

House SNAP Proposal Threatens Grave Harm to Poor Single Parent Families

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The Republican budget plan¹ recently passed by the House on a party line vote would cut SNAP (Food Stamps) by \$135 billion (almost 18%) over ten years,² and would apply to SNAP the “welfare reform” principles that were applied to cash assistance by the 1996 law that created TANF to replace AFDC.³ SNAP now aids 48 million low income persons in 23 million households.⁴ About half these households include minor children, and a substantial majority of the households with children are headed by single parents.⁵

Applying “welfare reform” to SNAP would likely lead to huge cuts in SNAP receipt. Welfare reform in cash assistance has reduced the number of families receiving cash aid from 72% of poor families and 79% of eligible families when TANF was created in 1996, to 27% of poor families and 32% of eligible families in the most recent year for which these data are available.⁶

Due to the cuts in cash assistance, SNAP now aids many more needy families and children than TANF does. In 2011, SNAP aided 9.8 million families with children monthly, TANF only 1.9 million. In that year, 45% of children in single mother families were poor, and 45% of children in single mother families received SNAP, while only 11% received TANF.⁷

A contraction in SNAP like that in cash assistance could leave millions of parents and children with little or nothing for their basic needs. Due to the decline in cash assistance, the number of SNAP recipient families with little or no cash income has soared. In 2011, 4.5 million SNAP recipient families with children had a cash income less than half the poverty level,⁸ 2.3 million had a cash income less than one fourth the poverty level, and 1.2 million had no cash income.⁹ It is difficult to see how these families could get by without SNAP.

(May 2013. Contact Timothy Casey, tcasey@legalmomentum.org, for further information.)

ENDNOTES

¹ H.Con.Res. 25: Establishing the budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2014 and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2015 through 2023, available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-113hconres25eh/pdf/BILLS-113hconres25eh.pdf>.

² Center on Budget and Policy Priorities report by Dorothy Rosenbaum, *Ryan Budget Would Slash SNAP Funding By \$135 Billion Over Ten Years* (March 2013), available at <http://www.cbpp.org/files/3-15-13fa.pdf>.

³ “Based on the lessons learned from welfare reform, now it is time to implement similar reforms across other areas of the safety net, especially Medicaid (medical care for the poor) and the Supplemental

Nutrition Assistance Program.” House Budget Committee, *The Path to Prosperity – A Responsible Balanced Budget* (2013) at 27, available at <http://budget.house.gov/uploadedfiles/fy14budget.pdf>.

⁴ United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), *Program Data* (as of April 2013), available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/34SNAPmonthly.htm>. Detailed information about SNAP is available from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, <http://www.cbpp.org/>, and from the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), <http://frac.org/>.

⁵ USDA, *Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2011* at Table 3.2 on p. 20 (2012), available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/snap/FILES/Participation/2011Characteristics.pdf>.

⁶ Legal Momentum, *A TANF Misery Index* (April 2013), available at <http://www.legalmomentum.org/our-work/women-and-poverty/a-tanf-misery-index.pdf>; Legal Momentum, *TANF Receipt Falls To Less Than One Third Of Eligible Families* (April 2013), available at <http://www.legalmomentum.org/our-work/women-and-poverty/resources--publications/tanf-receipt-falls-to-less.pdf>.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, *Table C8. Poverty Status, Food Stamp Receipt, And Public Assistance For Children Under 18 Years By Selected Characteristics: 2012*, available at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/cps2012.html>.

⁸ The current poverty line is \$15,510 for family of two, with an additional \$4,020 per person for larger family sizes.

⁹ USDA, *Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2011* at Table A-3 on p. 39 (2012), available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/snap/FILES/Participation/2011Characteristics.pdf>.