

An Open Letter to the Illinois Congressional Delegation

January 25, 2018

Dear Senate and House Members of the Illinois Delegation,

The undersigned Illinois organizations urge you to oppose any and all legislation that would harm residents by shredding our already depleted social services safety net.

The Tax Bill will increase the deficit by \$1.5 trillion over the next ten years. We must not pay for these tax cuts on the backs of the poor. Slashing critical programs like Medicaid, Medicare, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), housing assistance, child care, PreK-12 education higher education and so on would devastate millions of Illinois residents. With the state still reeling from the historic state budget impasse, we simply cannot afford to lose billions in federal funding for programs that keep residents healthy and out of deep poverty.

Threats to these critical programs could take a number of forms. Imposing cruel and ineffective work requirements that would cause needless suffering and take medical coverage, nutrition assistance and housing away from millions. Proponents of work requirements ignore the fact that most low-income people who can work already do. In 2015, of all non-disabled, non-elderly, adult Medicaid enrollees in Illinois, [eight out of ten \(79%\) were in a working family and six out of ten \(59%\) worked themselves.](#)

Further, work requirements do nothing to address the various barriers that prevent many low-income people from securing and maintaining decent jobs. A 2015 study by the [Ohio Association of Food Banks](#) found that most individuals who failed to meet work requirements for SNAP had low levels of education, mental or physical limitations, undiagnosed learning disorders, and/or criminal records. Medicaid in fact improves the financial stability of families by helping adults remain healthy enough to work and avoid catastrophic healthcare costs.

Moreover, work requirements cause tremendous administrative burdens and are often arbitrarily enforced, causing many low-income people to erroneously lose assistance they desperately need. People of color, who are more likely to face structural barriers to employment and interpersonal discrimination from caseworkers, are hit particularly hard.

We also urge you to oppose proposals to fundamentally alter the basic structure of these programs, such as by converting them into block grants, imposing per capita caps, or in some other way artificially limiting eligibility for these programs, resulting in unmet need for basic assistance.

Members of the Illinois House and Senate Delegation should protect Illinoisans by rejecting any future attempt to further siphon resources away from those in poverty, ravaging vital social services programs that meet basic needs.

For more information about this letter, please contact: Dan Lesser, Director of Economic Justice, The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law at danlesser@povertylaw.org.

Sincerely,

[LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER]