

URGE THE SENATE NOT TO PENALIZE CHILDREN

[Poor nutrition](#) and lack of access to medical care in early life can have numerous and profound life-long implications—from obesity and heart disease to untreated chronic ailments. Poor diet and missed medical care can also impact a child's academic performance, behavior, and development. These early experiences in human life can mean the difference between a child that grows and thrives or experiences a shorter, sicker lifespan.

In recent months, some members of Congress have taken aim at the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, or food stamps) and Medicaid in an effort to slash federal spending. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy has threatened that the House of Representatives will refuse to raise the federal debt ceiling unless Congress imposes work requirements for SNAP and Medicaid – with devastating implications for American children. We're calling on members of Congress to protect our children by **opposing any new work requirements and barriers to enrollment for SNAP and Medicaid.**

Background

SNAP and Medicaid are the first line of defense against hunger and illness for children in low-income families. More than [14 million children](#) – representing nearly half of the program's participants – rely on SNAP for consistent, healthy meals. In 2021, SNAP lifted [more than 800,000 children](#) out of poverty, and countless studies show that SNAP participation improves [food security, health, and educational and long-term economic outcomes](#) for children. Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) cover more than [91 million Americans](#), including children, pregnant women, seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income adults. Children covered by Medicaid during childhood have [better health as adults](#) with fewer hospitalizations and emergency room visits, are [more likely to graduate high school and college](#), have [higher wages and pay more in taxes](#). Taking health coverage or SNAP from families by imposing work requirements risks the short-and long-term health and development of our nation's children with no measurable gain.

And data shows that in most low-income households with children, at least one family member is already working, and federal law already requires “able bodied adults without dependents” to work 20 hours a week or be enrolled in a training program. For example, almost [90% of households](#) with children worked in the year before or after receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and more than [60% work while receiving SNAP](#). Work requirements add a layer of bureaucracy by forcing families to document their existing employment.

Proposals to increase SNAP and Medicaid restrictions for Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) also disproportionately harm children in poverty. These children often depend on pooled resources (including SNAP benefits) from extended family members who do not claim them as dependents. Additionally, when parents lose Medicaid benefits, [evidence shows that children do too](#), making policies such as these harmful to children's health and development. Past implementation of work requirements has demonstrated that confusing

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rules, complex reporting systems and other bureaucratic red tape cause children and families to lose their health coverage. Legislative changes that make ABAWD time limits stricter would also harm youth aging out of foster care and unaccompanied homeless youth over the age of 18, who [already experience high rates of unemployment and poverty](#) and face barriers to accessing public assistance programs.

Taking food and health care from families is no way to help them achieve economic mobility. Instead, lawmakers should pursue the [wide variety of available policies](#) that would strengthen and protect SNAP and Medicaid so that it better meets the needs of families across America. These policies include maintaining the increase in SNAP and Medicaid benefits created by COVID-19 era policies, making it easier for families to gain SNAP and Medicaid eligibility by limiting burdensome administrative requirements and ensuring vulnerable youth and young adults have access to food assistance and healthcare.

Steps for Writing an Effective email to your U.S. Senators:

1. Write a rough draft of your note explaining why you want both of your Senators to exclude SNAP and Medicaid work requirements from budget discussions.
2. Mention your strong opposition to proposals by some members of Congress to add work requirements to vital programs like Medicaid and SNAP.
3. Educate and raise awareness with your Senators about the danger of such proposals to the well-being of children.
4. Specifically request that your Senators protect and expand resources for children, who already receive [far less](#) of our federal resources than they should, given their proportion of the population.
5. When you are happy with your email, explore the website of your Senators for where to send it. Find your Senators [here](#).
6. Share any responses you receive with the team at First Focus on Children.
7. For bonus points, consider also using social media to convey the message above to your Senators using a positive and encouraging tone. Remember to use the hashtags #Commit2Kids, #InvestInKids and #VoteKids and to tag @Campaign4Kids and your members of Congress ([you can find their social media accounts using our tool here](#)). [You may check out [the social media "how to" document](#) for additional advice.]