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The Leadership Conference  
on Civil and Human Rights



UNIDOSUS  
STRONGER COMMUNITIES. STRONGER AMERICA.

May 8, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, NAACP, National Action Network, National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, National Council of Negro Women, National Urban League, and UnidosUS write to share with you our deep concerns about House Republican proposals to cut food assistance (SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and Medicaid for millions of poor households this year. These proposals would have a significant impact on the communities we represent. **As civil rights organizations, we want to express our strong support for SNAP and Medicaid and our unified opposition to proposed cuts or changes that will take food and health care away from people of color, children, older Americans, veterans, low-income working parents, people with disabilities, and other people whom we have forced through law and policy to live at the margins.**

We appreciate your strong opposition to any policies that would deepen poverty and result in the loss of food assistance and health care for low-income people. We are particularly concerned about proposals contained in the recently passed House Republican “Default on America Act” that would put millions at risk of losing health coverage and food assistance by imposing cuts and expanding harsh, bureaucratic work reporting requirements.

As you know, proposals to cut SNAP will widen an already serious problem in many Black and Hispanic communities: levels of food insecurity that are much higher than those of white households. In 2021, nearly 20 percent of Black households and more than 16 percent of Hispanic households experienced food insecurity, according to the USDA, compared to 7 percent of white households.

Because people of color have higher poverty rates — which is a result of deep-rooted historical discrimination in employment, housing, and education, as well as other forms of structural racism — they participate in SNAP and other federal nutrition programs at disproportionately high rates. SNAP is highly effective at improving nutrition and well-being, and it plays a critical role in mitigating racial disparities in rates of food insecurity.

The House Republican expansion of already harsh work reporting requirements in SNAP to include people aged 50 through 55 would create or worsen barriers and exclusions that disproportionately affect low-income people of color and could exacerbate the long-standing racial disparities in rates of food insecurity. The Department of Agriculture estimates that under the House Republican legislation, food assistance for nearly 1 million people would be put at risk. Congress should use the budget process and legislation like the Farm Bill to improve SNAP and address these racial disparities — not make them worse.

Most people participating in SNAP who can work do work. The vast majority of those who don't are children, disabled adults, and older people who face work obstacles. The more than two-thirds of SNAP participants who are not expected to work are children, disabled adults, and older people.

The same is true of health care: We are deeply concerned with proposals to take health care away from households if they are not able to navigate a complex bureaucratic system to document they are working or prove they are exempt. Under a plan that the last administration encouraged, 18,000 people in Arkansas lost their Medicaid-provided health care when they couldn't comply with the work reporting requirements.

Adding more red tape and bureaucracy for people to access Medicaid will only serve to cut rates of enrollment and result in the loss of Medicaid coverage for millions. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, health coverage and access to care for 21 million Americans would be jeopardized under the House Republican bill. People of color, older adults, people with disabilities, and rural residents are among those who would be disproportionately affected by these extreme cuts.

No poor household in this country should have their basic food and health assistance conditioned upon their ability to work or prove they are exempt from work requirements. Past experience shows that a significant number of people would likely lose benefits because their state agency failed to screen them for an exemption they should have qualified for or because they were unable to navigate the verification system to prove they are working.

We know that SNAP and Medicaid reduce hunger and poverty and that they improve health, education, and other important outcomes. SNAP and Medicaid face significant threats this year, and we ask that you do everything you can to protect and strengthen these vital programs in budget negotiations. We are grateful for your leadership in rejecting any proposal that will increase hunger or poverty for the most vulnerable people and families in this country.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. Please contact Peggy Ramin, policy counsel for health care and poverty, at [ramin@civilrights.org](mailto:ramin@civilrights.org) with any questions.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
NAACP  
National Action Network  
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation  
National Council of Negro Women  
National Urban League  
UnidosUS