

FEB 15,  
2018

# The case for expanding food stamp work requirements to parents

AUTHORED BY:

Jonathan Ingram  
*Vice President of Research*

Nic Horton  
*Research Director*

Sam Adolphsen  
*Senior Fellow*



TheFGA.org

# KEY FINDINGS

1

**THE PROBLEM:**  
MOST ABLE-BODIED PARENTS  
ON FOOD STAMPS DO NOT  
WORK AT ALL

52%

2

**THE REASON:**  
ABLE-BODIED PARENTS ON  
FOOD STAMPS HAVE NO REAL  
WORK REQUIREMENT



3

**THE RESULT:**  
DEPENDENCY ON FOOD  
STAMPS HAS REACHED  
RECORD HIGHS,  
SURPASSING

**12 MILLION**

ABLE-BODIED PARENTS

4

**THE SOLUTION:**  
CONGRESS SHOULD  
EXPAND WORK  
REQUIREMENTS TO  
ABLE-BODIED PARENTS



5

UP TO **7 MILLION** ADULTS COULD BE FREED FROM FOOD STAMPS,  
SAVING TAXPAYERS UP TO **\$12 BILLION** PER YEAR



## BOTTOM LINE:

ABLE-BODIED PARENTS ON FOOD STAMPS ARE TRAPPED IN DEPENDENCY.  
CONGRESS SHOULD MOVE THEM FROM WELFARE TO WORK.

---

## Executive Summary

For years, millions of able-bodied adults have been trapped in welfare dependency with little hope of better lives. Enrollment and spending have skyrocketed to historic levels recently, leaving fewer resources for the truly needy.

Thankfully, states have begun reversing Obama-era policies, reinstating work requirements and moving younger able-bodied adults out of welfare and back into the workforce. But able-bodied parents have been left behind.

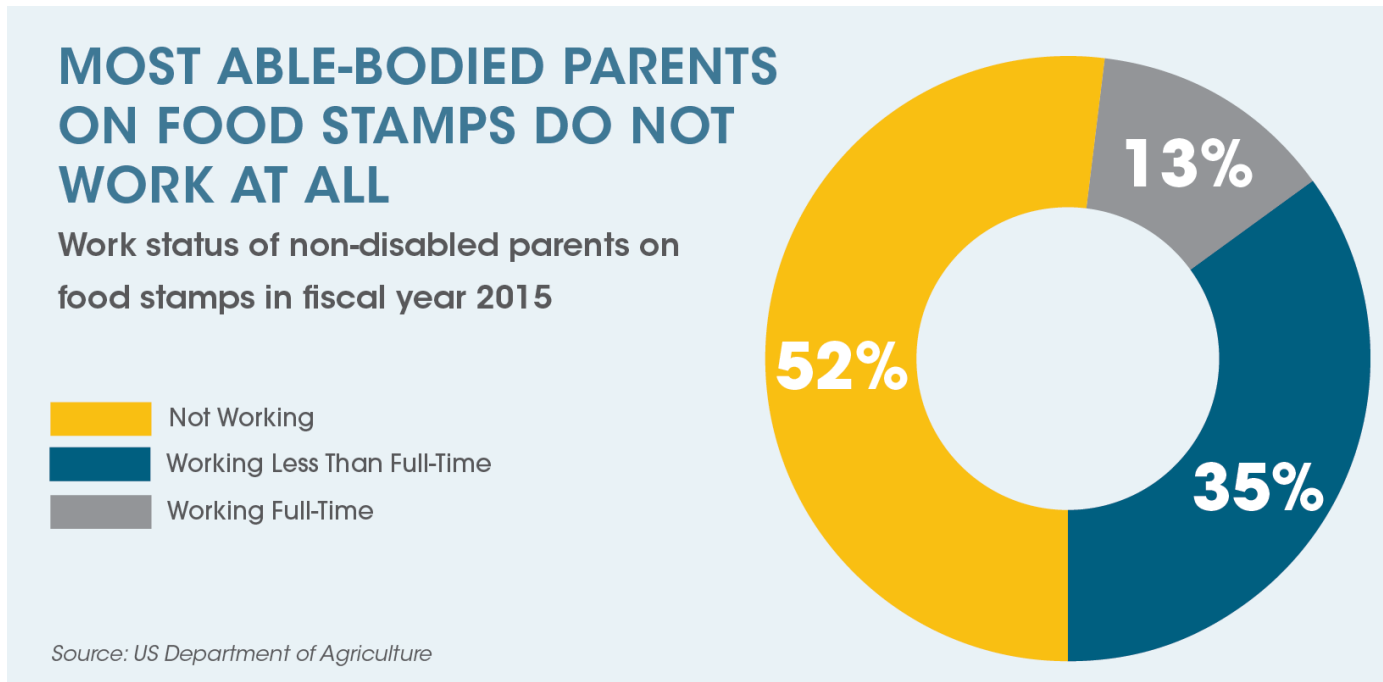
Able-bodied adults are currently exempt from food stamp work requirements if they have children, even if they have no disabilities that keep them from seeking gainful employment. Without work requirements, many are left to languish in welfare indefinitely.

This is a devastating reality for millions of individuals. Trapped in welfare, without work, they are significantly more likely to be stuck in a life of poverty and despair. To finish the great work that states have already begun, Congress should expand existing work requirements to all able-bodied adults, including parents. In so doing, they will lift millions of Americans out of welfare, save taxpayers billions annually, and free up resources for the truly needy.

---

## The problem: Most able-bodied parents on food stamps do not work at all

According to the most recent data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, more than 52 percent of able-bodied parents on food stamps do not work at all, while just 12 percent are working full-time.<sup>1</sup> These individuals are not working, even though they have no physical or mental disabilities keeping them from pursuing employment.



This lack of work is alarming in an era of near record-low unemployment.<sup>2</sup> With more than six million open jobs across the country, employers are desperate for workers.<sup>3</sup> In fact, there are more job openings today than nearly any point since the U.S. Department of Labor began tracking them.<sup>4</sup>

## The reason: Able-bodied parents on food stamps have no real work requirement

The reason most able-bodied parents on food stamps do not work is simple: they do not have to do so. Federal law requires able-bodied, childless adults on food stamps to work, train, or volunteer for at least 20 hours per week.<sup>5-7</sup> But current law exempts able-bodied adults from this requirement if they have dependent children in the home.<sup>8</sup>

Although some of these parents are theoretically subject to work registration and must participate in employment and training programs if assigned by states, few states ever assign these able-bodied adults to such programs, rendering them virtually meaningless.

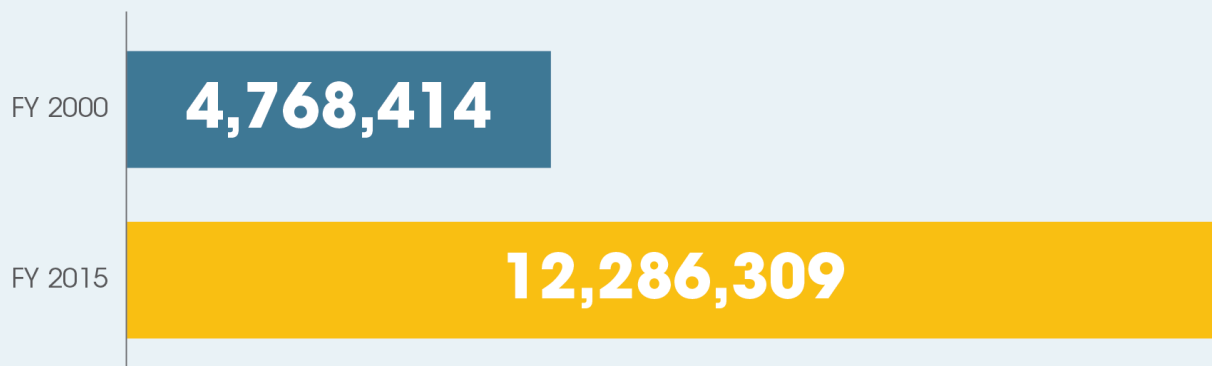
## The result: Record-high food stamp enrollment

With no work requirement in place, the number of able-bodied parents on food stamps—and not working—has reached record levels.

Today, more than 12 million able-bodied parents are dependent on the program—nearly three times the number enrolled in 2000.<sup>9-11</sup> Taxpayers spend roughly \$19 billion per year providing food stamps to these able-bodied parents.<sup>12</sup> For comparison, fewer than 600,000 able-bodied adults receive cash welfare through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program.<sup>13</sup>

### ABLE-BODIED PARENT FOOD STAMP DEPENDENCY HAS NEARLY TRIPLED SINCE 2000

Number of non-disabled parents on food stamps, by fiscal year



Source: US Department of Agriculture

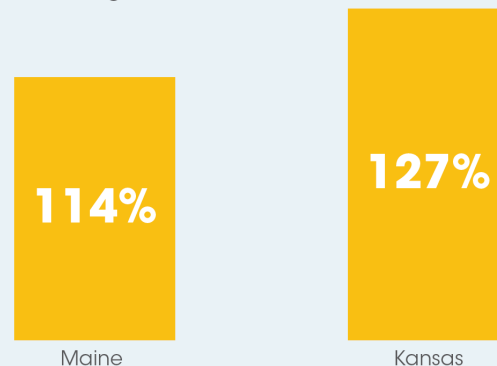
## The solution: Work requirements for able-bodied parents

Work requirements are a proven, efficient way to not only reduce caseloads but also increase incomes. After Kansas implemented work requirements for able-bodied, childless adults on food stamps, caseloads dropped by 75 percent and the average amount of time spent on welfare was cut in half.<sup>14</sup> Individuals who left welfare went back to work in more than 600 different industries and saw their incomes skyrocket, more than doubling on average.<sup>15</sup> Even better, this increased income more than offset their lost welfare benefits.<sup>16</sup>

When Maine implemented the same work requirements, it saw similar impressive results: incomes of former enrollees more than doubled and caseloads declined by 90 percent.<sup>17</sup>

### INCOMES DOUBLED AFTER KANSAS AND MAINE REQUIRED WORK

Average annual increase in income among non-disabled childless adults after leaving food stamps



Source: Foundation for Government Accountability

States have seen similar outcomes after work requirements were implemented for able-bodied parents on other welfare programs. In Kansas, for example, stronger work requirement sanctions for parents on cash welfare were followed by lower caseloads, more employment, and higher incomes.<sup>18</sup>

## FAMILY INCOMES DOUBLED AND THEN TRIPLED AFTER LEAVING CASH WELFARE IN KANSAS

Average annual increase in income among families who left cash assistance



Source: Foundation for Government Accountability

Getting able-bodied parents back into the labor force as quickly as possible is critical to returning them to a path of self-sufficiency. Research shows that re-entering the workforce becomes harder for able-bodied adults the longer they spend on welfare and the longer they spend not working.<sup>19-22</sup>

Without work requirements, able-bodied parents spend an average of five years on the program.<sup>23</sup> Two in five will languish on the program for more than eight years, compared to just 18 percent who leave within a year.<sup>24</sup> Getting these able-bodied adults back into the workforce as quickly as possible is essential to putting them back on the path to self-sufficiency and ending the cycle of dependency.

States can help address the problem even without a federal change by assigning more individuals mandatory job training if they are not already working. The Trump administration can also encourage more states to take these steps. But ultimately, it will take an act of Congress to create real work requirements for all able-bodied parents on food stamps.

Congress should simply extend the existing work requirement for able-bodied childless adults to parents. Under this approach, parents would be expected to work, train, or volunteer at least part-time to receive benefits long-term.

## The impact: 7 million fewer parents dependent on food stamps and up to \$12 billion in savings per year for taxpayers

Based on the experiences of other populations and other programs, expanding work requirements to able-bodied parents would lead to less dependency, more employment, higher incomes, and greater economic growth. These changes could move as many as seven million able-bodied parents out of welfare dependency and put them back on the path to better lives.<sup>25</sup>

As a result, federal taxpayers could save up to \$12 billion per year from reduced food stamp spending, plus additional state and federal Medicaid savings for those whose incomes rise above current eligibility limits.<sup>26</sup>

Rather than spending this money on welfare for able-bodied adults, policymakers would preserve these resources for the truly needy, including seniors, children, and individuals with disabilities. Wages for those removed from the program would also grow, generating additional payroll and income tax revenues.

Able-bodied parents on food stamps have been exempt from commonsense work requirements for far too long. Not only has this crowded out resources for the truly needy, but it has left millions of adults to languish on welfare, robbing them of the hope of better lives. Congress should help these families out of the welfare trap by expanding successful work requirements to all able-bodied adults on food stamps.

## REFERENCES

1. Authors' calculations based upon data provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on employment status of non-disabled adults between the ages of 18 and 64 who had dependent children in the household and were enrolled in food stamps in fiscal year 2015. See, e.g., Food and Nutrition Service, "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program quality control database," U.S. Department of Agriculture (2016), [https://host76.mathematica-mpr.com/fns/PUBLIC\\_USE/2015/qcfy2015\\_st.zip](https://host76.mathematica-mpr.com/fns/PUBLIC_USE/2015/qcfy2015_st.zip).
2. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Current population survey: Unemployment rate," U.S. Department of Labor (2017), <https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNS14000000>.
3. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Job openings and labor turnover survey: Job openings," U.S. Department of Labor (2017), <https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/JTS00000000JOL>.
4. Ibid.
5. 7 U.S.C. § 2015(o), <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2016-title7/pdf/USCODE-2016-title7-chap51-sec2015.pdf>.
6. During the Obama administration, virtually all states waived these requirements. See, e.g., Jonathan Ingram et al., "Trending now: Governors are reducing dependency," *Forbes* (2015), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/theapothecary/2015/08/19/trending-now-governors-are-reducing-dependency>.
7. Although states have begun restoring work requirements for younger able-bodied adults, there remains room for improvement. See, e.g., Sam Adolphsen, "Three simple steps to fast-track the American comeback: How to free millions from food stamps and save up to \$50 billion over a decade," Foundation for Government Accountability (2017), <https://thefga.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/3-Simple-Steps-To-Fast-Track-The-American-Comeback-9-5-17.pdf>.
8. 7 U.S.C. § 2015(o), <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2016-title7/pdf/USCODE-2016-title7-chap51-sec2015.pdf>.
9. Authors' calculations based upon data provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on food stamp enrollment in fiscal years 2000 and 2015 among non-disabled adults between the ages of 18 and 64 who had dependent children in the household.
10. Food and Nutrition Service, "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program quality control database," U.S. Department of Agriculture (2001), [https://host76.mathematica-mpr.com/fns/PUBLIC\\_USE/2000/qcfy2000\\_st.zip](https://host76.mathematica-mpr.com/fns/PUBLIC_USE/2000/qcfy2000_st.zip).
11. Food and Nutrition Service, "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program quality control database," U.S. Department of Agriculture (2016), [https://host76.mathematica-mpr.com/fns/PUBLIC\\_USE/2015/qcfy2015\\_st.zip](https://host76.mathematica-mpr.com/fns/PUBLIC_USE/2015/qcfy2015_st.zip).
12. Authors' calculations based upon data provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on food stamp expenditures in fiscal year 2015 among non-disabled adults between the ages of 18 and 64 who had dependent children in the household.
13. Administration for Children and Families, "TANF caseload data: Total number of adult recipients – 2017," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2017), [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/2017\\_adult\\_tan.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/2017_adult_tan.pdf).
14. Jonathan Ingram and Nicolas Horton, "The power of work: How Kansas' welfare reform is lifting Americans out of poverty," Foundation for Government Accountability (2016), <https://thefga.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Kansas-study-paper.pdf>.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Jonathan Ingram and Josh Archambault, "New report proves Maine's welfare reforms are working," *Forbes* (2016), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/theapothecary/2016/05/19/new-report-proves-maines-welfare-reforms-are-working>.
18. Nicholas Horton and Jonathan Ingram, "Work requirements are working for Kansas families," Foundation for Government Accountability (2017), <https://thefga.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Work-Requirements-are-Working-for-Kansas-Families.pdf>.
19. Jonathan Ingram and Nicholas Horton, "The power of work: How Kansas' welfare reform is lifting Americans out of poverty," Foundation for Government Accountability (2016), <https://thefga.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Kansas-study-paper.pdf>.
20. Job applicants are less likely to receive an interview callback the longer they have been unemployed. See, e.g., Kory Kroff et al., "Duration dependence and labor market conditions: Evidence from a field experiment," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (2013), <https://academic.oup.com/qje/article-abstract/128/3/1123/1852133>.
21. Individuals experience human capital depreciation when out of the workforce. See, e.g., Julie L. Hotchkiss and M. Melinda Pitts, "Evidence of demand factors in the determination of the labor market intermittency penalty," Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta (2007), <https://www.frbatlanta.org/-/media/documents/research/publications/wp/2007/wp0716.pdf>.
22. Longer periods of not working are associated with declining job skills relative to other workers. See, e.g., Per-Anders Edin and Magnus Gustavsson, "Time out of work and skill depreciation," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* (2008), <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/001979390806100202>.
23. Authors' calculations based upon completed spell lengths of non-elderly, non-disabled adults with dependent children. See, e.g., Food and Nutrition Services, "Dynamics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participation from 2008 to 2012," U.S. Department of Agriculture (2014), <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/ops/Dynamics2008-2012.pdf>.
24. Ibid.
25. Authors' calculations based upon current employment status of non-disabled parents aged 18-64 on food stamps and caseload declines for non-disabled childless adults on food stamps and non-disabled parents on cash assistance.
26. Authors' calculations based upon current average monthly benefits for individuals expected to be disenrolled.



# Appendix 1. More than 12 million able-bodied parents are dependent on food stamps

Number of non-disabled, working-age parents on food stamps and annual spending on such adults in fiscal year 2015

STATE	ENROLLMENT	ANNUAL SPENDING
Alabama	229,300	\$353,000,000
Alaska	23,000	\$49,900,000
Arizona	298,400	\$419,500,000
Arkansas	118,100	\$166,100,000
California	1,650,900	\$2,667,000,000
Colorado	148,500	\$236,500,000
Connecticut	95,700	\$142,000,000
Delaware	41,500	\$63,400,000
District of Columbia	32,100	\$50,200,000
Florida	910,000	\$1,345,800,000
Georgia	470,400	\$733,300,000
Hawaii	49,200	\$130,000,000
Idaho	60,400	\$85,900,000
Illinois	512,500	\$808,500,000
Indiana	211,100	\$318,400,000
Iowa	101,800	\$133,800,000
Kansas	74,500	\$105,200,000
Kentucky	215,600	\$315,500,000
Louisiana	206,500	\$323,400,000
Maine	47,300	\$64,500,000
Maryland	189,000	\$280,500,000
Massachusetts	142,700	\$205,600,000
Michigan	356,200	\$508,400,000
Minnesota	105,800	\$130,800,000
Mississippi	152,500	\$228,500,000
Missouri	229,800	\$353,100,000
Montana	28,600	\$40,800,000
Nebraska	44,300	\$64,000,000
Nevada	122,200	\$178,300,000
New Hampshire	24,000	\$30,400,000

## Appendix 1. More than 12 million able-bodied parents are dependent on food stamps (Continued)

Number of non-disabled, working-age parents on food stamps and annual spending on such adults in fiscal year 2015

STATE	ENROLLMENT	ANNUAL SPENDING
New Jersey	235,700	\$352,100,000
New Mexico	131,300	\$198,300,000
New York	661,200	\$1,024,300,000
North Carolina	443,500	\$662,900,000
North Dakota	14,100	\$20,800,000
Ohio	412,200	\$640,400,000
Oklahoma	168,700	\$255,800,000
Oregon	197,200	\$266,400,000
Pennsylvania	410,600	\$604,300,000
Rhode Island	40,900	\$61,900,000
South Carolina	231,500	\$365,700,000
South Dakota	26,100	\$38,900,000
Tennessee	302,300	\$476,700,000
Texas	1,203,200	\$1,746,000,000
Utah	67,500	\$95,200,000
Vermont	18,800	\$23,300,000
Virginia	235,500	\$362,600,000
Washington	287,400	\$378,900,000
West Virginia	90,500	\$127,700,000
Wisconsin	207,200	\$269,700,000
Wyoming	9,000	\$13,200,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12,286,300</b>	<b>\$18,517,500,000</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

## Appendix 2. Expanding work requirements to all able-bodied parents could save taxpayers more than \$12 billion per year

*Projected reduction in enrollment and potential annual savings if all non-disabled parents on food stamps were subject to a work requirement*

STATE	ENROLLMENT DECLINE	ANNUAL SAVINGS
Alabama	142,800	\$242,100,000
Alaska	17,900	\$41,100,000
Arizona	175,200	\$275,300,000
Arkansas	76,200	\$117,900,000
California	952,000	\$1,637,000,000
Colorado	90,400	\$155,400,000
Connecticut	60,700	\$99,500,000
Delaware	25,400	\$43,400,000
District of Columbia	22,000	\$38,000,000
Florida	516,500	\$851,300,000
Georgia	298,100	\$512,900,000
Hawaii	28,800	\$82,600,000
Idaho	36,400	\$57,100,000
Illinois	317,800	\$539,300,000
Indiana	134,600	\$225,900,000
Iowa	58,100	\$89,300,000
Kansas	44,900	\$71,000,000
Kentucky	121,400	\$191,000,000
Louisiana	130,000	\$224,300,000
Maine	29,200	\$45,200,000
Maryland	104,000	\$169,300,000
Massachusetts	85,500	\$142,100,000
Michigan	220,300	\$352,900,000
Minnesota	58,500	\$84,400,000
Mississippi	104,300	\$173,600,000
Missouri	133,400	\$222,000,000
Montana	17,700	\$28,700,000
Nebraska	25,300	\$41,300,000
Nevada	75,900	\$123,300,000
New Hampshire	13,800	\$20,500,000

## Appendix 2. Expanding work requirements to all able-bodied parents could save taxpayers more than \$12 billion per year (Continued)

Projected reduction in enrollment and potential annual savings if all non-disabled parents on food stamps were subject to a work requirement

STATE	ENROLLMENT	ANNUAL SAVINGS
New Jersey	136,000	\$224,300,000
New Mexico	77,800	\$130,200,000
New York	363,900	\$595,900,000
North Carolina	254,300	\$428,600,000
North Dakota	7,500	\$12,900,000
Ohio	264,800	\$450,800,000
Oklahoma	105,200	\$177,800,000
Oregon	117,400	\$179,600,000
Pennsylvania	257,100	\$427,500,000
Rhode Island	22,700	\$37,700,000
South Carolina	127,900	\$218,600,000
South Dakota	16,100	\$26,800,000
Tennessee	177,300	\$305,700,000
Texas	673,800	\$1,105,000,000
Utah	39,300	\$63,000,000
Vermont	10,300	\$15,000,000
Virginia	145,400	\$248,700,000
Washington	176,000	\$273,500,000
West Virginia	60,600	\$95,900,000
Wisconsin	108,800	\$162,000,000
Wyoming	5,500	\$9,300,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,264,700</b>	<b>\$12,086,300,000</b>

Source: Authors' calculations

## Appendix 3. Expanding work requirements to able-bodied parents without infants could save taxpayers more than \$10 billion per year

*Projected reduction in enrollment and potential annual savings if all non-disabled parents without dependent children under the age of one were subject to a work requirement*

STATE	ENROLLMENT DECLINE	ANNUAL SAVINGS
Alabama	125,000	\$209,400,000
Alaska	15,500	\$35,100,000
Arizona	150,600	\$239,300,000
Arkansas	66,300	\$101,600,000
California	830,900	\$1,436,500,000
Colorado	77,400	\$132,300,000
Connecticut	53,000	\$85,400,000
Delaware	21,000	\$35,600,000
District of Columbia	18,800	\$32,300,000
Florida	435,200	\$715,400,000
Georgia	267,600	\$456,900,000
Hawaii	26,400	\$75,700,000
Idaho	31,200	\$49,300,000
Illinois	272,500	\$459,400,000
Indiana	111,300	\$186,000,000
Iowa	47,700	\$73,200,000
Kansas	37,400	\$59,400,000
Kentucky	106,500	\$165,200,000
Louisiana	116,000	\$200,500,000
Maine	25,000	\$38,800,000
Maryland	92,700	\$149,700,000
Massachusetts	71,800	\$120,500,000
Michigan	189,500	\$294,500,000
Minnesota	50,300	\$72,000,000
Mississippi	94,700	\$158,100,000
Missouri	113,000	\$186,100,000
Montana	14,700	\$23,800,000
Nebraska	21,000	\$34,200,000
Nevada	63,700	\$104,100,000
New Hampshire	11,500	\$17,000,000

## Appendix 3. Expanding work requirements to able-bodied parents without infants could save taxpayers more than \$10 billion per year (Continued)

*Projected reduction in enrollment and potential annual savings if all non-disabled parents without dependent children under the age of one were subject to a work requirement*

STATE	ENROLLMENT	ANNUAL SAVINGS
New Jersey	118,900	\$197,600,000
New Mexico	65,900	\$110,800,000
New York	318,000	\$516,600,000
North Carolina	225,600	\$380,200,000
North Dakota	5,900	\$10,000,000
Ohio	222,000	\$377,800,000
Oklahoma	84,700	\$144,200,000
Oregon	102,000	\$157,100,000
Pennsylvania	213,800	\$352,200,000
Rhode Island	18,900	\$31,300,000
South Carolina	107,500	\$181,300,000
South Dakota	12,600	\$20,800,000
Tennessee	147,100	\$250,200,000
Texas	574,600	\$941,200,000
Utah	30,500	\$48,800,000
Vermont	9,100	\$13,300,000
Virginia	132,900	\$226,300,000
Washington	153,400	\$240,300,000
West Virginia	53,000	\$83,300,000
Wisconsin	87,600	\$130,400,000
Wyoming	4,600	\$7,800,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,246,500</b>	<b>\$10,368,900,000</b>

Source: Authors' calculations

## Appendix 4. Expanding work requirements to able-bodied parents without young children could save taxpayers more than \$5 billion per year

*Projected reduction in enrollment and potential annual savings if all non-disabled parents without dependent children under the age of six were subject to a work requirement*

STATE	ENROLLMENT DECLINE	ANNUAL SAVINGS
Alabama	71,400	\$118,900,000
Alaska	6,400	\$14,300,000
Arizona	72,700	\$110,500,000
Arkansas	32,100	\$49,100,000
California	422,600	\$739,000,000
Colorado	37,500	\$64,500,000
Connecticut	24,300	\$39,900,000
Delaware	11,400	\$20,000,000
District of Columbia	9,700	\$16,700,000
Florida	203,900	\$326,900,000
Georgia	148,400	\$257,900,000
Hawaii	11,300	\$32,600,000
Idaho	12,500	\$19,800,000
Illinois	145,900	\$246,500,000
Indiana	56,400	\$91,800,000
Iowa	25,300	\$37,900,000
Kansas	17,000	\$27,900,000
Kentucky	54,500	\$84,800,000
Louisiana	59,300	\$99,000,000
Maine	13,200	\$20,200,000
Maryland	48,800	\$80,900,000
Massachusetts	36,500	\$63,400,000
Michigan	91,800	\$137,200,000
Minnesota	21,100	\$31,800,000
Mississippi	42,800	\$71,100,000
Missouri	62,000	\$99,200,000
Montana	7,000	\$11,100,000
Nebraska	9,500	\$15,200,000
Nevada	35,300	\$58,800,000
New Hampshire	5,900	\$8,000,000

## Appendix 4. Expanding work requirements to able-bodied parents without young children could save taxpayers more than \$5 billion per year (Continued)

*Projected reduction in enrollment and potential annual savings if all non-disabled parents without dependent children under the age of six were subject to a work requirement*

STATE	ENROLLMENT	ANNUAL SAVINGS
New Jersey	50,900	\$85,600,000
New Mexico	33,200	\$55,300,000
New York	154,400	\$252,700,000
North Carolina	118,600	\$197,400,000
North Dakota	2,300	\$4,100,000
Ohio	137,700	\$231,100,000
Oklahoma	42,100	\$68,400,000
Oregon	54,300	\$85,700,000
Pennsylvania	103,300	\$177,200,000
Rhode Island	11,200	\$18,900,000
South Carolina	61,500	\$100,000,000
South Dakota	5,100	\$8,100,000
Tennessee	74,700	\$125,400,000
Texas	272,300	\$463,000,000
Utah	12,700	\$20,800,000
Vermont	4,300	\$6,000,000
Virginia	74,400	\$123,100,000
Washington	72,200	\$112,200,000
West Virginia	25,900	\$37,700,000
Wisconsin	38,400	\$58,500,000
Wyoming	2,100	\$3,400,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,148,500</b>	<b>\$5,229,500,000</b>

Source: Authors' calculations



## Appendix 5. Parents have child care options available

Although some opponents of commonsense work requirements have expressed concern about affordable child care options for parents if they return to work, the reality is that many of these parents currently have access to child care options. In fact, nearly two-thirds of the children in households with able-bodied, working-age parents are school-aged.<sup>1</sup>

These children will typically spend six to seven hours per day attending school for eight to nine months out of the year.<sup>2</sup> In fact, more than 5.2 million of these able-bodied parents have only school-aged children, with 1.5 million having only teenage children.<sup>3-4</sup> These young adults often participate in after-school programs including sports, band, drama, art, or various clubs offered through the school districts or in programs offered by independent community groups.

Many of the families with younger children also have older children who may be available to help watch younger siblings part-time. Nearly 4.7 million able-bodied parents have at least some children over the age of 13.<sup>5</sup> Many families also have access to grandparents or parents who would otherwise be exempt from the work requirement who could watch younger children.

Parents also have access to a variety of tax credits that could help fund child care expenses. The child and dependent care credit, for example, provides a credit of up to \$1,050 per year for one child or \$2,100 per year for two children to parents who are working or looking for work.<sup>6</sup> Workers can also use flexible spending accounts to pay for child care expenses with pre-tax dollars.<sup>7</sup>

These parents will also often qualify for earned-income tax credits, which can total up to \$6,444 per year, depending on income and number of children.<sup>8</sup> The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act also doubled the value of the child tax credit, now worth up to \$2,000 per child, which parents could choose to use to help defray child care expenses.<sup>9</sup>

Additionally, all states operate child care subsidy programs, partially funded through federal grants, to provide taxpayer-funded child care assistance to low-income working families.<sup>10</sup> Much of this spending flows through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), which combines mandatory and discretionary federal spending on child care subsidies with state funds required under maintenance of effort requirements.<sup>11</sup> State and federal taxpayers spent \$8.5 billion on child care assistance through the CCDF in 2015.<sup>12</sup> The 2018 budget deal included another \$5.8 billion in federal CCDF spending over the next two years.<sup>13</sup>

Virtually all of the families impacted by a new work requirement have incomes that would allow them to qualify for these programs. Parents applying for child care assistance initially can earn roughly 180 percent of the federal poverty line in the average state—more than \$45,000 per year for a family of four—and still qualify for the program.<sup>14-15</sup> Some states have expanded eligibility levels up to as high as 315 percent of the federal poverty line or more than \$79,000 per year for a family of four.<sup>16</sup> Many states also allow families already on the program to continue receiving subsidies even when their incomes rise above the initial eligibility limit.<sup>17</sup>

According to federal data, more than 99.6 percent of children in the families likely impacted by work requirements meet the current initial eligibility thresholds for these state programs.<sup>18</sup>

States also use funding from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program on direct child care subsidies. In 2015, for example, states allocated \$6.1 billion in TANF funds for child care and early education purposes.<sup>19</sup> States spent another \$585 million on refundable tax credits for things such as child care expenses.<sup>20</sup>

Federal law also allows states to transfer up to 30 percent of TANF funds into the CCDF block grant.<sup>21</sup> In 2015, states transferred \$1.3 billion from TANF to CCDF, though they could have transferred as much as \$5.1 billion under federal rules.<sup>22</sup> States have also accumulated \$3.4 billion in unused TANF funds that carry over year-to-year.<sup>23</sup>

State-level reforms may also guide federal policymakers on this issue. In Wisconsin, for example, Gov. Scott Walker has pursued requiring parents of school-aged children to work or participate in job training as a condition of eligibility.<sup>24</sup> The Wisconsin Department of Health Services and the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families estimate that just four percent of school-aged children whose parents are subject to the state's job training requirement are expected to need child care assistance.<sup>25-27</sup>

## Appendix 6. Every state operates a child care assistance program

Child care assistance programs and eligibility thresholds, by state

STATE	PROGRAM	INITIAL ELIGIBILITY	CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY
Alabama	Child Care Subsidy Program	130% FPL	150% FPL
Alaska	Child Care Assistance Program	216% FPL	216% FPL
Arizona	Child Care Assistance	165% FPL	165% FPL
Arkansas	Child Care Assistance Program	148% FPL	148% FPL
California	California Alternative Payment Programs	210% FPL	210% FPL
Colorado	Colorado Child Care Assistance Program	225% FPL	225% FPL
Connecticut	Care 4 Kids	222% FPL	222% FPL
Delaware	Child Care Subsidy Program	200% FPL	200% FPL
District of Columbia	Subsidized Child Care	228% FPL	254% FPL
Florida	School Readiness	150% FPL	200% FPL
Georgia	Childcare and Parent Services	140% FPL	140% FPL
Hawaii	Child Care Connection Hawaii	204% FPL	204% FPL
Idaho	Idaho Child Care Program	130% FPL	130% FPL
Illinois	Child Care Assistance Program	185% FPL	185% FPL
Indiana	CCDF Program	127% FPL	170% FPL
Iowa	Child Care Assistance	145% FPL	145% FPL
Kansas	Child Care Program	185% FPL	185% FPL
Kentucky	Child Care Assistance Program	138% FPL	152% FPL
Louisiana	Child Care Assistance Program	152% FPL	152% FPL
Maine	DHHS Child Care Subsidy Program	272% FPL	272% FPL
Maryland	Child Care Subsidy Program	149% FPL	149% FPL
Massachusetts	Early Education and Care Financial Assistance	222% FPL	377% FPL
Michigan	Child Development and Care	119% FPL	243% FPL
Minnesota	Child Care Assistance Program	177% FPL	252% FPL
Mississippi	Child Care Payment Program	174% FPL	174% FPL
Missouri	Child Care Assistance Program	123% FPL	175% FPL
Montana	Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program	150% FPL	150% FPL
Nebraska	Child Care Subsidy Program	130% FPL	130% FPL
Nevada	Child Care Development Program	236% FPL	236% FPL
New Hampshire	NH Child Care Scholarship	250% FPL	250% FPL

## Appendix 6. Every state operates a child care assistance program (Continued)

Child care assistance programs and eligibility thresholds, by state

STATE	PROGRAM	INITIAL ELIGIBILITY	CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY
New Jersey	Child Care Subsidy Program	197% FPL	246% FPL
New Mexico	Child Care Assistance	200% FPL	200% FPL
New York	Child Care Subsidy Program	200% FPL	200% FPL
North Carolina	Subsidized Child Care Program	200% FPL	200% FPL
North Dakota	Child Care Assistance Program	315% FPL	315% FPL
Ohio	Publicly Funded Child Care	130% FPL	300% FPL
Oklahoma	Child Care Subsidy Program	175% FPL	175% FPL
Oregon	Child Care Program Employment Related Day Care	185% FPL	261% FPL
Pennsylvania	Child Care Works Subsidized Child Care	200% FPL	235% FPL
Rhode Island	Child Care Assistance Program	180% FPL	180% FPL
South Carolina	SC Voucher Child Care Program	150% FPL	175% FPL
South Dakota	Child Care Assistance	175% FPL	175% FPL
Tennessee	Child Care Certificate Program	166% FPL	166% FPL
Texas	Child Care Services	200% FPL	247% FPL
Utah	Child Care Assistance	166% FPL	207% FPL
Vermont	Child Care Financial Assistance Program	197% FPL	197% FPL
Virginia	Child Care Subsidy and Services	185% FPL	185% FPL
Washington	Working Connections Child Care	200% FPL	200% FPL
West Virginia	Child Care	148% FPL	182% FPL
Wisconsin	Wisconsin Shares Child Care	185% FPL	200% FPL
Wyoming	Child Care Subsidy Program	175% FPL	225% FPL

