

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**TRUMP ADMINISTRATION PROPOSAL WOULD CAUSE HUNDREDS OF
THOUSANDS OF AMERICANS TO GO HUNGRY**

Plan to limit state waivers of work requirements is latest attack on low-income people

CHICAGO—Using executive power to accomplish what it could not do legislatively, the Trump Administration plans to eliminate food assistance for hundreds of thousands of people living in poverty by setting counterproductive and unnecessary “work requirements.” Under the proposed rule announced days before Christmas, more people who are struggling to find or retain steady work would be cut off from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) after just three months, regardless of how hard they are looking for work or how few jobs are available in their area. This announcement comes after Congress rejected similar attacks on access to SNAP in the recently passed bipartisan farm bill.

Currently, able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) are required to work at least 20 hours each week to remain eligible for food supports under SNAP. Under appropriate circumstances, state leaders, such as outgoing Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner, have been able to waive this requirement to respond to their residents’ needs. Now, the Trump administration is proposing to sharply limit such waivers, which could leave hundreds of thousands of people losing their lifeline to the nutrition they need.

Keeping food away from people living in poverty is not an effective job creation strategy. Empirical research has shown that the vast majority of men and women who would be cut off from SNAP without these waivers want to work but either aren't able to work, can't find a job, can't maintain 20 hours per week of employment in the unstable, low-wage work market, or are actually meeting the 20 hour requirement but are being cut off because of bureaucratic errors. Additionally, research shows that more than eighty percent of SNAP participants work in the year before or after receiving SNAP, which keeps them afloat during hard times.

States should retain the authority to waive time limits based on “work requirements.” Without such authority, basic food assistance will be denied to people living in poverty who face multiple barriers to working, including low educational attainment, chronic homelessness, a criminal record, lack of access to transportation, undiagnosed mental illness or disabilities, domestic and sexual violence, high regional unemployment rates and other structural economic forces.

This is the latest attempt by the Trump Administration to undermine our country’s commitment to equal opportunity for all. Alongside efforts to slash funding for key anti-poverty programs through the legislative process, the Trump administration has encouraged states to attach work requirements

to Medicaid eligibility, which has already left thousands of people without healthcare coverage they need.

We must all fight against this latest attack on low-income people and their ability to access the basic necessities that everyone deserves. By taking crucial medical, food, housing, and other assistance away from people who are already struggling, work requirements make finding or maintaining employment much more difficult. The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law will work vigorously alongside our partners in Illinois and across the country to oppose this short-sighted and harmful proposal during the period for public comment.

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