

May 18, 2023

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Charles E Schumer
U.S. Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate Minority Leader
U.S. Senate

Dear Speaker McCarthy, Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, and Leader Jeffries,

As the bipartisan national membership association representing state and local human services agencies that administer economic assistance and work support programs for families experiencing poverty, we write to express our deep concerns about the negative outcomes the Limit, Save, Grow Act of 2023 will have for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) participants. TANF is an essential tool to help families thrive through work; however, the reforms proposed run counter to what we know works to address the underlying issues that make it difficult for families to achieve long-term economic mobility.

There is longstanding, bipartisan consensus that the Work Participation Rate (WPR) is a flawed performance measurement system that impedes the ability of state and local TANF agencies from providing individualized services that remove barriers to work and set families on career pathways. Since 2018, comprehensive proposals for TANF reform, such as the [Republican-led JOBS for Success Act](#), have consistently proposed to replace WPR with an outcome-based system of accountability; defining success and holding TANF programs accountable by whether they in fact help families achieve economic mobility and well-being through increased employment and earnings upon exiting TANF. Yet the Limit, Save, Grow Act of 2023 doubles down on a WPR structure that compels TANF agencies to prioritize inputs over outcomes, with dire consequences for families.

TANF programs serve families experiencing deep, intergenerational poverty, with many interwoven social and economic needs. Overcoming these challenges requires that we build trust with TANF participants and co-design economic mobility plans that recognize their role as providers for and caregivers to their families. The Work Participation Rate works in direct conflict with brokering this relationship and recipe for success by prescribing to participants a narrow set of allowable work activities, with arbitrary limits in countable hours and time limits in these services that focus attention away from what matters. Stricter WPR requirements will force TANF agencies and their already strained workforce to prioritize compliance over what is right and what is needed to achieve real outcomes for the communities we serve.

We believe there is a clear path forward for reforms that can make TANF a more effective work program that supports upward mobility for families. But this requires Congress to look comprehensively at what is working right now, what is not, and what it really takes to disrupt poverty. The TANF provisions in the Limit, Save, Grow Act of 2023 fail to get to the root of these questions, and as such, will lead to worse outcomes for families and communities if passed. Given that the [Congressional Budget Office has determined](#) that the proposed policy will have no impact on the national debt, further discussion should be held to develop impactful solutions that promote positive work outcomes in TANF.

We appreciate your consideration and welcome the opportunity for further dialogue on how to strengthen TANF. Please contact Matt Lyons, Senior Director of Policy & Practice at mlyons@aphsa.org with any questions or follow-up.

Sincerely,

Tracy Wareing Evans



President and CEO
American Public Human Services Association

cc:

The Honorable Steve Scalise, Majority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Tom Emmer, Majority Whip, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Katherine Clark, Democratic Whip, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Elise Stefanik, Republican Conference Chairman, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Pete Aguilar, Democratic Caucus Chairman, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Gary Palmer, Republican Policy Committee Chairman, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable James Clyburn, Assistant Democratic Leader, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Richard Durbin, Majority Whip, U.S. Senate

The Honorable John Thune, Republican Whip, U.S. Senate

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Chair of Policy & Communications Committee, U.S. Senate

The Honorable Joni Ernst, Republican Policy Committee Chairman, U.S. Senate

The Honorable John Barrasso, Republican Conference Chairman, U.S. Senate



The Honorable Elizabeth Warren, Vice Chair of Conference, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Mark Warner, Vice Chair of Conference, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Shelly Moore Capito, Vice Chairman of the Senate Republican Conference, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Amy Klobuchar, Chair of Steering Committee, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Steve Daines, Republican Senatorial Committee Chairman, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Bernard Sanders, Chair of Outreach, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Catherine Cortez Masto, Vice Chair of Outreach, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Joe Manchin, Vice Chair of Policy & Communications Committee, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Cory A. Booker, Vice Chair of Policy & Communications Committee, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Tammy Baldwin, Secretary of the Conference, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Brian Schatz, Deputy Conference Secretary, U.S. Senate

