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May 23, 2023

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate

Dear Speaker McCarthy, Minority Leader Jeffries, Majority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McConnell:

On behalf of Generations United and our millions of constituents, I am writing to urge Congress to pass a clean debt limit increase and express our strong concerns with the work requirements being proposed for critical federal programs including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) as part of the ongoing debt limit negotiations. The expanded work requirements being considered for TANF, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Medicaid would have serious consequences for children, older adults, and their families. We urge you to reject these proposals and pass a clean debt limit increase that does not cut critical programs or lead to further harm to children and older adults, our nation's most vulnerable populations.

Generations United's mission is to improve the lives of children, youth, and older adults through intergenerational collaboration, public policies, and programs for the enduring benefit for all. For nearly twenty-five years, Generations United's National Center on Grandfamilies has been a leading voice for issues affecting families headed by grandparents, other relatives, and close family friends.

Currently more than 2.5 million children benefit from the sacrifices of grandparents, other relatives, or close family friends, who often assume caregiving responsibilities unexpectedly when a crisis occurs. It is important to note that for every 1 child being raised by kin in foster care, there are 18 children being raised by kin outside foster care. For these families outside foster care, TANF is often the only source of support to help meet the children's basic needs. Yet barriers like work requirements can prevent many of them from being able to access it. Work requirements are not appropriate for grandparents and other relatives raising children as they do not account for older caregivers who may struggle to find employment and caregivers who cannot work due to health concerns. Furthermore, oftentimes children in grandfamilies have significant special needs due to the traumatic circumstances that brought them into care, which can make finding safe and appropriate child care difficult or impossible. In fact, at a recent [Subcommittee on Work and Welfare hearing](#) related to TANF, there was bipartisan acknowledgement that grandparents and other relatives raising children should not be subject to work requirements in order to receive TANF to care for their children successfully.

The majority of grandparents and other relative caregivers raising children access TANF through child-only grants, which in most cases are not subject to work requirements. However, the proposed provision related to resetting the caseload reduction credit would provide additional incentives for states to reduce their TANF caseloads, which will undoubtedly harm a substantial number of poor children who are the only recipients of TANF in their families.

Historically states have relied heavily on cutting the caseload to meet the strict work requirements. Given that child-only cases represent over half of TANF cases in 50 percent of the states, resetting the caseload reduction credit to current case levels essentially eliminates the caseload reduction credit as a way for states to meet the harsh work participation rates. As a direct consequence, this provision would push states to reduce the number of work-eligible and child-only families in order to achieve the sizeable caseload reduction needed to meet the expanded work requirements. The overall impact of the expanded TANF work requirements would not only detrimentally disincentivize states from opening child-only TANF cases to support grandparents and other relative caregivers, but it would also scare them away from seeking the help that they need.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns and for your commitment to the well-being of children, older adults, and their families. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families is an essential source of support to help these caregivers meet the children's basic needs as they provide the love and care they need to thrive. We welcome the opportunity to partner with you in your efforts to improve the TANF program and hope that you consider such legislation separate from the debt limit negotiations. We urge you to pass a clean debt limit increase that does not cut critical programs or lead to further harm to children, older adults, and their families. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Chelsi Rhoades, Generations United's Public Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, at crhoades@gu.org or (202)289-3979.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donna M. Butts". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Donna M. Butts
Executive Director