## REFERENCES FOR APPENDIX 5

1. Authors' calculations based upon data provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on food stamp enrollment in fiscal year 2015 among children in households with non-disabled adults between the ages of 18 and 64, disaggregated by age. See, e.g., Food and Nutrition Service, "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program quality control database," U.S. Department of Agriculture (2016), [https://host76.mathematica-mpr.com/fns/PUBLIC\\_USE/2015/qcfy2015\\_st.zip](https://host76.mathematica-mpr.com/fns/PUBLIC_USE/2015/qcfy2015_st.zip).
2. Public schools have an average school day length of 6.64 hours and an average school year length of 180 school days. The average school day length ranges from a low of 6.22 hours in Washington to a high of 7.17 hours in Texas. The average school year length ranges from a low of 171 school days in Colorado to a high of 184 school days in Florida. See, e.g., National Center for Education Statistics, "Schools and staffing survey: Public school data file, 2007-2008," U.S. Department of Education (2008), [https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/xls/sass0708\\_035\\_s1s.xls](https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/xls/sass0708_035_s1s.xls).
3. Authors' calculations based upon data provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on food stamp enrollment in fiscal year 2015 among non-disabled adults between the ages of 18 and 64 who had only dependent children over the age of six in the household.
4. Authors' calculations based upon data provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on food stamp enrollment in fiscal year 2015 among non-disabled adults between the ages of 18 and 64 who had dependent children over the age of 13 in the household.
5. Authors' calculations based upon data provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on food stamp enrollment in fiscal year 2015 among non-disabled adults between the ages of 18 and 64 who had any dependent children over the age of 13 in the household.
6. Internal Revenue Service, "Child and dependent care expenses," U.S. Department of the Treasury (2017), <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p503.pdf>.
7. Ibid.
8. Internal Revenue Service, "2018 EITC income limits, maximum credit amounts, and tax law updates," U.S. Department of the Treasury (2017), <https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/earned-income-tax-credit/eitc-income-limits-maximum-credit-amounts-next-year>.
9. Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, Public Law 115-97 (2017), <https://www.congress.gov/115/bills/hr1/BILLS-115hr1enr.pdf>.
10. Administration for Children and Families, "The CCDF policies database book of tables: Key cross-state variations in CCDF policies as of October 1, 2015," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2016), [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/ccdf\\_policies\\_database\\_2015\\_book\\_of\\_tables\\_final\\_11\\_23\\_16\\_b508.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/ccdf_policies_database_2015_book_of_tables_final_11_23_16_b508.pdf).
11. Karen E. Lynch, "Trends in child care spending from the CCDF and TANF," Congressional Research Service (2016), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R44528.pdf>.
12. Administration for Children and Families, "Child Care and Development Fund fiscal year 2015 state spending from all appropriation years," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2017), [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/final\\_overview\\_allyears15.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/final_overview_allyears15.pdf).
13. Thomas Kaplan, "Senate leaders reach budget deal to raise spending over two years," New York Times (2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/07/us/politics/budget-deal-trump.html>.
14. Authors' calculations based upon median and mean initial eligibility level for CCDF programs. See, e.g., Administration for Children and Families, "The CCDF policies database book of tables: Key cross-state variations in CCDF policies as of October 1, 2015," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2016), [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/ccdf\\_policies\\_database\\_2015\\_book\\_of\\_tables\\_final\\_11\\_23\\_16\\_b508.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/ccdf_policies_database_2015_book_of_tables_final_11_23_16_b508.pdf).
15. This report uses data from the Administration for Children and Families for all states as of October 2015 except Illinois, which restored eligibility thresholds to 185 percent of the federal poverty level after a temporary reduction to 50 percent of the federal poverty level was captured in the CCDF policies database. See, e.g., Division of Family and Community Services, "Child Care Assistance Program policy manual: Income guidelines," Illinois Department of Human Services (2017), <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=97063>.
16. Administration for Children and Families, "The CCDF policies database book of tables: Key cross-state variations in CCDF policies as of October 1, 2015," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2016), [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/ccdf\\_policies\\_database\\_2015\\_book\\_of\\_tables\\_final\\_11\\_23\\_16\\_b508.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/ccdf_policies_database_2015_book_of_tables_final_11_23_16_b508.pdf).
17. Ibid.
18. Authors' calculations based upon data provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on food stamp enrollment in fiscal year 2015 among children under the age of 13 in households with non-disabled adults between the ages of 18 and 64 who were not working or were working less than 20 hours per week and who had incomes below the initial eligibility thresholds for child care assistance programs.
19. Administration for Children and Families, "Fiscal year 2015 federal TANF and state MOE financial data," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2017), [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/tanf\\_financial\\_data\\_fy\\_2015\\_8217.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/tanf_financial_data_fy_2015_8217.pdf).
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Authors' calculations based upon 2015 federal TANF awards.
23. Administration for Children and Families, "Fiscal year 2015 federal TANF and state MOE financial data," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2017), [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/tanf\\_financial\\_data\\_fy\\_2015\\_8217.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/tanf_financial_data_fy_2015_8217.pdf).
24. Wisconsin Executive Order 271 (2018), [https://walker.wi.gov/sites/default/files/executive-orders/Executive\\_Order\\_271.pdf](https://walker.wi.gov/sites/default/files/executive-orders/Executive_Order_271.pdf).
25. Authors' calculations based upon the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' estimate of roughly 110,000 children living in

households subject to the job training requirement and the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families' estimate of 4,500 children expected to enroll in the state's child care assistance program.

26. Division of Executive Budget and Finance, "Fiscal estimate on LRB 17-5286/1: Department of Human Services," Wisconsin Department of Administration (2018), [https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2017/related/fe/jr8\\_sb2/jr8\\_sb2\\_DHS.pdf](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2017/related/fe/jr8_sb2/jr8_sb2_DHS.pdf).
27. Division of Executive Budget and Finance, "Fiscal estimate on LRB 17-5286/1: Department of Children and Families," Wisconsin Department of Administration (2018), [https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2017/related/fe/jr8\\_sb2/jr8\\_sb2\\_DCF.pdf](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2017/related/fe/jr8_sb2/jr8_sb2_DCF.pdf).



[TheFGA.org](http://TheFGA.org)

[@TheFGA](https://twitter.com/TheFGA)

15275 Collier Boulevard | Suite 201-279

Naples, Florida 34119

(239) 244-8808