of support to relative caregivers through the child-only grant. In FY 2020, 457,000 families were receiving child-only grants¹, a total that is decreasing from 2015 when there were 649,000 child-only families². Approximately half

¹ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): Fiscal and Calendar Year 2020; Total Number of No Parent Families. Retrieved from:

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ofa/fy2020_tanf_caseload_0par_0.pdf.

² U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Twelfth Report to Congress Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015. Retrieved from: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ofa/12th_annual_tanf_report_to_congress_final.pdf.

of these families include a parent not covered by TANF assistance while relative caregivers are included in the remaining half.

These child-only grants allow some relative caregivers to avoid entering the formal child welfare system, which may be appropriate for some families. In other instances, these TANF-funded grants can support children in the child welfare system who may not qualify for federal reimbursement due to Title IV-E eligibility restrictions. It's an important alternative for many families trying to maintain family connections for the children involved. Perhaps the greatest challenge here is the drain on funding. As TANF loses its value due to inflation and past reductions to the block grant, it becomes more difficult to provide adequate support to relative caregivers while also addressing the needs of single and two parent families through basic assistance.

TANF is also important because it provides important wraparound services by funding important family support, family preservation and other preventive services. In FY 2020 over \$1.2 billion in child welfare services were drawn from TANF and spent in this way. This does not include child-only grant funding or the other vital human services supports funded through the TANF block grant, including supplemental child care funding, Head Start supplemental funding, state supplements to the Earned Income Tax Credits or other services. All these services should be viewed as initiatives to prevent child maltreatment and to prevent foster care placements.

That said, TANF plays a significant role in other parts of the child welfare system. TANF funds flow into some foster care placements because the law allows some states to spend TANF funds in the same way they spent funds through the AFDC program before 1996 when TANF replaced AFDC. In this way, TANF supplements some of these out of home placements, a critical support given that Title IV-E foster care and kinship care assistance continues to erode due to the ongoing eligibility link to the July 1996 AFDC eligibility requirements. Less than 40 percent of the foster care population are now covered through Title IV-E.

In federal fiscal year (FY) 2020, at least 15 states spent more than 15 percent of their TANF funds directly on child welfare services, including the Chairperson and Ranking Member's home state of Illinois, which spent approximately 20 percent of FY2020 TANF funds on child welfare services. These funds are in addition to child-only relative care services.

We caution this Subcommittee that, short of a significant increase in the \$16.5 billion TANF block grant, restricting this use of TANF funding would be harmful to children and families, since these dollars have become critical funding sources for child welfare, child care and prevention services.

TANF and Federal Strategies to Addressing Poverty

There is another key part that TANF can and should play regarding child welfare: reduction of child poverty. Re-focusing the mission of the TANF program on child

poverty would provide critical relief to families both in and outside of the formal child welfare system and could reduce reports of suspected child maltreatment due to poverty-related neglect.

More than five years ago, CWLA President and CEO Chris James-Brown served on the Congressionally mandated committee for National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to study evidence-based strategies to reduce child poverty by half within a ten-year period. This Congressionally driven study resulted in the 2019 National Academy of Sciences report, *A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty*.

After nearly two years of work, the Committee completed a review of the research literature and commissioned analyses to answer some of the most important questions surrounding child poverty and its eradication in the United States. The Committee found there was no single approach that could reduce child poverty in half within ten years. The Academy report identified a combination of evidence-based, work-based and income support packages that would reduce child poverty and deep poverty within the ten year timeframe and recommended four different approaches, which did not include TANF but instead focused on expansions of tax credits like the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), the Child Tax Credit (CTC), and the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC), increasing the minimum wage, and expanding access to basic needs through SNAP and housing vouchers³. These programs and tax incentives were grounded in sufficient research to be selected as the most effective way to reduce child poverty.

The Committee did examine TANF and other anti-poverty programs but as the Committee stated in *CONCLUSION 7-4*:

*“There is insufficient evidence to identify mandatory work policies that would reliably reduce child poverty, and it appears **that work requirements are at least as likely to increase as to decrease poverty**. The dearth of evidence also reflects underinvestment over the past two decades in methodologically strong evaluations of the impacts of alternative work programs,⁴”* (emphasis added).

The Report further detailed, *“...very little evidence concerning the impact of block grants on poverty rates meets the standard of rigor we imposed on the other reforms we simulated. Second, block grants come in a variety of forms, and knowing how they are constructed is crucial in assessing any poverty impacts they might have. Accordingly, there is no simple answer to the question of whether block grants are likely to increase or reduce poverty.⁵”*

When specifically addressing work requirements in block grants, as was the topic of the Subcommittee hearing, the Report Committee noted, “One study which attempted to separate the work components concluded that ‘work requirements alone have relatively

³ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2019. *A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25246>.

⁴ Ibid., p. 210

⁵ Ibid., p. 211

weak effects on family income and poverty,⁶ (Grogger and Karoly, 2005, p. 171).” Hearing witness Heather Reynolds, Managing Director, Lab for Economic Opportunities at the University of Notre Dame, corroborated this finding in her testimony, noting that the currently available data makes clear that flexible funding and case management are needed for people to retain work and move out of poverty.

The Report notes that there is some evidence that TANF had short-term impacts on poverty at the time of its implementation, but there was insufficient research to prove its long-term impact as a poverty-reduction program.

... “A review examining the short-run poverty impacts of well-evaluated pre-1996 programs resembling TANF, as well as studies of TANF itself, concluded that while evaluations of most of the pre-1996 programs showed no effect on poverty, some of the studies of TANF itself suggested that it did indeed reduce poverty (Grogger and Karoly, 2005). The review cautioned that after time limits became effective and block grants declined in real value, the program might show different effects. A later review by Ziliak (2016) found less evidence for the poverty-reducing impact of the 1996 legislation, which suggests that the longer-run impacts of TANF on poverty reduction may have been smaller than its short-run impacts.”⁷

More recently, the New York Times with Child Trends released a study, [Expanded Safety Net Drives Sharp Drop in Child Poverty](#), which examined the impact of various federal programs on reducing child poverty. The positive news is that the analysis found that child poverty had been reduced by 59 percent between 1993 and 2020 (before the COVID-19 pandemic began) but the decrease was not the result of TANF.

While that analysis found that multiple forces reduced child poverty, including the employment rate, labor force participation and state minimum wage increases, the story went on to state, “*But a dominant factor [in reducing child poverty] was the expansion of government aid.*”⁸

The federal programs that had the greatest impact between 1993 and 2019 included, in order of significance: the Earned-income tax credit, Social Security, SNAP, Housing assistance, Free and discounted school lunch, Supplemental Security Income, Cash assistance, Women/children nutrition (WIC), Unemployment insurance, and Home energy assistance.

The New York Times-Child Trends analysis found that cash assistance had reduced child poverty by 5 percent in 1993 but by only 2 percent in 2019. By comparison the EITC had reduced child poverty by 5 percent in 1993 and by 22 percent by 2019. The only two

⁶ Ibid., p. 210 (footnote).

⁷ Ibid., p. 214

⁸ DeParle, J. (2022, September 11). Expanded Safety Net Drives Sharp Drop in Child Poverty. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/11/us/politics/child-poverty-analysis-safety-net.html>.

federal programs that had not increased its reduction in child poverty between 1993 and 2019 were TANF and unemployment insurance.

The Need to Refocus and Increase TANF Funding

Similar to other block grants that convert entitlement funds to a fixed allocation or block grant, the value of TANF has been eroded by more than 40 percent by inflation. Some of the funding was actually eliminated in 2012 with the elimination of the supplemental TANF grants. The block grant funds are insufficient to meaningfully reduce poverty, which ought to be a primary purpose of the TANF program. As noted in the Roadmap Report, “block grants that are inadequately funded, fail to be sustained, or lack provisions for countercyclical adjustment have resulted in reduced support for low-income families and in increased poverty.”⁹

We hope Congress will do much more as part of a poverty reduction strategy including restoring the Child Tax Credit as it existed during the pandemic. For now, regarding this particular program, we do propose certain reforms.

When AFDC was converted into the TANF block grant in 1996, over 65 percent of poor families were receiving cash assistance through AFDC. In recent years that percentage has shrunk to less than 1 in four of poor families receiving cash assistance. “Because expenditures in the TANF program have fallen so dramatically, the cash component of the program currently contributes very little to poverty reduction. Eliminating TANF would increase the child poverty rate by about one-half of one percentage point.”¹⁰ While we believe that TANF can reduce some deep poverty (families at one-half the federal poverty level), if TANF is to live up to its potential to reduce poverty for children and families, it will be necessary to implement significant reforms that refocus the program on poverty reduction and increase efficacy and access for families in need of support.

More than five years ago this Subcommittee considered a re-draft and reauthorization of the TANF law—something that is long overdue. At that time, we submitted several suggestions tied to an earlier reauthorization draft. Some of those comments, although over 5 years old still hold value today:

Purposes of the Act

CWLA supports the inclusion poverty reduction as one of the purposes of the act as we did more than two decades ago. We feel this is an important step in helping to focus TANF on assistance for poor families. As was noted multiple times during the Work and Welfare Subcommittee Hearing, more than 70% of TANF recipients are children¹¹. TANF reform is an opportunity to focus on reducing poverty for children.

⁹ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2019. A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25246>. P. 213

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 213 footnote.

¹¹ Falk, Gene. “The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant: Responses to Frequently Asked Questions.” Congressional Research Service. Updated February 27, 2023. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/RL32760.pdf>.

In addition to adding poverty reduction to the purposes, states ought to be rewarded for decreasing the number of families that are poor, or at least the number of families in deep poverty, in need of assistance. Incentivizing states to reduce poverty and deep poverty, with clear and relevant success measures, would refocus the TANF program to address desired outcomes rather than outputs, such as tracking the number of hours spent on work-related activities.

Elimination of Caseload Credit

Part of the unofficial goals of the TANF program was to reduce welfare caseloads, and it was largely successful: “by 2000 it was only a little more than one-half of what it had been in 1995, prior to passage of the TANF legislation.”¹² We support elimination of the caseload credit because it has placed too much emphasis on reduction of cash assistance caseloads since 1996. Although caseloads have dramatically decreased, poverty has not decreased in equal measure. The overall goal of TANF should include not just assisting adults to find permanent and productive work but also the provision of needed assistance for vulnerable families. Incentives that reward decreasing caseloads in times of great need, as was the case during the recession of 2008-09, should not be a goal - the main goal must be to assist and protect families. We recognize the interaction this caseload reduction credit has on state work targets but caseload reduction in and of itself is a false test of success for this human service program.

Improved Counting Hours/Work

We support improvements in how and what qualifies as work. We support allowing states to count as partial work credits for adults who may not be able to meet the full number of hours but who are working. We also support a broader definition of work that expands upon what a state may be able to count.

As part of this recommendation, we support the expanded way in which states can count vocation education as meeting the work requirements, the extension to 26 for adults seeking their GED or high school degrees, and we suggest that a cap on how many adults are counted under the vocation education provisions be removed.

Penalty Provisions

We believe that any penalties assessed on states should be redirected into program improvement plans. If a state is failing to successfully move adults into work or failing to meet their targets, revenue from penalties assessed would be better utilized in working with that state in developing more effective strategies around assistance and work.

Individuals Convicted of a Drug Related Crime

The current blanket prohibition on assistance to anyone with a past conviction of a drug related crime should be eliminated. This barrier is a relic of past political scare tactics, when too many policymakers viewed drug-addiction as a scourge of the cities dominated

¹² National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2019. A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25246>. P. 213

¹² Ibid., p. 213.

by the use of crack-cocaine, declaring a War on Drugs to combat its usage. We now have more research and knowledge available to us, as well as experience over the past 25 years of addressing the epidemics of manufactured drugs such as methamphetamines that were prevalent in rural areas and more recently opioids which are a product of the drug-regulated pharmaceutical industry and found in in both rural and suburban settings. Addiction is an illness that doesn't discriminate and people with addictions can and do recover when the right supports are available.

It's time to address the need for greater access to substance use treatment and to walk away from outdated assumptions that we can penalize people out of their substance use addictions. If our goal is productive employment that lifts people up, then treatment and not penalty is the more logical approach.

Minimum Spending on Child Care, Cash Assistance and Work Activities

In the past there has been discussion of limiting how TANF is spent to some mission-focused parts of TANF. While there may be some logic to limiting the block grant to assistance, work support and child care, we caution the Subcommittee that any such reforms must include an increase in the \$16.5 billion block grant.

It is worth noting that in the Roadmap Report, the Committee found that in order for work requirements to be successful in reducing child poverty, “[c]oupling mandated employment with work supports like child care, job search assistance, and transportation assistance is often the key to success, because... low-income families face many barriers to work related to these factors.¹³” In the absence of broad reform and investment in these supports outside of TANF, it is prudent to continue to allow TANF funds to be spent in this way.

Elimination of Marriage Penalty

We support the elimination of the separate and often times too rigorous work requirements and standards for married families. The current work requirements have often failed to take into account the challenges that many of these families experience due to the areas of the country they live in or the personal challenges that these families may be living with.

Additional Concerns:

In regard to data collection, we suggest that states, through TANF in coordination with the child welfare agency, collect data on the number of children in child only families that are in state custody while receiving child-only grants. In addition, the state should indicate if these children are also counted as part of their AFCARS data in the out-of-home care category.

We also propose that under the TANF program, if a state also has a Title IV-E subsidized guardianship program that families be informed of their options including the options

¹³ Ibid., P. 208

available under Title IV-E, the supports available and the benefit levels provided under TANF compared to Title IV-E. Similar information is required under Title IV-E regulations but not under the TANF program.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer these recommendations for the record and for your consideration and attention to our comments.



**U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Work & Welfare
Written Comments for Hearing, “Welfare is Broken: Restoring Work Requirements to Lift
Americans Out of Poverty”**

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Neal, Subcommittee Chairman LaHood, Subcommittee Ranking Member Davis, and Members of the House Committee on Ways and Means, thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record.

First Focus on Children is a bipartisan children’s advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions. Our organization is committed to ensuring that all our nation’s children have equal opportunity to reach their full potential.

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program is a children’s program. The vast majority — over 70 percent — of TANF recipients are children.¹ TANF provides critical assistance to millions of children and families, but it falls short in promoting lasting economic mobility for recipients and fails to reach many kids in need. In 2019, for every 100 families in poverty, just 23 families received TANF assistance.² About half of TANF caseloads are “child-only” caseloads, where children in the household can receive assistance even when a parent or caretaker is ineligible.

Due to its racist design intended to limit assistance to Black mothers and children, states with larger percentages of Black residents offer lower levels of cash assistance,³ contributing to Black children experiencing disproportionately high rates of poverty compared to white children. As a fixed block grant that is not indexed to inflation, TANF has not been effective at adjusting to meet increased need during times of economic crisis, and its value has fallen significantly over time.⁴

Rather than providing cash assistance, states use a significant amount of TANF dollars for “non-core” services and programs that have been historically funded by the state, such as child welfare services, pre-kindergarten programs, state Earned Income Tax Credits, and more. These funds often supplant state dollars for these services rather than providing additional assistance to families with children, and in more egregious

¹ Falk, Gene. “The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant: Responses to Frequently Asked Questions.” Congressional Research Service. Updated February 27, 2023. <https://spp.fas.org/crs/misc/RL32760.pdf>

² Scott, Liz, Floyd, Ife, and Pavetti, LaDonna. “Cash Assistance Should Promote Equity.” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. August 4, 2021.

<https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/cash-assistance-should-promote-equity>

³ Parolin, Zachary. “Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and the Black-White Child Poverty Gap in the United States. Socio-Economic Review 19(3). May 2019. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322715782_Temporary_Assistance_for_Needy_Families_and_the_Black-White_Child_Poverty_Gap_in_the_United_States

⁴ Falk, Gene. “The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant: Responses to Frequently Asked Questions.” Congressional Research Service. Updated February 27, 2023. <https://spp.fas.org/crs/misc/RL32760.pdf>

examples, states have used funds to serve upper-middle-class families⁵ and even fraudulently diverted funds to benefit wealthy individuals.⁶

This is to the detriment of children, who greatly benefit in the short- and long-term from cash assistance. A 2019 landmark study from the nonpartisan National Academy of Sciences⁷ finds that cash transfers reduce child poverty and improve children's long-term health, educational, and economic outcomes, both by increasing access to resources that support children's healthy development as well as reducing household stress, giving parents and caregivers more mental and emotional bandwidth for their children. Cash assistance has a two-generation effect in promoting economic mobility — in addition to supporting children, the assistance helps adults in the household afford childcare, transportation to work, higher education, or job training programs that lead to steady employment and higher-paying jobs.

Lessons Learned from the Child Tax Credit

We have a recent, real-world example that confirms the positive impacts of cash assistance for children and families. Expansions to the Child Tax Credit in 2021 delivered dramatic results for children, nearly cutting child poverty in the U.S. in half and narrowing the racial child poverty gap.⁸ It is hard to overstate the impact, for the Child Tax Credit payments transformed the lives of tens of millions of children.

Improvements to the Child Tax Credit greatly increased the amount of the credit, made payments available monthly for half of the year, and allowed children in families with little or no income to be eligible for the full credit for the first time. Analysis from Columbia University's Center on Poverty and Social Policy⁹ finds that children in the lowest income households who were ineligible for the Child Tax Credit prior to the 2021 enhancements — Black and Hispanic children, young children, and children in single-parent, rural or large families — all experienced significant declines in child poverty in 2021.

Expanding the Child Tax Credit also significantly reduced material hardship and household food insecurity with “no significant differences in the changes in employment between December 2020 and December 2021 for adults who received the payments and adults who did not receive the payments.”¹⁰ In fact, the Child Tax Credit is found to help mothers, especially single mothers, increase their labor force participation by allowing them to afford childcare, transportation, and other necessities that help them get to work.¹¹

With the expiration of the improvements to the Child Tax Credit at the end of 2021, nearly 4 million children immediately fell back into poverty in January 2022.¹² By July 2022, the percentage of households with children that reported they could not afford enough food had increased by 25%.¹³

⁵ Clark, Krissy, Esch, Caitlin, and Delvac, Gina. “How Welfare Money Funds College Scholarships.” NPR Marketplace. June 10, 2016.

<https://www.marketplace.org/2016/06/10/how-welfare-money-funds-college-scholarships/>.

⁶ Chappell, Bill. “Mississippi's Ex-Welfare Director, 5 Others Arrested Over 'Massive' Fraud.” NPR. February 6, 2020.

<https://www.npr.org/2020/02/06/803399172/mississippi-ex-welfare-director-5-others-arrested-in-massive-fraud>

⁷ “A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty.” National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. National Academies Press. 2019.

<https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/25246/a-roadmap-to-reducing-child-poverty>.

⁸ Baldari, Cara. “U.S. Child Poverty in 2021.” First Focus on Children. Fact Sheet. September 21, 2022. <https://firstfocus.org/resources/fact-sheet/u-s-child-poverty-in-2021>.

⁹ Wimer, Christopher, Collyer, Sophie, Harris, David, and Lee, Jiwan. “The 2021 Child Tax Credit Expansion: Child Poverty Reduction and the Children Formerly Left Behind.” Columbia University Center on Poverty and Social Policy. Poverty & Social Policy Brief. Vol. 6 No. 8. November 2, 2022. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/610831a16c95260dbd68934a/t/63629828229a175d3864c0a1/1667405865381/Expanded-CTC-and-Child-Poverty-in-2021-CTSP.pdf>.

¹⁰ Karpmann, Michael, Maag, Elaine, Zuckerman, Stephen, and Wissoker, Doug. “Child Tax Credit Recipients Experienced a Larger Decline in Food Insecurity and a Similar Change in Employment as Nonrecipients between 2020 and 2021.” Urban Institute. Brief. May 9, 2022. <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/child-tax-credit-recipients-experienced-larger-decline-food-insecurity-and>.

¹¹ Hammond, Samuel. “New research finds the Child Tax Credit promotes work.” December 10, 2020.

Niskanen Center. <https://www.niskanencenter.org/new-research-finds-the-child-tax-credit-promotes-work/>.

¹² “Absence of Monthly Child Tax Credit Leads to 3.7 Million More Children in Poverty in January 2022.” Columbia Center on Poverty and Social Policy. Policy Brief. February 17, 2022. <https://www.povertycenter.columbia.edu/publication/monthly-poverty-january-2022>.

¹³ Bovell-Ammon, Allison, C. McCann, Nicole, Mulugeta, Martha, Ettinger de Cuba, Stephanie, Raifman, Julia, and Shafer, Paul. “Association of the Expiration of Child Tax Credit Advance Payments with Food Insecurity in US Households.” Children's HealthWatch. Journal of American Medical Association Network Open. October 21, 2022. <https://childrenshealthwatch.org/association-of-the-expiration-of-child-tax-credit-advance-payments-with-food-insecurity-in-us-households/>.

The lesson from 2021 shows us that the best way to help children in need is through cash assistance that is delivered to families monthly and without any employment or earnings requirements, thereby ensuring that all households have a steady source of income to provide for children as they are undergoing critical stages of brain development.

First Focus on Children urges you to look to the example of the Child Tax Credit for guidance in improving TANF and pass reforms that require states to redirect more funds towards cash assistance to families.

Negative Implications of Work Requirements for Child Well-Being

Nearly 30 years of evidence show that TANF's work requirements have failed to improve employment outcomes for program participants.¹⁴ Documenting work is especially onerous for low-wage workers who often have no control over their schedules and whose hours may vary from week to week. Workers in immigrant households are more likely to be paid in cash and to lack pay stubs or paychecks, making employment verification difficult. Certain employers may be unwilling to provide a letter of employment verification.¹⁵ Furthermore, some parents are self-employed and may not have an employer available to provide verification. Work requirements also do not account for uncompensated child rearing and caretaking of family members, work that produces large benefits to the collective whole. Grandparents caring for grandchildren, or parents caring for children with disabilities or special health care needs face particular barriers to economic security.

Rather than fostering economic mobility, work requirements prevent parents and caretakers from accessing assistance programs and family support and have a negative impact on children and their families, hindering healthy child development and causing additional burdens on struggling families. The National Academy of Sciences sums it up by finding that “that work requirements are at least as likely to increase as to decrease poverty.”¹⁶

As we heard from Ms. Gray's testimony during last week's hearing, work requirements and other bureaucratic hurdles are particularly onerous for the millions of grandparents and older relatives who are caring for children, and often prevent these families from accessing TANF. Some households headed by grandparents or older caretakers can receive TANF assistance for child(ren) in the home as a “child-only” case, but the number of these caseloads vary greatly across states, and the level of cash assistance provided is often small and includes no wraparound support.¹⁷

Recommendations for TANF Reform

In closing, we urge you to improve TANF's effectiveness at reducing child poverty and promoting family economic mobility by:

- Adding child poverty reduction as the overarching goal of TANF;
- Requiring states to report on how TANF spending impacted their state child poverty rate;
- Mandating that states spend a significant amount of TANF funds on basic cash assistance for families with children with very low incomes;

¹⁴ Safawi, Ali and Paretti, LaDonna. “Most Parents Leaving TANF Work, But in Low-Paying, Unstable Jobs, Recent Studies Find.” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. November 19, 2020. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/family-income-support/most-parents-leaving-tanf-work-but-in-low-paying-unstable-jobs>

¹⁵ Gelatt, Julia and Koball, Heather. “Immigrant Access to Health and Human Services.” Urban Institute. October 2014. <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/33551/2000012-Immigrant-Access-to-Health-and-Human-Services.pdf>

¹⁶ “A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty.” National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. National Academies Press. 2019. <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/25246/a-roadmap-to-reducing-child-poverty>

¹⁷ Joyce, Kristen. “TANF Child-Only Cases: Characteristics, needs, services, and service delivery challenges.” Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. https://peerta.ct.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/uploaded_files/TANF_Child-Only-Brief-091919-508.pdf Last accessed March 30, 2023.

- Increasing program funding, indexing funds to inflation, and allocating additional funds to states with high rates of child poverty;
- Improving the program's ability to respond during times of increased need by eliminating its block grant structure;
- Eliminating work requirements for assistance and instead funding trained providers to help parents and caregivers pursue higher education or skills training by guaranteeing quality childcare, transportation assistance, and other supports;
- Using funds to prevent children from entering foster care and increasing support for relatives, including grandparents and older relatives, who care for children when their parents are unable;
- Getting rid of family caps, asset tests, family sanctions, arbitrary work requirements, and other policies that either block or reduce benefits to families with children and deepen racial economic disparities;
- Requiring that all states pass through all child support collected on behalf of households receiving TANF, rather than reimbursing themselves, and disregard any income received through child support for the purposes of TANF eligibility.

Welfare is Broken: Restoring Work Requirements to Lift Americans Out of Poverty

United States House Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Work and Welfare

Testimony of Donna Butts, Executive Director, Generations United

Wednesday, March 29th, 2:00 PM

Chairman LaHood, Ranking Member Davis, and members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for your commitment to families and the opportunity to submit written testimony about the critical role Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) plays in the lives of grandparents, other relatives and close family friends raising children, also known as grandfamilies or kinship families. My name is Donna Butts and I have the honor as serving as the executive director of Generations United.

Generations United's mission is to improve the lives of children, youth, and older adults through intergenerational collaboration, public policies, and programs for the enduring benefit for all. As the only national nonprofit focused solely on intergenerational solutions, Generations United acts as a catalyst for stimulating collaboration among a wide range of organizations focused on aging, children, and youth and provides a forum to explore areas of common ground to advance innovative public policies and programs.

For nearly twenty-five years, Generations United's National Center on Grandfamilies has been a leading voice for issues affecting families headed by grandparents, other relatives, and close family friends. Through the Center, Generations United leads an advisory group of organizations, caregivers, and youth that sets the national agenda to advance public will in support of these families. The Center's work is guided by the GRAND Voices Network of grandfamily caregivers representing 46 states and 12 tribes, including Ms. Victoria Gray of Arizona, who provided in-person testimony on behalf of grandfamilies at this hearing. Center staff conduct federal advocacy, train grandfamilies to advocate for themselves, and raise awareness about the strengths and needs of the families through an annual State of Grandfamilies report, media outreach, weekly communications, and awareness-raising events. As of fall 2021, Generations United, along with five national partners and an array of subject matter experts, also operates the first-ever national technical assistance center on grandfamilies and kinship families, known as the Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network (Network). Through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Community Living, the Network is providing a new way for government agencies and nonprofit organizations in states, tribes, and territories to collaborate and work across jurisdictional and systemic boundaries – all to improve supports and services for grandfamilies and kinship families now and into the future. More information can be found at www.gu.org, www.gksnetwork.org, and www.grandfamilies.org.

For many grandfamilies, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families is the only source of support to help meet the children's basic needs, yet barriers like work requirements can prevent many

of them from being able to access it and the payment amount still leaves most grandfamilies struggling to make ends meet.

When parents are unable to raise their children, grandparents and extended family step up and wrap children in the protective cocoon of family, providing roots and connection to culture, keeping siblings under one roof, and showering children with the one thing money cannot buy – love. Currently more than 2.5 million children benefit from the sacrifices of grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends, and they thrive in this loving care. Collectively, they save our country more than \$4 billion a year by keeping children connected to their roots and out of foster care.

Yet, grandfamilies often step into their caregiving role unexpectedly and struggle financially to provide for children they did not plan or expect to raise. Caregivers may step into this role for a host of reasons, including the parent’s substance use, mental illness, military deployment, or death. This list grows whenever our country faces a crisis, including most recently the COVID-19 pandemic. For every 1 child being raised by kin in foster care, there are 18 children being raised by kin outside foster care. TANF is one of the few sources of support for grandfamilies outside of the foster care system.

There are two basic types of grants a relative caregiver may receive under TANF: "child-only" and "family". Child-only grants were designed to consider only the needs and income of the child. A child’s income might include child support payments or a public benefit like Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Because most children have limited income, most relative caregivers can receive a child-only grant on behalf of the children in their care. Unfortunately, child-only grants are typically quite small and may be insufficient to meet the needs of the child.

The second type of TANF grant for which relative caregivers may be eligible is a “family grant.” Since one of the main purposes of TANF is “to provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives,” relative caregivers who meet the state’s income and asset criteria are eligible to receive a grant that addresses their needs, as well as those of the child. Although these grants are larger than the child only grants, federal law imposes a 60-month time limit and work requirements on such grants.

TANF Family Grants

Work requirements are not new under TANF, but in the past individuals throughout the country who were part of an AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) assistance unit were exempt if they were too ill to work, over age 59, were needed in the home to care for an incapacitated household member or were providing care for young children. These exemptions no longer exist under federal law, although the states have the flexibility to exempt groups from TANF’s work requirements and time limits. Depending on the state and the exemptions made, TANF family grants may not be available for retired relative caregivers or for caregivers who will need assistance for more than 60 months. This poses a significant barrier for

grandfamilies, as 45% of grandparents raising their grandchildren have raised them for five or more years.

Work requirements are also a barrier for grandfamilies. Just over half (56 percent) of grandparent caregivers are in the workforce, but many find that the lack of affordable childcare and the demands of providing for children who have experienced trauma force them to quit their jobs and dedicate their full attention to the children. Many are retired and living on fixed incomes and going back to work can be a huge challenge. Almost half of grandparents raising grandchildren are age 60 and older, and one in four has a disability. Some who try to go back to work are judged because of their age alone which keeps them from securing jobs.

In order to receive a family grant, caregivers must be needy. Consequently, there are limits on how much money they can have in assets, with the typical limit being \$2,000. State policies often allow for savings for a first home or college, but not for retirement. These asset limits can pose a problem for older caregivers who need retirement assets. Similarly, income disregards are not high enough to allow for those caregivers approaching retirement to continue to save. Grandfamilies are essentially penalized for responsibly saving for retirement. Countless grandfamilies report spending down their retirement savings to address the needs of the children.

“I was retired from my job with the federal government by that time, and I depleted my 401(k) to adopt and continue caring for my grandchildren. That was supposed to fund our retirement, but the grandchildren became our priority.”

— Sarah Smalls, Grandparent Caregiver, Virginia

TANF Child-Only Grants

To address some of these barriers most states offer TANF child-only grants. In most cases, child-only grants do not consider the family's assets or income and are not subject to work requirements, however the amount of that grant is vastly lower and not per child like foster care maintenance payments. Additionally, TANF eligibility rules and grant amounts vary significantly by state and tribe. On average, according to data compiled in 2011 by the GAO, families within the foster care system received \$511 per month in financial assistance for one child, compared with an average of just \$249 per month in financial assistance from TANF child-only grants. In 2022, many states still reported a child-only amount of just \$99 for the first child. The disparities become substantially larger for kin who care for sibling groups, and this inadequate assistance often necessitates foster care placement. This practice of unequal support per-child is reflective of TANF child-only policies around the country. While it is valued and essential, the amount of TANF child-only grants is largely inadequate to provide for the children's needs. In order to thrive, families routinely have to piece together other assistance from food banks and clothing closets. Often, they go without.

Child Support Enforcement

One additional barrier to accessing both TANF family and child-only grants, is the requirement that the grandparent or other relative caregiver turn over the right to collect child support from the parent to the state. Many grandparents are caring for children through informal arrangements without court or child welfare system involvement. If the state tries to locate the parent to collect support, they fear the parent will become angry and take the child back, placing the child in danger. Some grandparents fear for their own safety as well. Many grandparents simply want to help their adult child be able to re-parent. They know if their adult child has some of their income taken, the likelihood of being able to provide a home again for the child is further jeopardized. While states have the flexibility to use a “good cause” exception to waive the child support requirement if the caregiver can demonstrate a reason not to seek child support, few states use it. Instead, grandparents often chose not to pursue TANF and suffer emotionally and financially for the concerns of the children, the parents, and themselves.

Definition of Relative

“Relative” is not defined in the federal TANF law or in its regulations. Consequently, there are varying definitions across the states. For either family or child-only grants, only a handful of states allow adults with a family-like relationship to the children -- such as godparents and close family friends -- to be eligible as caregivers of children. This leaves large numbers of family caregivers who have stepped up to keep children out of foster care without access to critical support to meet the children’s needs.

TANF Application Process

The TANF application process can be complicated, long, and confusing, causing some grandfamilies to give up and go without. Some grandfamily caregivers feel overwhelmed with the duties of raising children they did not expect to raise and may not have the mental or physical energy, or the ability, to go through multiple complicated application processes for TANF, Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and other public benefit programs they may need.

Recommendations:

Generations United makes the following recommendations to ensure Temporary Assistance for Needy Families helps provide critical support for grandfamilies raising children.

Encourage States to:

- Reinstate clear exceptions to time limits and work requirements for TANF family grants for grandparent and other relative caregivers who are raising young children and/or are age 55 and older. Ensure no work requirements or time limits are placed on child-only grants.

- Eliminate asset limits for grandparent and other relative caregivers to qualify for TANF as has been done by several states. At a minimum, like common exemptions for college savings, caregivers must be able to keep retirement savings.
- Provide clear directives that child-only TANF grants cannot test caregiver income. These grants are intended for the child based on the income of the child.
- Make clear use of the “good cause” exception to complying with child support enforcement clarifying that caregivers do not have to pursue child support from the parents.
- Improve the adequacy of TANF child-only grants to better meet the needs of children, including by providing the same amount of TANF child-only support for each eligible child in the home.
- Allow adults with a family-like relationship to the children to be eligible for TANF child-only grants.
- Combine application requirements for TANF and other major public benefits, such as Medicaid or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Every day across the nation grandparents and other relatives step up to keep children with family and out of foster care. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families is an essential source of support to help these caregivers meet the children’s basic needs as they provide the love and care they need to thrive. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today on behalf of Generations United and the grandfamilies and kinship families we believe in and support.

Resources for Further Information and Recommendations:

[Policy Brief: Improving Grandfamilies’ Access to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families](#)
[Grandfamilies and Kinship Families: Strengths and Challenges Fact Sheet](#)
[Generations United’s Annual State of Grandfamilies Reports](#)
[Grand Facts State Fact Sheets](#)
[Grandfamilies & Kinship Support Network: A National Technical Assistance Center](#)



Written Comments

Welfare is Broken: Restoring Work Requirements to Lift Americans Out of Poverty

United States House Committee on Ways and Means

April 12, 2023

Helping and Lending Outreach Support ("HALOS") is a §501(c)(3) non-profit based in North Charleston, South Carolina. Our mission is to promote safe and nurturing homes for children in kinship care. Kinship care is when a grandparent, relative or family friend takes in a child who would otherwise be placed in foster care.

We are grateful to the Subcommittee for the opportunity to stress the critical role Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) plays in the lives of grandparents and other relatives raising children, also known as grandfamilies or kinship families. At HALOS, we serve hundreds of families each year in the State of South Carolina and we routinely connect these families with TANF as an essential source of support for the children entering their homes. These families sometimes depend on TANF as the *only* source of support to help meet children's basic needs, and complex or unclear work requirements are often a barrier, preventing many of them from being able to access it.

Grandparents are raising more than 2.5 million children in the United States currently. They often step into the caregiver role unexpectedly and experience financial struggles as they provide for children they did not plan to raise. These efforts keep vast numbers of children out of foster care and save our country more than \$4 billion each year, all while allowing children safety, stability, and a connection to their roots. Data shows that over 45% of all grandparents responsible for their grandchildren are age 60 and older.

The child-only TANF grant is critical to families like those led by Delores Wright. When Ms. Delores got the call to pick up her grandson from the hospital after he was born with drug exposure, she was retired and caring for her terminally ill husband. Her husband passed shortly after, and then she lost everything in a house fire. Two years later, she also took in Erick's brother, Shawn, when he was born. Her income is limited to her social security payment (less than \$2,500/month) and she is raising two growing boys. Ms. Delores is in her mid-eighties. The child-only TANF grant was a lifeline for her when she received it.

We ask that you consider and keep grandparents and other kinship families in mind when moving forward with TANF and any revisions to TANF. Specifically, we urge you to consider the following:

- Reinstating clear exceptions to time limits and work requirements for grandparent and other relative caregivers who are raising young children and/or are age 55 and older. Ensure no work requirements or time limits are placed on child-only grants.

- Eliminate asset limits for grandparent and other relative caregivers to qualify for TANF, as has been done by several states. At a minimum, like common exemptions for college savings, caregivers must be able to keep retirement savings.
- Provide clear directives that child-only TANF grants cannot test caregiver income. These grants are intended for the child based on the income of the child.
- Make clear use of the "good cause" exception to complying with child support enforcement clarifying that caregivers may ask the state not to pursue child support from the parents.
- Improve the adequacy of TANF child-only grants to better meet the needs of children, including by providing the same amount of TANF child-only support for each eligible child in the home.

HALOS fights for families who have worked, planned, and saved for retirement but then respond to the call to care for a relative child with little or no warning. TANF is a lifeline for them, and we thank you for keeping them in consideration when implementing any new TANF regulations.

Sincerely,



Executive Director

HALOS

jed@charlestonhalos.org



Key Results

- The Excel Center® is a successful, cost-effective solution for high school dropouts.
- After 5 years, graduates increase earnings by 38% compared to their peers.
- Graduates are more likely to be working and have college credits than their peers.
- All graduates - regardless of race, gender or demographics - experience similar earnings outcomes.

Context of the Issue

There is a high school dropout problem in Indiana. In 2019, more than 12% of students did not finish high school. Those who drop out have significantly worse labor market outcomes than peers. Hoosiers without a high school diploma earn, on average, less than \$10,000 per year and 37% less than those with a high school diploma as their highest credential. Adult learners have unique needs that are not one-size-fits-all, often balancing otherwise busy lives with full-time work while managing a household and caring for children. Hoosiers driven to finish high school as adults often have to choose between convenience and potential earnings. There is a solution that meets adult learners where they are, leads to higher earnings and has the evidence to prove it: The Excel Center.

Current Efforts

In 2019, almost 470,000 Hoosiers ages 25 and over had not earned a high school diploma (or equivalent). When one of these adults wants to return to school, they are typically directed to the High School Equivalency (HSE) test.¹ However, completion of an HSE is not common—in 2015, just over 6,600 Hoosiers successfully passed. Their earnings gains are minimal: students who barely pass the General Educational Development test (another high school equivalency test) see less than a 10% increase in earnings. A high school diploma will potentially trump an HSE when an employer compares two similar job applicants. A high school diploma offers something significantly different than the HSE test. In the process of completing the diploma, the student builds soft skills in such areas as attendance, persistence and interpersonal interaction. Where available,

the high school diploma can support learning for those whose educational needs cannot be met by traditional Adult Basic Education and the HSE test. Importantly, the HSE may simply evaluate whether one has skills or not, while the Excel Center experience is as much about a process of building skills as it is about completing the diploma. Despite this range of benefits, options for adults to complete a high school diploma are extremely limited.

Innovative Solution: The Excel Center

Founded by Goodwill of Central and Southern Indiana, The Excel Center is a tuition-free, public charter high school that supports adult learners in completing their state-certified high school diploma. The Excel Center provides small classes on a flexible schedule, assistance with transportation, and on-site child care in order to address the major barriers to being in class and ready to learn. Life coaches mentor students to help them navigate challenges, to assist in building soft skills necessary for the workforce, and to focus on postsecondary goals and preparedness such as credits towards an undergraduate degree or industry-recognized certifications. Goodwill of Central and Southern Indiana operates 15 Excel Center locations across Indianapolis and other parts of central and southern Indiana; there are three additional locations in northern Indiana. The collective Excel Center network includes 31 schools across five states and Washington, D.C.—all operated by local Goodwill organizations—with a goal of serving 30 total states by 2030.

¹ Indiana changed from administering the General Educational Development (GED) test to the High School Equivalency (HSE) test in 2014.

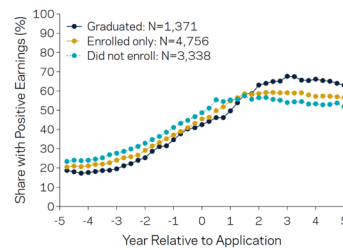
LEO's Study

LEO performed a rigorous, quasi-experimental study to evaluate the impact of The Excel Center's specialized approach. The study sample included all applicants to The Excel Center from January 2013 through June 2015. Three groups of applicants were studied: (a) those who applied to the program but did not enroll; (b) those who applied and enrolled but did not complete the program; and (c) those who both enrolled in and completed the program—with individuals in group (a) and (b) serving as a comparison group of "peers" to group (c). LEO researchers linked application records from the Excel Center with education and labor market data from the Indiana Management Performance Hub. LEO used earnings and employment data from five years after a student's application to The Excel Center in order to analyze changes in earnings over time.

Major Findings

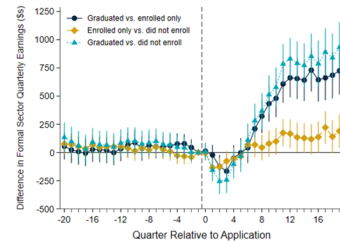
Higher employment: Excel Center graduates are 11 percentage points more likely to be employed in the formal sector than their peers (63% versus 52%).

Figure 1. Percent of Applicants with Formal Sector Employment



Higher earnings: Excel Center graduates see a 39% increase in their earnings in 5 years (\$13,028 annual income for graduates versus \$9,252 for peers), when controlling for observable characteristics.

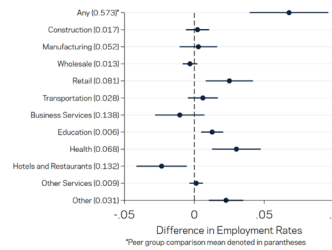
Figure 2. Differences in Annual Earnings



More college credits and certificates earned: Excel Center graduates are 18.5 percentage points more likely to earn college credits and 47.9 percentage points more likely to earn professional and course certificates.

More career opportunities: Excel Center graduates are 3 percentage points more likely to be employed in the health sector than their peers (10% versus 7%).

Figure 3. Probability of Employment in Different Sectors



No differences across groups: Excel Center graduates see similar increases in earnings regardless of gender, race, socioeconomic background, or geography.

Lasting State Benefit

At a cost of \$6,750 per student per year, the total cost for an Excel Center graduate is \$10,000. An Excel Center graduate is projected to make higher earnings over their lifetime, increasing the benefit to the individual and potentially to society through decreased use of public benefits and increased tax payments.

Key Takeaways

- Graduates of The Excel Center make more money, work in higher opportunity jobs, and earn more college credits and professional certificates more than their peers.
- The Excel Center costs the same as other charter schools, and has more advantages for adult dropouts than the common HSE alternative.
- The Excel Center is a proven model to help people who drop out of high school course-correct.

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**WRITTEN COMMENT FOR THE RECORD
ON BEHALF OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES**

**IN RESPONSE TO "WELFARE IS BROKEN: RESTORING WORK REQUIREMENTS TO LIFT AMERICANS OUT
OF POVERTY"**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON WORK AND WELFARE
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**MARCH 29, 2022
WASHINGTON, D.C.**



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Dear Chairman Smith, Subcommittee Chairman LaHood, Ranking Member Neal and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee Davis,

On behalf of the National Association of Counties (NACo), the only organization representing the nation's 3,069 counties, parishes, and boroughs, I write to thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the importance of the TANF program and how we can strengthen its effectiveness in serving county residents.

Regardless of population size, geography and available resources, counties are deeply invested in ensuring healthy, safe and vibrant communities. Among our numerous responsibilities, serving as the front-line of the social safety net is primary function of county governments. However, with nearly 37.9 million Americans living below the federal poverty line in 2021, including nearly 12 million children, intergenerational poverty remains one of the most pressing challenges facing county leaders as we seek to safeguard the well-being of our residents and communities.

Recognizing that poverty operates across multiple systems and population levels, county leaders have adopted multigenerational approaches, seeking to disrupt the cycles and systems that keep families at risk. Counties employ 257,000 human services workers nationwide and invest more than \$62 billion annually in federal, state and local funding to support human services programs. Several states also task counties with administering key federal human services programs that help stabilize vulnerable residents, including the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF), which is the focus of today's hearing. Counties administer TANF in California, Colorado, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, and Virginia. Together, these nine states represent 55 percent of total program participants and accounted for \$14.4 billion (45.6 percent) of total federal, state and local TANF expenditures in FY 2020.

Given the role that county governments play in administering TANF and other public assistance programs—as well as in employing 3.6 million Americans—our employees, administrators and elected officials have unique insight into the barriers that certain residents face in accessing stable employment. From our perch on the ground, county governments can attest that current labor shortages cannot be solved by changes to TANF alone. Because TANF is structured as a block grant—rather than a countercyclical program—it is especially limited in reach. Those receiving public assistance are often already working or face unique barriers to employment, while those who might be brought into the workforce are still too low in number to close the gap of all open job opportunities in a given community. For instance, in Warren County, Ohio (population 246,553), where unemployment is 3.2 percent, 711 adults receive Unemployment Insurance (UI) while two adults receive cash assistance. However, within a five mile radius of the county seat, there are more than 3000 job postings (many of which may be seeking more than one hire.)

Meanwhile, county caseworkers across the country understand that TANF's complex work requirements remain a significant barrier for individuals seeking aid while creating extensive administrative burden for benefits workers. Often, TANF-eligible residents face multiple barriers to employment that require significant wraparound supports—such as access to child care, education, health care, substance abuse treatment, stable housing, transportation and more. At the same time, TANF funding has remained at \$16.5 billion annually since its inception, with no growth for inflation, while the formula for state allocations remains linked to data from the mid-1990s. As a result, basic assistance is limited in its ability to provide meaningful financial support to households struggling to make ends meet. Across county-administered TANF states in 2020, the average maximum benefit allowed for a single-parent with two children earning no income was just \$570 a month—a figure that declines rapidly with earnings.¹ However, those earnings are often restricted, as evidence suggests that TANF participants engaging in employment are more likely to have low-paying, unstable jobs. Recent analysis by the Congressional Budget Office suggests that even if basic assistance manages to shift individuals



from assistance to employment, that work is insufficient to lift participants out of poverty, “although some people have higher income because they work more to meet the programs’ requirements, other people do not meet the work requirements and are left with little income from in-kind benefits, cash payments, earnings, or other sources. Overall, the increase in total earnings from TANF’s work requirements is about equal to the reduction in benefits.”¹¹ For these reasons, NACo opposes arbitrary and counterproductive work and participation requirements and supports a strong county role in mutually negotiated outcome measures in which states are judged by their progress toward achieving these goals.

TANF-eligible individuals who are not already working, or who are stuck in low-paying and unstable employment, may face multiple barriers to stable employment that require significant wraparound supports—such as access to child care, long-term education and training, health care, substance abuse treatment, stable housing, transportation and more. Instead of providing participants with these supports, county caseworkers instead must spend significant amounts of time tracking and documenting hours of participation to ensure compliance with stringent, often unworkable rules governing the Work Participation Rate (WPR). It is unsurprising that basic assistance represents little more than a fifth of TANF expenditures. Even then, children—not work-eligible adults—represent 71 percent of the basic assistance caseload.

In contrast, the flexible components of the TANF block grant allow many counties to fund programs and services that help vulnerable residents gain the necessary stability to access sustainable employment. With these dollars, county governments often fund innovative anti-poverty programs as well as key supports—such as child care—that enable low-income individuals to engage in the workforce. However, the success of these initiatives is not accounted for given the narrow metrics by which TANF measures performance.

Counties have long called for a substantive, bipartisan reauthorization of the TANF program to address shortcomings that hamper its effectiveness in lifting vulnerable families out of poverty, including by connecting participants to sustainable employment. First and foremost, we urge our federal partners to ensure funding adequacy for the program by increasing the size of the block grant and indexing it to inflation to ensure that its actual value no longer erodes over time.

Additionally, while TANF alone cannot solve worker shortages and intergenerational poverty, additional flexibilities could drastically improve the ability of counties and states to meet the individual needs of our caseloads. These include, but are not limited to:

- Ensuring any time-limited assistance is accompanied by adequate federal and state funding for a wide continuum of supportive services that will help families move towards self sufficiency
- Replacing the 90 percent WPR for two-parent families with the 50 percent WPR applied to single-parent families
- Providing flexibility in meeting the 30 hour weekly work for two-parent and single parent families, including allowing partial credit for hours worked that are less than 30
- Expanding the list of the 12 activities included in the original TANF law that qualify as work
- Allowing individuals who are participating in substance use or mental health treatment, and domestic violence services to count those activities as work
- Permitting at least twelve weeks of thirty hours per week a year for job search and job readiness activities
- Expanding the percentage of the TANF caseload that could benefit from the 24-month limit for vocational education



- Allowing more than 10 hours a week of basic skills and education training to count as work activities and allowing these hours to count toward work participation rates
- Removing teen parents from the 20 percent vocational education limit
- Exempting relatives who are caring for a child who would otherwise be in foster care from the work requirements and the time limit
- Allowing higher education, vocational training and high school equivalency programs to count towards the work participation rates
- Exempting adults who are the primary caregivers of a disabled family member from the work requirements
- Allowing a parent providing child care in a two-parent family to count toward the work requirement
- Preserving and increasing state flexibility in administering the federal time limits, such as allowing states to discount months in which the recipient participates in work and/or specific work activities, including substance use disorder treatment, behavioral health and domestic violence services in compliance with their employability plan and eliminating childcare, transportation, and housing from the definition of assistance.
- Lifting the lifetime ban on TANF eligibility for individual family members with drug felony convictions
- Allowing counties and states to gradually phase-out cash benefits as a family's income increases, as under current policy, a single dollar increase in TANF's Income Reporting Threshold can make a family ineligible for benefits
- Retaining and enhancing state and county flexibility in using TANF to support subsidized employment programs
- Greater flexibility for counties to coordinate workforce development programs with TANF, including by blending and braiding funds

Counties stand ready to work with Congress and the administration to make evidence-driven improvements to the TANF program to ensure it serves the needs of vulnerable county residents. We welcome ongoing dialogue with this Committee that acknowledges the complexities and challenges facing county agencies and those we serve as we work to implement upstream solutions to intergenerational poverty.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to continued opportunities offer the county perspective on this topic. Please direct any follow-up questions to Rachel Mackey, NACo's Legislative Director of Human Services and Education: rmackey@naco.org.

Sincerely,



Matthew Chase,
Executive Director



ⁱ Calculations based Welfare Rules Database, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/wrd-2020-databook-companion-piece-feb2022.pdf>
ⁱⁱ <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/57702>



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Restoring Work Requirements to Lift Americans Out of Poverty

**Presented to the U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Ways and Means**

Scott Centorino
Opportunity Solutions Project

Overview

Work requirements work. The members of this committee have known that simple fact since at least 1996, when a bipartisan majority in Congress passed and President Bill Clinton signed The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-193), popularly known as “welfare reform.”

That bill led to a mountain of social science literature outlining resulting increases in income and workforce participation and decreases in poverty and dependency.¹⁻²⁻³⁻⁴⁻

⁵ But in the long shadow of that mountain, federal policymakers have not acted to expand its success across America’s safety net programs. Instead of doubling down on dynamism, federal policy has mostly sleepwalked into sclerosis.

Did Washington deepen and multiply the 1996 welfare reform’s commonsense changes in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program? No. Did Washington apply the lessons of comprehensive work requirements and time limits for able-bodied adults to Medicaid, food stamps, and public housing? No.

Instead, Washington has expanded these programs again and again to more and more able-bodied adults.

On the positive side of the ledger, state policymakers have filled the vacuum in the last 25 years. But they do so handcuffed by federal law and regulations which limit their options and authority to make real change across America despite obvious opportunities.

The two organization for which I work on welfare policy—I am a Senior Fellow at the Foundation for Government Accountability (FGA) and a Visiting Fellow at Opportunity Solutions Project (OSP), both non-partisan, non-profit organizations—have tracked and, in many cases, encouraged these efforts and results at the state level.

We cannot claim originality in our primary finding—work requirements work. FGA has released report after report showing the impact of work requirements in boosting incomes, even doubling incomes for folks leaving welfare who go back to work.⁶⁻⁷

For example, when Kansas reformed its TANF program to increase work incentives, lower time limits, and strengthen sanctions, the state also released data regarding the results.⁸ In Kansas:

- Families who left welfare saw their earnings more than double within one year;
- Families who left welfare saw their earnings triple within four years;
- Higher wages and earned income tax credits offset the value of welfare benefits lost;⁹
- Workers earned jobs in diverse fields and shattered the misguided expectation that welfare enrollees would be worse off because they can only fill entry-level, short-term jobs in service industries; and
- Work requirements drove up workforce participation.

Amidst widespread worker shortages and related inflation and supply-chain problems, the state of the American economy today makes the issue of work requirements not just relevant but urgent.

These shortages have more than one cause. But massively increasing welfare and weakening work requirements surely ranks among the primary drivers. Over the last three years, the federal government has expanded welfare programs and payments again and again—from a 25 percent increase in food stamp benefits to a prohibition on Medicaid removals and more.¹⁰ And, at the same time, the federal government has suspended work requirements across welfare.¹¹

But the current worker shortages just represent an acute symptom of a longer-term problem across America. Today, the labor force participation rate is 62.6 percent—the lowest rate since Jimmy Carter was president.¹² Just 20 years ago, the rate was nearly 70 percent.¹³

Again, work requirements can help. The economy needs workers, and able-bodied welfare enrollees who are not working are perfectly positioned to meet the need.

And, because volunteering and training can count toward compliance, work requirements are flexible enough to accommodate individuals in any region, including areas with fewer open jobs, and at any time, even when paid work is not as easy to find as it is now.

As outlined in recommendations below, TANF has its share of problems which need fixing. This Committee should focus on tightening standards in TANF to protect and build on the program's successes since 1996.

But the biggest problems—and opportunities—for work requirements and systemic welfare reform on a scale which can truly change the future of poverty, dependency, and economic growth in the United States lay scattered across America's other, bigger welfare programs.

Without federal reform, states remain handcuffed. In Medicaid, a number of states remain in a kind of legal, regulatory, and political limbo as they have requested and received permission to pursue work requirements in their Medicaid programs, only to have that permission withdrawn by the Biden administration or held up in courts under current federal law.¹⁴

Yet, the Biden administration has also not appealed a decision that allows Georgia to implement a work requirement for its expansion population.¹⁵ If states, like Georgia, make it clear that they will only continue expansion for able-bodied adults under Obamacare with a work requirement in place, will the Biden administration be more accommodating? Will courts allow them to proceed?

Unfortunately, the answer to this critical question remains unclear under current federal law. Congress can and should change this state of play.

In food stamps, state agencies are encouraged by the federal government to submit geographic waivers and no-good-cause exemptions which undermine the work requirement in that program.¹⁶⁻¹⁷ Congress can and should change this state of play.

In public housing, work requirements are proven to work.¹⁸ But local public housing authorities struggle to receive permission to do so as part of limited programs with the federal government's blessing.¹⁹ Congress can and should change this state of play.

In short, the appetite for more and stronger work requirements across welfare is enormous across the country. States are starved for more authority to build on past successes.

To that end, this Committee can shape the future of welfare reform debates and move the United States in the direction it needs to go if it chooses not to turn over significantly more authority and money to the states: a true, universal work requirement across federal welfare programs.

Recommendations:

- The Committee should strengthen TANF's work requirements through more robust standards applied to individual enrollees, rather than relying on work-participation standards open to abuse through counterproductive and counterintuitive caseload reduction credits.
- The Committee should expand TANF's work requirement rules to beneficiaries of all TANF-funded benefits, including childcare programs.
- The Committee should eliminate exemptions which allow some enrollees to receive benefits after the statutory 60-month limit.
- The Committee should make clear that TANF funds may be used by states to fund Employment and Training (E&T) programs in food stamps.
- The Committee should stop state agencies' current abuse of TANF as a "fast lane" to skip program integrity measures in other welfare programs, like the broad-based categorical eligibility loophole in food stamps.
- The Committee should require that states spend a certain minimum threshold of TANF benefits on work supports and a maximum threshold of TANF benefits on cash support.
- The Committee should limit the number of authorized users per TANF EBT card to two individuals.
- The Committee should prohibit TANF EBT cards from being used by a TANF recipient in their own place of business.
- The Committee should drive forward debate and legislation to expand TANF's pro-work elements and build a true national and universal work requirement

across welfare programs by enacting work requirements for able-bodied adults who receive benefits through TANF, food stamps, Medicaid, public housing, and childcare subsidies.

On-the-ground reality

Finally, a network of charities I work with recently sent out a survey about this very issue—work requirements in welfare. Many, many charity leaders took the time to respond to the survey. These non-profit leaders often do not have the time, opportunity, or access to share their on-the-ground experiences with policymakers.

But their words can only encourage policymakers who understand the power and potential of a robust work requirement for able-bodied adults on welfare. They have enthusiastically and graciously allowed me the privilege of incorporating some of their most relevant comments into my own written testimony:

- **Jon Barrett, Pennsylvania, Conestoga Valley Christian Community Services:**

"The lack of work requirements has made a HUGE difference in the lives of our clients...for the worse. It has crushed dignity and has increased depression while encouraging dependence on government. We have seen that this keeps people in a destructive cycle of dependency and they rarely if ever move out of a life of constant 'relief' and struggle...

"Getting our clients back to a 'need to work' reality would not only reduce inflation because more people would be working which will positively impact society, it will also help with a crisis more dire than inflation which is mental health...

"Rather than the government setting up benefits to incentivize going back to work, the current system is forcing our clients to choose between benefits OR work and they are choosing benefits over work in EVERY case we see."

- **Lana Henry, Missouri, RISE (Reaching Independence Through Support & Education):**

"With the families I work with, the lack of work requirements has made a negative difference in their lives. Yes, I think they should be reinstated. Work requirements as an external motivator encourage able-bodied people to work (an innate need), rather than continue dependency on free aid.

"The RISE program helps families living paycheck to paycheck (relying upon government subsidies and aid) to

work toward becoming self sufficient. The majority of local families we attempt to recruit to RISE refuse the free support program because they fear losing their government benefits—including SNAP. They are employable and can work. They choose to not work and live as they're living—basically dependent (forever) on government aid. They live dissatisfied lives, with unmet potential & low self esteem, unable to break free from the unseen trap that is restricting their ability to personally thrive."

- **Rich Schaus, Oklahoma, Muskogee Gospel Rescue Mission:**

"Many years ago, our government saw the value of people with disabilities and created laws to ensure that they are not discriminated against when it comes to employment. However, today people seek to have a disability so that they do not need to work.

"The men and women I work with are mostly able bodied and would work but are now identified as disabled and thus 'cannot' work. We have a job training program and many discover that they can work and then strive to get away from government funding, but when they go to get off the programs they are discouraged by DHS and other social workers...

"One of our guys at GRM was waiting on disability. He had been a roofer and had fallen off of the roof one too many times. He had become afraid of heights. In a random conversation he mentioned that before he did roofs that he had built cabinets. I asked him if he thought he could do that sort of work again and he said he could. That week we needed some shelves built and he did an incredible job. We showed that work to a local cabinet company and they hired him. He just needed an opportunity to rethink life. It was reasonable to become uncomfortable on roofs, but he still could work."

- **Sarah Swankler, Pennsylvania, Brethren Housing Association:**

"In my current work as a social worker in homeless services, I have observed the disincentive for employment that is being perpetuated with the current expectations. Recipients are very content to simply collect these 'entitlement benefits' and have no desire to strive to improve their circumstances. Recipients have been quoted to say they can budget better when they earn their money

but these entitlement benefits 'I don't need to budget for them.'

"Recipients who are able-bodied should be encouraged to work and provide for their families. Not just as it will help our overall society to regain a value in honest work but because it will improve the individuals' wellbeing, self confidence, purpose, and dignity. There is a sense of despair and discouragement by the recipients who choose to stay home, stay isolated, and collect entitlement benefits. There is a feeling of 'why try? why put myself out there when I can just stay comfortable enough with the benefits that I have.'

"...[P]ost-pandemic and all the ripple effects that have continued, we are seeing families who reach the program maximum time without accomplishing any goals, including obtaining permanent housing...

"They are reporting depression in large numbers. And these behaviors are transferring down to their children and the next generation. The families are sleeping all day and still reporting they are tired. Their hygiene is poor and their support network is bleak.

"There is a palpable lack of dignity and self-worth from the families we serve who are not doing any meaningful activity in their days. When our case managers are encouraging our families to find employment or pursue education, the response is 'Why?'..."

¹ Nic Horton and Jonathan Ingram, "Work requirements are working for Kansas families: How welfare reform increases incomes and improves lives," Foundation for Government Accountability (2017), <https://thefga.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Work-Requirements-are-Working-for-Kansas-Families.pdf>.

² Ron Haskins, et. al, "A Safety Net that Works: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families," The American Enterprise Institute (2017).

³ Ron Haskins, "Work over welfare: The inside story of the 1996 welfare reform law," Brookings Institution Press (2006).

⁴ Mary Daly and Joyce Kwok, "Did welfare reform work for everyone? A look at young single mothers," Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco (2009), <https://www.frbsf.org/economic-research/publications/economic-letter/2009/august/welfare-reform-single-mothers/>.

⁵ Rebecca M. Blank, "Declining caseloads/increased work: What can we conclude about the effects of welfare reform," Federal Reserve Bank of New York (2001), <https://www.newyorkfed.org/medialibrary/media/research/epr/01v07n2/0109blan.pdf>

⁶ Nicholas Horton and Jonathan Ingram, "Work requirements are working in Arkansas: How commonsense welfare reform is improving Arkansans' lives," Foundation for Government Accountability (2019), <https://thefga.org/research/workrequirements-arkansas/>.

⁷ Jonathan Ingram, Nicholas Horton, "Welfare Reform is Moving Mississippians Back to Work," Foundation for Government Accountability (2019) <https://thefga.org/paper/mississippi-food-stamps-work-requirement/>.

