



February 20, 2018

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the undersigned religious denominations and faith-based organizations representing millions of people of faith across the country, we write to express our deepest concern about proposals to undermine Americans' basic living standards by imposing work requirements on essential anti-poverty programs. These programs, including Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and housing vouchers, already assist millions of Americans on the path to self-sufficiency. Onerous requirements would only create barriers for America's most vulnerable people to receiving medical treatment, eating nutritious meals, and living in safe homes.

While our religious traditions and practices vary enormously, we are united by our fundamental belief in the dignity of every human being. When people face financial or health challenges, our communities are on the front lines. We feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, counsel those struggling with addiction, and care for the sick. But the faith community cannot work alone to solve these challenges; Medicaid, SNAP, and housing programs are indispensable in complementing our efforts.

Working, engaging in one's community, and pursuing education should all be encouraged. Houses of worship and faith-based organizations promote these practices every day. However, we believe that increasing affordable job training, instituting paid family leave, making child care more affordable, improving addiction treatment services, and subsidizing transportation are far more likely to yield the desired outcomes than imposing unnecessary barriers to critical programs. "Community engagement" should never be used as a threat to cut programs that are the difference between health and sickness, hunger and sustenance, and shelter and homelessness for millions of people.

The programs that have been targeted for potential work requirements, including Medicaid, SNAP, and housing vouchers, serve populations that are largely already working or would be exempt from requirements because of their age or disability status. Others face obstacles to working, like caring for sick relatives, suffering from illnesses that do not qualify them for disability benefits, attending school, or seeking addiction treatment. Furthermore, the history of TANF demonstrates that creating bureaucratic hurdles for enrollment in federal programs will result in coverage loss, even for those who qualify. Pulling the rug out from people already in challenging circumstances will not make it easier for anyone to work, participate in their community, or seek education.

Our faiths demand that we do all we can to amplify the voices of those concerned about losing medical care, food assistance, and housing benefits. We call on Congress to reject harmful proposals that will make the lives of millions more difficult.

Sincerely,

American Muslim Health Professionals

Bread for the World

Disciples Center for Public Witness (Disciples of Christ)

Franciscan Action Network

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Islamic Relief USA

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

People of Faith for Access to Medicines

Poligon Education Fund

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society

Union for Reform Judaism

Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation