

February 25, 2025

The Honorable
Charles Grassley
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable
Ashley Hinson
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable
Joni Ernst
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable
Zach Nunn
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable
Mariannette Miller-Meeks
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable
Randy Feenstra
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Members:

We, the undersigned Iowa organizations, strive to assure that our neighbors can afford to see a doctor and put food on the table, even when their individual financial circumstances take a turn for the worse. Our goals mirror those of the vast majority of Iowans, who, regardless of their political leanings, believe in a government that works and supports Iowans in building the lives we want for ourselves and our families.

We ask that you work with your colleagues and leaders to ensure Congress does not pass fiscally risky budget legislation that would hurt so many of your constituents.

Medicaid, SNAP and other nutrition programs are high on the list of essential supports coming under attack in the 119th Congress. News is breaking every day about proposals to make deep cuts to these programs, coupled with major tax breaks that would mostly benefit corporations and upper-income households.

The reality is most Iowans cannot afford to pay more for food and health care. Household budgets are stretched thin. Cutting Medicaid and SNAP would increase families' costs — and strain the local institutions Iowans rely on, like hospitals, nursing homes, food pantries and grocery stores.

Medicaid concerns

Medicaid is the backbone of our state's health care system, covering 700,000 Iowans, including nearly 1 in 3 children, more than 1 in 3 people with disabilities and half of nursing home residents. Proposals in play would:

- **Keep Iowans from getting health care they need.** Proposals for “per capita caps” would cause large structural cuts in Medicaid by shrinking federal funding over time. These cuts would in turn require Iowa’s Medicaid program to cut services, cut enrollment or reduce already low reimbursement to health providers. These would place serious financial strain on Iowa hospitals and nursing homes, particularly in rural areas, where larger shares of people rely on Medicaid for health insurance.¹
- **Create administrative waste and barriers to care.** We all agree on helping people get into decent jobs, but proposals to cut off their health insurance if they can’t meet rigid work reporting requirements won’t further this goal. In fact, evidence shows that most adults enrolled in Medicaid are already working — in low-wage jobs without benefits. Most who are not working face serious health challenges or are caregiving for loved ones.² Like many Iowans with low incomes, people on Medicaid are more likely to move frequently, have unreliable internet access, inflexible work hours and face other barriers that make managing complex verification requirements especially difficult.³
 - In Georgia, where the state has expanded coverage to some low-income adults and required them to report work activity, 90% of spending has gone to hiring corporate consultants and creating complex reporting systems — and only a few thousand people have successfully enrolled.⁴
 - When Arkansas implemented similar requirements in 2018, over 18,000 eligible people lost coverage in just seven months because they couldn’t clear required bureaucratic hurdles, and the state saw no increase in employment.⁵
- **Put Iowa on the hook for more Medicaid costs.** Among proposals to shift costs to states is one to slash the share of federal funding for Medicaid expansion, which launched in Iowa a decade ago under Gov. Terry Branstad. This would force Iowa to drastically increase its Medicaid budget or — more likely given state revenue projections — entirely drop the expansion population, now consisting of about 180,000 low-income Iowan adults. Shifting Medicaid costs to the state would not only squeeze health care; it would likely have cascading impacts on other parts of the state budget, including schools, courts and public safety.

SNAP and other nutrition program concerns

SNAP is also critical to Iowans’ well-being, helping nearly 260,000 Iowans, 8% of the state population, afford groceries. Nearly two-thirds of SNAP enrollees live in families with children, and more than one-third in families with older adults or disabled members. Emerging proposals would:

- **Make it more difficult for Iowa families to get healthy food.** A proposal to undo a permanent increase to the Thrifty Food Plan, the basic nutritious diet that is the basis for calculating SNAP benefits, would cut the average SNAP household in our state by \$70 a month.⁶ According to a recent study commissioned by the Iowa Department of Health and

Human Services, low-income Iowans value fruits, vegetables and protein, and would like to include more of these items in their diets but already struggle to afford them.⁷

- **Kick about 25,000 Iowans off SNAP entirely.**⁸ Some proposals call for the end of broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE), which allows states to extend SNAP benefits to households earning somewhat above the traditional income limit — in Iowa’s case those earning 131 to 160% of the federal poverty level. BBCE lessens what is otherwise a drastic benefits cliff, allowing working families to continue receiving some SNAP benefits as their incomes grow modestly. This state policy was codified by the Iowa Legislature and signed into law by Gov. Kim Reynolds in 2023.⁹
- **Further strain Iowa grocery stores, food banks and food pantries.** Cutting SNAP would place additional demand on emergency food providers, who continue to face record-breaking numbers of Iowans turning to them for assistance. It would also take critical income away from grocery stores at risk of closing their doors. Just undoing recent improvements to the Thrifty Food Plan would lead to a loss of nearly \$15 million in economic activity in Iowa every single month,¹⁰ squeezing already tight grocery profit margins and undermining efforts by Republican state lawmakers to stabilize small, independent stores in high-need, low-access areas.¹¹
- **Expand SNAP’s harsh work-reporting requirement to groups that can least afford more financial strain,** including older adults up to age 65, people living in areas with insufficient jobs, veterans, people experiencing homelessness, parents of school-age children and youth who have aged out of foster care.
- **Eliminate free school meals for an estimated 25,000 Iowa children** by making it harder for schools to qualify for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).¹²

Iowans want an economy that makes it possible for folks to afford essential services like food and health care. We ask that you actively oppose these potential cuts that would profoundly harm our families and communities.

Sincerely,

Cedar Valley’s Promise, Waterloo
CommUnity Crisis Services, Iowa City
Coralville Community Food Pantry
Corridor Community Action Network, Iowa
City (serving Iowa City, Cedar Rapids,
Coralville, Tiffin, North Liberty and
Marion)
Des Moines Area Religious Council
Dream City, Iowa City

Families Forward, Des Moines
Family Crisis Center, Ottumwa
Family Resources, Inc., Davenport
Firefly, Council Bluffs
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ),
Coralville
Girls Inc. of Sioux City
Hand in Hand, Bettendorf

League of Women Voters Metropolitan Des Moines
 North Liberty Community Pantry
 Primary Health Care, Inc., Des Moines
 Social Action Office, Diocese of Davenport
 South Central Iowa Community Action Program, Chariton
 Southeast Linn Community Center, Lisbon
 Table to Table Food Distribution Network, Iowa City
 Tanager, Cedar Rapids
 United Way of Central Iowa, Des Moines
 United Way of East Central Iowa, Cedar Rapids (serving Linn, Benton, Iowa, Jones and Cedar counties)
 West Central Community Action, Harlan
 YPN, Cedar Rapids
 YWCA Clinton

Statewide organizations

Common Good Iowa
 Disability Rights Iowa
 Easterseals Iowa
 EyesOpenIowa
 Iowa ACEs 360
 Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children
 Iowa CareGivers
 Iowa Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
 Iowa Citizen Action Network
 Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
 Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence
 Iowa Healthy School Meals for All Coalition
 Iowa Hunger Coalition
 Iowa State Education Association
 NAMI Iowa
 Planned Parenthood North Central States
 Project Iowa

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- ¹ Joan Alker, Aubrianna Osorio and Edwin Park, “Medicaid’s Role in Small Towns and Rural Areas,” Georgetown Center for Children and Families, January 15, 2025. Downloaded from <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/2025/01/15/medicaids-role-in-small-towns-and-rural-areas/>
 - ² Madeline Guth, Patrick Drake, Robin Rudowitz and Maiss Mohamed, "Understanding the Intersection of Medicaid & Work: A Look at What the Data Say," KFF, April 24, 2023. Downloaded from <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/understanding-the-intersection-of-medicaid-work-a-look-at-what-the-data-say/>
 - ³ Jacque Whearty, “Administrative Burden: Everyone Pays when Eligible Families Can’t Access Public Assistance,” Prenatal-to-3 Impact Center, July 2023. <https://pn3policy.org/blog/administrative-burden-blog/>
 - ⁴ Andy Miller and Renuka Rayasam, “Georgia’s Medicaid Work Requirements Costing Taxpayers Millions Despite Low Enrollment,” KFF, March 20, 2024. Downloaded from <https://kffhealthnews.org/news/article/georgia-medicaid-work-requirements-experiment-high-cost-low-enrollment/>. See also MaryBeth Musumeci, Elizabeth Leiser and Megan Douglas, “Few Georgians Are Enrolled in the State’s Medicaid Work Requirement Program,” The Commonwealth Fund, September 11, 2024. Downloaded from <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/blog/2024/few-georgians-are-enrolled-states-medicaid-work-requirement-program>
 - ⁵ Benjamin D. Sommers, Lucy Chen, Robert J Blendon, E. John Orav and Arnold M. Epstein, “Consequences of Work Requirements in Arkansas: Two-Year Impacts on Coverage, Employment, and Affordability of Care,” Health Affairs, Vol. 39, No. 9, September 2020. Downloaded from <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00538>
 - ⁶ Calculations by the Iowa Hunger Coalition based on: Iowa Department of Human Services, “SNAP Report Series F-1. Downloaded from <https://hhs.iowa.gov/performance-and-reports>. USDA Food and Nutrition Service, “Estimated Increase in SNAP Benefits by State, FY 2022. Downloaded from https://www.fns.usda.gov/TFP/state_table
 - ⁷ Altarum for the Iowa Department of Human Services, “Iowa State Nutrition Action Council (SNAC) Focus Group Report,” September 30, 2024.
 - ⁸ Iowa Department of Human Services, open records request response reporting the number of Iowa individuals enrolled in SNAP whose gross income falls between 131% and 160% of the federal poverty level as of July 31, 2024. Released in August 2024.
 - ⁹ Iowa Senate File 494, 90th Iowa General Assembly, 2023. Downloaded from <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=90&ba=sf494>
 - ¹⁰ Iowa Hunger Coalition
 - ¹¹ Iowa House File 59, 91st General Assembly, 2025. Downloaded from <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=91&ba=hf59>
 - ¹² Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Information and Analysis Services, “2023-24 Iowa Public School K-12 Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch by School,” Student Reporting in Iowa 2023-2024 fall enrollment file. Downloaded from <https://educate.iowa.gov/pk-12/data/education-statistics>.