⁸ Nic Horton and Jonathan Ingram, "Work requirements are working for Kansas families: How welfare reform increases incomes and improves lives," Foundation for Government Accountability (2017), <https://thefga.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Work-Requirements-are-Working-for-Kansas-Families.pdf>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Scott Centorino, "BidenStamps are driving workers home and prices up," Washington Examiner (2021), <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/restoring-america/faith-freedom-self-reliance/bidenstamps-are-driving-workers-home-and-prices-up>.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² "Labor force participation rate," St. Louis Federal Reserve (2023), <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CIVPART>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Foundation for Government Accountability, "FGA statement on Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services revoking work requirements," Foundation for Government Accountability (2021), <https://thefga.org/press/centers-for-medicare-and-medicaid-services-revoking-work-requirements/>.

¹⁵ Rebecca Grapevine, "Georgia moves ahead with Medicaid work requirement plan," Capitol Beat News Service (2022), <https://capitol-beat.org/2022/11/georgia-moves-ahead-with-medicaid-work-requirement-plan/>.

¹⁶ Jonathan Bain, Jonathan Ingram, et al., "Waivers gone wild: How states are still fostering dependency," Foundation for Government Accountability (2019), <https://thefga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/WGW2.pdf>.

¹⁷ Scott Centorino, "No good cause: How a food stamp loophole could become the next big battle in the war on work," Foundation for Government Accountability (2022), <https://thefga.org/paper/food-stamp-loophole-next-big-battle/>.

¹⁸ Scott Centorino, "Room to Grow: Work Requirements in Public Housing will Increase Independence and Preserve Resources for the Truly Needy," Foundation for Government Accountability (2020), <https://thefga.org/research/public-housing-work-requirements/>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

To whom it my concern,

I'm a single grandmother raising my granddaughter. When I received guardianship of my granddaughter 6 yrs ago I worked outside the house. I went to apply for work related daycare, and the child only grant. I was told here in Oregon that the child only grant is based off my income and that I did not qualify for anything. I was forced to work overtime at my job so I could afford to pay daycare so that meant more time away from my granddaughter, which really needed me Due to her abandonment issues. We make the choice to keep our grandchildren safe and out of the custody of children services and pay a harsh reality when most services are based on our income and not the needs of the family or child those needs of the family and child do not change just because of our income, I've had to give up our home and move to a fifth wheel because I could not afford to stay there any longer with the rising cost in our economy. I was even told at that time from the ombudsman that maybe I should just sign her over to DHS so we could get the services I was requesting now that's a sad reality. I have to ask if you were forced to make that decision because of a financial hardship and only needing help with daycare would you sign your grand child over or would you do what you need to do to make ends meet for your family? For me signing her over was not an option so I did what I had to do to make ends meet. Now I ask you to take a moment and think about if I received the child only grant in assistance with daycare would I have given up my home that my granddaughter had lived in and was familiar with? The answer is no I'm asking you to take into consideration the position families are put in attempting to keep their children/grandchildren out of the system and with family members. And weigh out the cost of having these children in DHS custody as opposed to lifting the income requirements so grandparents and family members raising family members. Children could receive the child only grant. The other issue I hear a lot about is that they force us to comply with child support enforcement. When I took over guardianship, the agreement was to give my daughter time to find, stable, housing, employment, and for her to get clean and sober. The last thing I wanted to add to her plate was child support. I wanted her focus to first and foremost, beginning, clean, and sober. She was also involved in an abusive relationship that I wanted her to get away from. I did apply at first for child support due to my financial situation and needing the extra income, and being denied for the child on the grant. When Covid hit I had to find a job working from home because there were no daycare's open at that time. I was able to use essential staff daycare at first, which was no cost to me and help make ends meet then I found a job working from home, but that was also difficult because I was homeschooling at that time and did not have the extra money to pay a tutor to come in and help with that. So again I ask that here in Oregon the income restrictions are lifted and that each families situation is taken into consideration , and to also look at the money we are saving the state keeping our grand children out of the system. Thank you for your time and reading this and taking this into consideration. If you have any further questions, you can contact me at 360-6078919 or my email Which is Tstantini62@gmail.com

Research Brief | February 2023

Holistic case management helps families escape the cycle of poverty

leo WILSON SHEEHAN
LAB FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES



Key Results

Based on a two-year followup survey, evidence suggests that:

- Individuals offered holistic case management are more likely to be employed full time than their peers.
- Unemployed clients offered holistic case management earn more.
- Unstably housed clients offered holistic case management have increased housing stability.

Context of the Issue

In 2019, nearly 14 percent of Texans lived in poverty, and more than 19 percent of Texas children experienced poverty. Designing policies that effectively move these families out of poverty is challenging because their reason(s) for being in poverty are varied and families can have multiple influencing factors, such as: a disability, lack of skills, loss of a home to crippling medical debt, being a single parent, recovering from an addiction, having a criminal record, being an undocumented worker, not having adequate transportation to reliably get to a job, to name a few. While overcoming just one of these factors is challenging, many families are experiencing more than one of these barriers. National surveys in 2004 and 2006 discovered that more than one in five current welfare recipients were experiencing three or more barriers simultaneously. Therefore, a successful tool for those in poverty to utilize must attack many fronts at once, if it is truly designed to help them climb out of poverty and achieve self-sufficiency.

Current Efforts

Safety net programs support Texans with a variety of resources. In 2020, approximately 3.7 million Texas residents received SNAP and more than 45,000 individuals received TANF benefits. Interventions like individualized service plans and case management attempt to address issues related to poverty, and have been used with patients with severe mental illness, those experiencing housing instability, former prisoners re-entering the community, and in a number of other contexts. In these examples, programs are very specific to the presenting issue and do not completely address the multidimensional nature of what prevents families from achieving self-sufficiency.



Catholic Charities Fort Worth's Solution: Padua Program

The Padua® Program (Padua) is a holistic case management program designed by Catholic Charities Fort Worth to address the unique set of barriers faced by families in poverty. The program has five main elements: (1) a detailed assessment, (2) an actionable service plan, (3) a two-person case management team with small caseloads, (4) intensive, strengths-based case management services, and (5) strategic, flexible financial resources. The case management team designs an individualized service plan that helps them prioritize and methodically tackle issues with clients. The Padua model leverages staff's relationships with agencies in the community to help clients efficiently access resources. These partnerships break down the silos that often exist across community organizations, freeing up time and energy for clients to focus on their goals. Padua staff have small caseloads that enable them to build strong relationships with the families they serve. These relationships support participants over the long haul—families can participate in Padua until they reach self-sufficiency, which often means they are engaged in services for a number of years.

LEO's study

LEO conducted a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to assess Padua's impact on participants. LEO enrolled clients into the study over the course of two years, with one cohort in 2015 and one in 2016. Approximately 11,000 individuals contacted CCFW seeking assistance during these enrollment periods. Of those 1,072 were eligible for the study, and 40 percent agreed to participate. In total, 193 study participants were offered access to the Padua program and 234 were offered services "as usual"—a list of the organizations and services available to them at CCFW and in the broader community. Study participants completed in-person surveys at application as well as one and two years after opting into the study. Administrative data sources were also used to analyze changes in outcomes over time. LEO measured program impacts by comparing differences in outcomes between those who were and were not offered Padua, and conducted exploratory analysis on how Padua affected different subgroups of applicants.

Major findings

- **Higher Employment:** Those offered Padua services are 25 percent more likely to report being employed full time than their peers.
- **Higher Earnings:** Unemployed individuals offered Padua services earn, on average, 46 percent more (roughly \$420 more per month) than unemployed individuals offered "services as usual."
- **Increased Stable Housing:** Unstably housed individuals offered Padua are 60 percent more likely to have stable housing 24 months later compared to unstably housed individuals offered "services as usual."
- **Less credit card debt:** Those offered Padua services experience a sharp decline in credit card debt that persists over time compared to peers (roughly \$400 less in credit card debt).
- **Better Health:** Those offered Padua services are 53 percent more likely to rate their health as having improved or stayed "Excellent" after program application compared to their peers.



Lasting benefits:

The findings shown above persist over the 24 months of the initial study. Currently available administrative data suggests that these benefits persist for longer durations of time. To more fully understand the lasting impacts of Padua, CCFW and LEO have enrolled an additional 702 individuals in a study and are following administrative earnings data over multiple years.

Key takeaways

- Individuals offered Padua services have less credit card debt, better health, and are more likely to have full-time employment.
- Padua provides services to those in poverty by addressing many factors at once, as opposed to dealing with factors in silos.
- Evidence suggests Padua has a particularly large impact on those stably housed and unemployed. This research is ongoing.

1. The average time in the program is 20 months, but many families are in the program for more than two years.
NOTE: For a complete summary of the study please visit <https://www.nber.org/papers/w30992>.

Submission for Hearing: Welfare is Broken

Submitted by: Maria Pontones-Bonenfant
 P: 908-415-4882
 F: 732-643-9664
 20 Standish Drive
 Ocean, NJ 07712

Work Requirements for those on Government Assistance

I have changed the title slightly because Welfare isn't the only problem with regard to government programs discouraging work.

If this committee is going to look at ways to encourage work, it also has to look at the Social Security Survivor earnings limit. I submit these comments for perspective, as a former recipient of such benefits. Remember, these beneficiaries are not retirees, although the laws are the same across the board. These recipients are working-age single parents. And single parents purely through bad luck, not any fault of their own.

Background

I became a widow at the age of 43. At the time I was the mother of a 10 and a 7-year-old. My husband was a Wall Street Analyst and former engineer. I was a stay-at-home mother because I had been a telecom engineer and my career was a casualty of the 2001 industry bubble. My husband had a master's degree from Caltech and I had one from Cornell, both in engineering. We had a comfortable life, although, on one salary in the metro NYC area, it was not extravagant.

I began receiving benefits in October of 2010. It was at that time that I was told that I was subject to an earnings limit of around \$16,000. This was the same limit as for a 62 year old, presumably with minimal living expenses and no dependents. But I was raising two growing children, and without a husband, in order to work, I would need childcare. I had a mortgage that we qualified for on both our salaries at the time we bought it. I now had to pay COBRA to the tune of \$1500/mo for the three of us (for myself alone it would have been half that amount).

In a perfect world, my children's survivor benefits would support their physical needs, and mine would pay childcare expenses so that I could work to afford some of the quality-of-life aspects that my husband's salary had given us. Again, these weren't luxuries – I just mean staying in our school district and keeping our minimum daily activities. My children had already lost their father. I did not want them to lose their home, school (=friends), or activities too. They were emotionally traumatized enough.

But if I worked, I would slowly lose my benefit. And in the metro NYC area, childcare is so expensive that I simply could not work enough hours to pay for it and keep more money after taxes and commute than I would net from staying at home and collecting Social Security. This was true even with my engineering

master's because without my spouse and not having local family members to rely on, I could not work more than a certain number of hours a week and still make sure my kids' schedule could be maintained.

IN OTHER WORDS, THE SOCIAL SECURITY EARNINGS LIMIT MADE IT UNAFFORDABLE FOR ME TO WORK AT ALL. I did the math. (I'm good at math. 😊)

Proposal

How about treating survivors differently than early retirees? How about making earnings limits more reasonable for their realities? How about setting limits that take into account a home that qualified for a mortgage, quite possibly on two salaries¹, that childcare is expensive, that children don't interact with their peers freely in neighborhoods anymore but rather through extracurricular activities that aren't free?

Additionally, how about treating child survivors as unemancipated minors and not 62-year-old early retirees? How about if a child is lucky enough to be cast in a Broadway show for 14 months (as my son was²), they don't lose two years of benefits because nowhere else in any Federal or State statute is it legal for an unemancipated minor to support themselves (provided their income is temporary) regardless of the amount of income?

I ask Congress to consider raising the Survivor earnings limit to something that allows an approximation of whatever lifestyle the family had EARNED and is threatened through no fault of their own. Alternatively, or in addition, Congress may consider removing a dollar for every three earned rather than for every two. For me, this would have made working feasible.

A final thought, and an important one

As a general comment, if you want to encourage work for recipients of any Federal assistance, for Pete's sake, factor in the cost of living in an area when setting earnings limits! (You know how to do this – Medicare sets reimbursements this way.) Having a certain level of earnings goes way further in some areas than others, and factors into the decision of whether working is more or less financially viable than collecting benefits.

¹ In 1939 when the Survivor benefit was created, only about 5% of households with children had both parents working. In the modern age, it is closer to 75%, according to census data. Social Security laws have not kept up with modern family dynamics.

² One upside of my financial situation, however, is that since I wasn't working, I had time to help my son establish his career. He's been in the business for 7 years now – look for him in the Lionsgate theatrical release called *Unsung Hero*, later this year. You can also see him in the opening sequence of the pilot episode of the *Dynasty* reboot (playing piano), and in the Amazon Prime series, the *Romanoffs*, *Panorama*. By the way, he has paid far more in taxes in those 7 years than the \$25,000 in child support that I lost thanks to his job, so you're welcome. (In other words – you would have benefitted from his job even if you'd paid benefits to him, as I think would be the case for most – another reason to encourage work while receiving benefits – the end result for the taxpayer is net positive.



Perry County Job and Family Services

April 12, 2023

The Honorable Jason Smith
Chairman
House Committee on Ways and Means
1011 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Darin LaHood
Chairman
Subcommittee on Work and Welfare
1424 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Neal
Ranking Member
House Committee on Ways and Means
372 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Daniel Davis
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Work and Welfare
2159 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith, Subcommittee Chairman LaHood, Ranking Member Neal, and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee Davis,

On behalf of Perry County (Ohio) Job and Family Services agency, I appreciate the opportunity to share comments we have in response to the hearing held March 29, 2023, titled Welfare is Broken: Restoring Work Requirements to Lift Americans Out of Poverty.

My name is Tamara K. Corp, and I lead the Income Maintenance Department of Perry County's Job and Family Services which is located in New Lexington, Ohio. Perry County is an Appalachian Ohio community of about 36,000 residents lying an hour and a half southeast of Columbus. It is a former coal mining community, with thousands employed in the industry as late as 1980's, although the last coal mine closed and laid off its workforce in November of 2019.

However, the prospects for a new age of prosperity for the Perry County community are brightening as development of the greater Columbus region approaches. Parts of our community are only 35 minutes away from the Intel fab labs now under construction, and the many thousands of job and career opportunities it offers along with other industries and employers new to Central Ohio.

I want to share insights from my experience overseeing a staff of 12 case workers who determine eligibility for SNAP, TANF and Medicaid programs. My team provides program services for customers, including, in the case of TANF, assessments, placements, training and work activities. We currently serve a caseload of over 3,000 Perry County residents. As their supervisor, I work closely with my staff in carrying out all day-to-day activities of the Income Maintenance Department.

Tamara K. Corp
page two

In addition to my current role, please consider two other experiences in evaluating my submission. Shortly after 2005, before I was department supervisor, I was given responsibility for all of Perry County's TANF work-required cases. Despite the challenges of applying the then-new federal work participation rate requirement given the extreme economic dislocation and high poverty our community was experiencing, Perry County JFS met or exceeded its work participation requirements consistently over the next five years.

I also know firsthand how TANF can work as policymakers would intend it to. I was a participant in the program at a point prior to joining Perry County JFS. The support I received at a moment of desperate need helped me to secure a self-reliant, productive future for me and my family. I know the program can make a difference for families as it did for mine, but it needs to be modernized, particularly as new threats undermine family security and financial independence just as new opportunities for work and career approach our community.

Here are three examples of how the workforce participation rate assessment has gotten disconnected from the activities and outcomes our agency has found to best lift people in our community out of poverty.

Recognize the Training and Skill Development Requirements of Success in 21st Century Economy

A few months ago, we began to work with a Perry County gentleman in his late 20's. He was out of work and had no career. In our assessment of him, we found something we see frequently in our community which is the lack of agency on this person's part. It is a legacy of several things, but the demise of coal mining and its generationally dominant, deeply-ingrained pathway for economic prosperity in our community has left many adrift on how they need to invest in their learning and skill development in order to become and stay productive in the 21st Century global economy.

Through our support, this person gained a sense of what he wanted to do for a living and what it would take to prepare for this career. He also gained the commitment required to navigate enrollment, classes, licensing tests and more. In short order he completed training and licensing for a commercial drivers' license and gained full-time employment.

But this success story is an example of where we received essentially no workforce participation credit for getting this person ready for participation in the workforce. The current policy of credit for training and skill development is badly out of alignment with the new realities of both economic opportunity and post-secondary learning.

The threat of being penalized for achieving what we see as a successful outcome in effect doubles down on the impact of this misalignment of the workforce participation rate policy.

Tamara K. Corp
page three

This is particularly punishing for Ohio. To better serve its people and our employers our state has invested in a unique and successful system of career technical centers that provide high quality one-year certificates of all kinds. The CTC's, as they are called, operate in close collaboration with employers and their desperate demand for middle-skilled employees. Yet the workforce participation rate assessment in place does not recognize the successful outcomes for this person or others who receive valuable training for in-demand jobs from these and other WIOA-approved providers.

It can be seen here that the participation rate requirement in TANF actually thwarts leveraging other programs we count on for improving the quality of our workers and preparing them for the jobs of today and the future.

Recognize that Recovery from Substance Use Disorder Has No Timeline

With the end of coal mining and the prosperity it brought to Southeast Ohio, it was hard to think of a comparable economic and community disaster occurring to us. Then came opioids.

Our responses to this challenge continue to develop, but successful, meaningful employment is both an outcome and a part of the recovery journey for most in our community.

We have had a case with a single mother of two young children who suffered from substance use disorder. Through our referral, our financial support and our partnership with our local behavioral health provider, this person completed in-patient treatment and the six months of out-patient counselling and programming.

We in Perry County run a "Recovery to Work" program where we coach workplaces to accommodate workers in recovery and recognize them as "Perry County Recovery-Friendly Workplaces". This person was placed in an alt-work job position that allowed her to continue with her recovery activities while working.

Today she is a recovery success story now gainfully employed and supporting her family. This is the kind of outcome from TANF that our community badly needs. But my team receives no workforce participation credit even though we did everything our experience with this insidious opioid epidemic has told us could be effective in assisting this person back into the workforce.

Tamara K. Corp
page four

We could have received a countable interaction with this customer if we wanted. We could have sent her directly to a work experience program, which is countable, when we first encountered her. But this would have been irresponsible for us to do this. We would be ignoring her well-being if we made her work before she would be ready to. It is also deeply unfair to our employers to propose someone who could harm themselves on the job site, or harm others. At this point it becomes a question of communitywide well-being that would be jeopardized if followed the misaligned incentives of the current workforce participation rate system.

Recognize the Flexible and Individualized Solutions Agencies Can Provide

We recently worked with a domestic violence victim, a single mother of two teenagers. She fled her domestic violence situation and came to our community through the help of relatives and friends.

We were not going to try to place her at a typical work-requirement activity workplace as she would be far too visible to her abuser. Her fear of discovery by him would have likely undermined her effectiveness in many jobs, and we have a state directive that also would have prevented us from doing so.

Instead, we helped her in other ways to put her abuse into the past: we assisted her in getting counseling and housing, and supported her safety and that of her children. After about six months she had regained control of her life and was ready to leave the prison of abuse. During that period we had found a fairly unique worksite for our area that offered an unusual amount of personal security for her. We supported her through the job application, intervened on her behalf with the employer, and supported her as she started her new work.

In the time since then, this new member of our community has completely put her life back together and achieved exactly the kind of independence we count as a success story of the TANF program. Only my team doesn't get full recognition for our role in helping her get back on track with her life.

Domestic abuse is more relevant and talked about than it has been in the past, but in our community I believe it is still a very underseen problem. Yet while it is a challenge almost meant for TANF, the work participation rate rules do not recognize the value of the individualized solution we developed for this customer. Here, as elsewhere, we need a policy that recognizes the different stages of exposure to challenges prior to being eligible or ready or secure enough for the workplace.

Tamara K. Corp
page five

Final Comments

Our caseworkers operate in a conflicted environment: we need to have a tremendous amount of empathy for our customers to be effective, but we also operate in an environment characterized by compliance and regulatory accountability. This is not a complaint; we accept it as part of the job and good scores on agency evaluations matter as much as a pleasant customer interaction.

But our typical caseworker is worn down by the conflict between empathy and compliance in the case of the workforce participation rate system. They see success stories every day created out of their effort, creativity and caring for individuals but then see participation rates of "zero" despite it all.

I listened to the testimony of March 29th and heard a Member ask my peer in North Carolina if there was something the federal government does that "hinders" her work at helping people. When she responded immediately with the workforce participation rate, I immediately agreed. Of all the rules and regulations we follow in our duties, the workforce participation rate stands out as a genuine impediment in how we address the needs and opportunities of our community through the TANF program.

Our last case illustrates another point about the workforce participation rating. One of the advantages to living in a small rural community is that our equally small social services agency is flexible and entrepreneurial enough in its operations to find individualized solutions to difficult problems and then deliver positive outcomes as a consequence. Yet the one-size-fits-all workforce participation rating approach is really at best an *output* metric, not an outcome measure. It operates to undermine our strengths as a small community by dictating a narrow window of how to solve a problem rather than outlining a large vista of the many ways a problem can actually be solved through our efforts.

Thank you for allowing a veteran caseworker from rural Ohio share with you her thoughts about the vital federal program we administer here in Perry County. Please contact me anytime at tamara.corp@ifs.ohio.gov or 740.342.3551 and would be happy to provide you follow-up or clarifications if needed.

Sincerely,



Tamara K. Corp
Supervisor, Income Maintenance Department
Perry County Job and Family Services



April 12, 2023

The Honorable Jason Smith
Chairman
House Committee on Ways and Means
1011 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Darin LaHood
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1424 Longworth HOB
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Ranking Member
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372 Cannon HOB
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The Honorable Daniel Davis
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Work and Welfare
2159 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith, Subcommittee Chairman LaHood, Ranking Member Neal, and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee Davis,

On behalf of the American Public Human Services Association, the bipartisan organization representing state and local human service agencies across the country and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programs they administer, we are grateful for this opportunity to submit comment in response to the hearing held March 29, 2023, titled *Welfare is Broken: Restoring Work Requirements to Lift Americans Out of Poverty*.

As Chairman LaHood aptly stated during the hearing, the path toward effective TANF reform will be a bipartisan one. Maintaining this focus, with a commitment to following the evidence of what works and leading with an unwavering belief in people and public service, we can break through the entrenched political divides that have halted TANF reauthorization for 18 years.

The hearing revealed far more areas of agreement around TANF than disagreement. We agree that we should be helping families towards gainful employment that supports their long-term economic mobility, replacing the pressure for participants to obtain the first job available, no matter the pay. We agree that we must provide services that are tailored to the individual needs of participants, supporting their abilities as both a worker and caregiver to their family. We agree that TANF agencies should be held accountable towards achieving real and tangible outcomes for the families they serve and that their time should be spent meaningfully supporting participants in reaching their goals rather than policing their participation. Yet, we know that the current statutory construct of TANF falls short of these shared beliefs, leaving state and local agencies working to reverse-engineer outcomes that align to these values.

If we can shift our dialogue towards solutions that are rooted in these principles, we can build the momentum needed for meaningful reform. APHSA and its membership of state and local human services agencies are eager to advance real reform that harnesses the immense potential of TANF to support families' path out of poverty and proactively promote wellbeing. To that end we have developed a set of [Core Principles for TANF Modernization](#) that articulate our belief in what



TANF policies and practices should reflect, and a [Legislative Framework for TANF Reform](#) that translates those principles into a clear runway for Congress to enact a reauthorization. Further, we continue to exercise these core principles in our work, weaving them into the fabric of state and local practice changes happening around the country and using them to generate insights on new ideas to improve TANF.

We have enclosed with this comment a copy of our TANF Core Principles and Legislative Framework. We welcome further opportunities to discuss ways to improve TANF. Please direct any follow-up to Matt Lyons, Senior Director of Policy and Practice, at mlyons@aphsa.org.

Sincerely,

Matt Lyons

Senior Director, Policy & Practice
APHS A

Justin Brown

Secretary, Oklahoma Human Services
Chair, APHS A Leadership Council

Babette Roberts

Chair, APHS A National Association of State
TANF Administrators



Core Principles for TANF Modernization: A Legislative Framework for TANF Reform

Revised May 2022

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), establishing the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. TANF provides millions of parents and caregivers with economic supports to help meet their basic needs; employment and training skills to earn family-sustaining wages; early childhood care that fosters development during children's formative years; and services that prevent and mitigate childhood stress and trauma.

Over these past 25 years, we have learned much about what works—and what doesn't—to help families succeed for the long-term and get to the root of barriers communities face to promote opportunity for all. As our nation faces unprecedented new challenges in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have simultaneously made bold new investments in the foundational supports we all rely on to thrive. TANF has the potential to catalyze and transform these investments into economic mobility for millions of Americans by working in true partnership with people to remove roadblocks to their economic and family well-being.

Working with TANF administrators and human services leaders across the country, the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) embraces the call to reimagine how TANF can work in support of the families it serves and has established a set of [TANF Modernization Core Principles](#) to guide our vision for the future of TANF. Grounded in these Core Principles, APHSA's members have laid out a legislative framework to unlock the potential of TANF. We call upon Congress to use this framework as a starting point to build common ground to achieve a TANF reauthorization that promotes a more equitable and prosperous future for all Americans.

TANF Modernization Core Principles
page 2

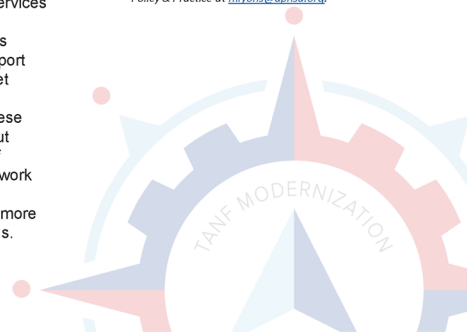
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For inquiries or more information,
contact Matt Lyons, Senior Director of
Policy & Practice at mlyons@aphsa.org.

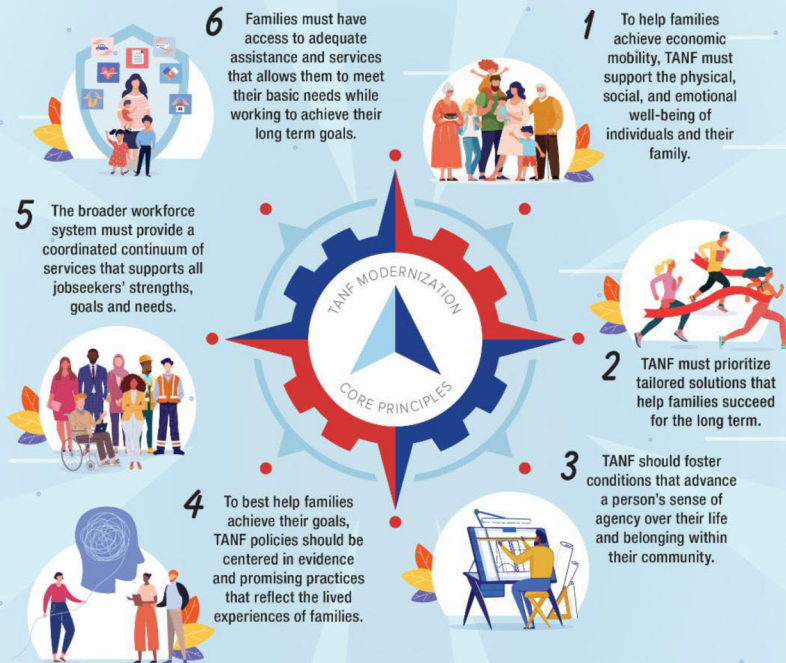




TANF MODERNIZATION CORE PRINCIPLES

We maintain the values of equity, inclusion, and the limitless possibilities of human potential as a clear North Star, guiding each of the Core Principles and all of our work; these values must serve as the foundation for building modern TANF programs to support child and family well-being for generations to come.

To advance these values, we pull each Core Principle through a race equity lens.



Reimagining Family Engagement in TANF

VISION FOR TANF:

Families should be in the driver's seat of their own lives, co-creating plans with TANF agencies that support their family well-being and long-term economic mobility. Families should receive individualized assessments that are used to place them in customized activities that reflect their input and expertise. These plans should be reviewed and updated over time with participants and staff jointly evaluating progress as they work together to achieve agreed upon goals.

CONGRESS SHOULD:

> Establish a Framework for Customized Career and Family Success Plans

- Direct the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to establish common standards for states to develop individualized assessments for TANF participants that consider families' economic, social, emotional, and physical well-being.
- Direct states to co-create with TANF participants customized Career and Family Success Plans that put into action a plan to achieve mutually agreed upon goals based on individualized assessments.
- Use individualized assessments to measure progress towards goals and update Career and Family Success Plans bi-annually and as otherwise requested by TANF families.
- Require states to submit to HHS their methodology for conducting individualized assessments to develop Career and Family Success Plans (replacing the existing Work Verification Plan requirement) using state performance data, participant feedback, and social and economic indicators to inform changes and revisions.

> Use Career and Family Success Plans to Reimagine the Role of TANF Agencies to Support Pathways to Economic Mobility

- Replace arbitrary and convoluted Work Participation Rate (WPR) requirements and associated restrictions on countable hours and activities with economic mobility and child and family well-being components jointly identified with participants through their individualized Career and Family Success Plans.
 - Economic mobility activities may include education, training, and employment activities and/ or work readiness activities that help support successful entry and long-term success and growth in the workforce.
 - Child and family well-being activities may include services and resources that address children and caregivers' physical, behavioral, social, and emotional needs.
- Tailor economic mobility and child and family well-being activities to the specific needs of TANF participants and their families using a trauma-informed approach, accounting for families' participation in other economic mobility and child and family well-being programs and advancing a strategy towards family-sustaining wages.

- Require states to reassess and update, in consultation with TANF participants, Career and Family Success Plans, when participants are not meeting Plan requirements.
- Limit sanctioning of TANF participants to instances where individuals are not meeting Career and Family Success Plan requirements and proactive outreach has failed to reengage TANF participants in jointly reviewing and realigning their Success Plans with relevant and achievable goals and activities.
- Prohibit “full family” sanctions, fostering continued service provision and support that meet the needs of children in the home.

> [Provide a Minimum Five-Year Lifetime Limit for TANF Participation](#)

- As a condition of accepting the TANF block grant, states must provide a minimum five-year lifetime limit for TANF cash assistance.
- States should have discretion to propose through State Plans to increase their lifetime limit for TANF assistance beyond five years.



Establishing Performance Measures Focused on Outcomes

VISION FOR TANF:

TANF services should be centered in evidence of what works for families, informed by the perspectives, goals, and needs of individuals served. The success of TANF programs should be measured by their ability to achieve employment and economic well-being outcomes, as captured through progress towards and attainment of family-sustaining wages. Further, TANF programs should measure family stabilization outcomes that assess whether participants have the child and family supports they need to effectively pursue their career goals.

CONGRESS SHOULD:

> Establish Employment & Economic Well-Being Performance Measures Aligned with WIOA

- Direct HHS to establish TANF Employment and Economic Well-Being Measures that:
 - Align with WIOA measures of employment rates (Q2 and Q4), median earnings (Q2), and credential attainment rates (within 1 year) after exit, and measurable skills gains rates for program participants.
 - Are adapted to the specific characteristics of TANF participants, such as measuring skill gains and credential attainment that consider improvements in executive functioning and soft skills while participating in TANF.
 - Include a list of acceptable supplemental measures that consider whether TANF recipients are achieving long-term economic mobility or incremental progress towards removing barriers to economic mobility, which states may report on to be factored into determining whether they have met performance standards.
- Provide a three-year transition period for states to adopt new outcome-based performance measures, including grant funding and technical assistance to collect the data needed for performance reporting.
 - Establish state-specific TANF baselines using data on TANF participant employment and economic well-being outcomes in the three years prior to implementation of new outcome-based performance measures.
 - Fund pilots during the three-year transition period for states with existing capabilities to track and evaluate outcome measures.

> Establishing Federal Oversight to Assess Progress in State Performance Outcomes

- Direct HHS to develop criteria for acceptable employment and economic well-being outcomes based on states falling within an acceptable range of performance targets.
 - Metrics should include data that enable states to identify and track progress towards addressing disparities in outcomes among TANF participants.
- Permit states that fail to meet performance standards in a reporting period to establish a corrective action plan to avoid penalties, contingent on performance outcomes in the following reporting period.
- Require states under penalty to increase state Maintenance of Effort spending to improve performance outcomes rather than withhold a share of the TANF block grant.
- Direct HHS to determine aspirational thresholds for employment and economic well-being measures and establish a high-performance bonus structure that rewards states that reach aspirational thresholds and maintain high TANF penetration rates within eligible populations.
- Grant HHS discretion to waive penalties in exceptional circumstances.

> Establish Family Stabilization Metrics to Measure Child and Family Well-Being

- Direct HHS to establish acceptable state and/or county-level Family Stabilization Measures for assessing child and family well-being overall, prioritizing identifying and tracking progress towards addressing disparities in outcomes among TANF participants.
- Require states to identify within their State Plan which Family Stabilization Measures they will track. Measures selected should be informed by community assessments that include input from current or former TANF recipients.
- Provide a three-year transition period for states to adopt and implement Family Stabilization Measures.
- Direct HHS to offer technical assistance to states on establishing, measuring, and improving outcomes within Family Stabilization Measures.



Moving TANF Upstream Through Cross-Systems Alignment

VISION FOR TANF:

TANF must act as a bridge to create alignment with the constellation of programs and services critical to optimizing career and family well-being outcomes for people experiencing poverty.

CONGRESS SHOULD:

> Require States Spend at Minimum 50% of Federal TANF Funding Towards Core Activities

- Core activities include cash assistance, case management, and economic mobility and child and family well-being activities that are part of Career and Family Success Plans, as well as non-recurrent short-term benefits and family support/family preservation/reunification services.
- Countable core activities may include activities included in a Career and Family Success Plan intended to support non-custodial parents, grandfamilies, and other non-traditional caregivers of TANF assistance recipients in financially and socially supporting their families.
- Countable core activities may include activities funded by TANF transfers to another program so long as they are part of a TANF assistance recipient's Career and Family Success Plan.
- Provide a two-year transition period for states to come into compliance with core activities requirements.

> Require TANF Transfers to Demonstrate Coordination Across Programs

- Require states that choose to transfer TANF funds to CCDBG, SSBG, WIOA, or child welfare to document within State Plans how funds are being coordinated in pursuit of TANF goals through policy and system alignment, data sharing, referrals, shared metrics, and customer feedback.
- Direct HHS to develop a schedule for key reporting and administrative requirements that supports coordination with other major federal program planning and reporting schedules.

> Adequately Fund Mutually Supportive Systems to Work Effectively with TANF

- Ensure that systems aligned with TANF to help families achieve success, such as child welfare, child care, child support, and workforce development, are adequately funded, allowing states the ability to prioritize TANF funds towards core activities.

> Direct HHS to Evaluate Alignment of TANF Cash and Supportive Services with Aligned Economic Mobility and Child and Family Well-Being Programs

- Reserve funding to enhance research, technical assistance, and pilots that increase the evidence base on best practices and impacts of aligning TANF with child welfare prevention services, housing, WIOA, and WIOA one-stop partners.
- Expand the scope of the Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse to warehouse evidence of what works in alignment with the full scope of TANF Career and Family Success Plans.

Updating TANF Funding and Resourcing

VISION FOR TANF:

TANF must be adequately resourced to invest in families' short-term stability and long-term economic mobility goals. States must be able to make investments in people and services in ways that mitigate benefit cliffs, clearing a path to economic mobility and supports healthy, thriving families. TANF must also be responsive in times of public health emergencies, natural disasters, and economic downturns; families must have adequate resources to weather the storm.

CONGRESS SHOULD:

- > **Invest in TANF's Potential to Align Benefits and Supportive Services to Help Families Out of Poverty**
 - Immediately increase the TANF block grant from 1995 spending levels to compensate for lost value due to inflation.
 - Index future block grant levels to inflation to prevent future loss in value.
- > **Modify the Calculation of Individual State's Block Grant Levels to Reflect Current Need**
 - In conjunction with an increase to the TANF block grant and holding states harmless from a reduction to existing TANF state grant amounts, charge HHS to transition from the current state allocation formula that is based on outdated AFDC spending levels to reflect more equitable distribution across states based on current economic needs of families with children.
- > **Provide Cash Assistance, Paired with Career and Family Services, that Meets Families' Basic Needs to Support their Path Out of Poverty**
 - Require states to demonstrate how TANF benefits and services, in conjunction with other economic supports, provide TANF participants enrolled in Career and Family Success Plans with the resources needed to meet their basic needs while working towards career and family well-being goals.
 - Grant authority for states to exempt TANF cash assistance from countable income for other means-tested programs when TANF benefits would result in benefit cliffs that reduce net wealth as TANF participants' earned income rises.
 - Incentivize states to adopt and expand child support pass through policies by fully waiving the federal share of child support collections for TANF cash assistance on passed-through child support payments.
- > **Limit States' TANF Reserves to 100% of Their Annual Block Grant**
 - Limit states reserves of overall, unobligated TANF block grant funds at the end of each fiscal year to no more than 100% of the state's current fiscal year allocation of TANF funds.
 - Allow States with current reserves above this threshold two fiscal years from the date of the policy change to obligate excess funds with an additional year to expend excess funds.

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