



May 3, 2023

Senator Rick Scott
U.S. Senate
502 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Scott:

I am writing on behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan national organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of our nation's children, to express our strong opposition to S. 39, the Let's Get to Work Act of 2023.

Imposing work requirements on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Public Housing and Tenant-Based Rental Assistance programs is a harmful policy that will undermine access for low income families, with devastating consequences—including undercutting opportunities for their children. Work requirements have been shown through extensive research to be counterproductive and cruel: various studies illustrate that kicking people off of critical assistance programs does not help them achieve economic self-sufficiency, but instead harms their health and productivity.¹

SNAP

As the nation's largest federal food assistance program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the first line of defense against hunger and food insecurity for poor and low income children. Over 14 million children rely on SNAP for access to consistent, healthy meals—representing nearly half of the program's participants.² In 2021, SNAP lifted over 800,000 children out of poverty,³ and countless studies show that SNAP participation improves food security, health, educational, and long-term economic outcomes for children.⁴

The Let's Get to Work Act calls would end the current suspension of SNAP's work requirements for Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs) put in place during the pandemic, expand work requirements to even more ABAWDs, and eliminate exemptions from meeting untenantable work requirements for individuals who face structural barriers to employment or sufficient work hours. Instead of incentivizing work, these policies will unduly harm children in poverty. These

¹ Dr. LaDonna Pavetti, "Work Requirements Don't Cut Poverty, Evidence Shows," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, June 7, 2016, <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/6-6-16pov3.pdf>

²Kronquist, Kathryn, "Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2019," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, Alexandria, VA, January 2017, available <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/Characteristics2019.pdf>

³ Creamer, John, Emily A. Shrider, Kalee Burns, and Frances Chen, Poverty in the United States: 2021, US Census Current Population Reports, September 2022, available <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2022/demo/p60-277.pdf>

⁴ Furman, Jason, Munoz, Cecilia and Black, Sandra, Long Term Benefits of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, White House Council of Economic Advisors, December 2015, available at https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/files/documents/SNAP_report_final_nonembargo.pdf.

children often depend on pooled resources (including SNAP benefits) from extended family members who do not claim them as dependents. Such changes that make ABAWD time limits stricter would also harm youth aging out of foster care and unaccompanied, homeless youth and young adults who are over the age of 18, who already experience high rates of unemployment and poverty and face barriers in accessing public assistance programs.

Public Housing and Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Programs

Housing instability, which includes situations such as being behind on rent and making multiple moves, is associated with an increased risk of poor child health,⁵ including hospitalizations and maternal depression. Sustained housing instability can lead to homelessness, causing trauma with severe negative implications for children's healthy development.

Rental assistance lifts nearly 600,000 children out of poverty each year and provide stability to children and families, supporting healthy child development. Most households receiving housing assistance have at least one family member that is already working, and if not, the household is already subject to existing work requirements.⁶ Therefore, rather than promoting economic security, adding or harshening work requirements for these programs as mentioned above for SNAP instead just adds another layer of bureaucracy by requiring families to now document their existing employment.

Since most low-income, hourly workers have no control over their schedules or the number of shifts they are assigned, documenting steady employment would pose a major barrier for many families in maintaining housing assistance.

Actions to limit household access to effective anti-poverty programs will result in a future generation of children whose physical, mental health, nutritional, and educational outcomes are weakened. Instead, we need to build on what works and promote policies that ensure that every child has access to health care, proper nutrition, stable housing, and enough resources to support their healthy development.

Sincerely,



Bruce Lesley
President

⁵ Sandel, Megan, Sheward, Richard, Ettinger de Cuba, Stephanie, Coleman, Sharon M., Frank, Deborah A., Chilton, Mariana, Black, Maureen, Heeren, Timothy, Pasquariello, Justin, Casey, Patrick, Ochoa, Eduardo, Cutts, Diana, Unstable Housing and Caregiver and Child Health in Renter Families, Pediatrics, January 2018, available:

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2018/01/18/peds.2017-2199>.

⁶ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Fact Sheet: Federal Rental Assistance, United States, March 30, 2017, available at: <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/4-13-11hous-US.pdf>.