

Legislation Text

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Urging the Pennsylvania House of Representatives to reject House Bills 1659 and 2138, which would create stringent employment requirements for Pennsylvanians using SNAP and Medicaid benefits.

WHEREAS, One in seven Pennsylvanians use the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to help buy the food they need to survive and feed their families. The SNAP benefit allows low-wage workers and those who cannot find steady employment, the resources they need to feed themselves and their families. SNAP also provides benefits to those who cannot work such as children, seniors, and people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The SNAP program is particularly important for the City of Philadelphia given its large number of residents living below the poverty line. According to the 2018 State of the City Report by Pew Charitable Trusts, 25.7 percent of residents live in poverty and 12.3 percent of residents are living in deep poverty; and

WHEREAS, The number of households receiving SNAP benefits has tripled since 2000. Working families have turned to SNAP during periods of both under-employment and unemployment. Research indicates that 96% of households who worked in the year before enrolling in SNAP also worked once they received benefits; and

WHEREAS, House Bill 1659 would prevent people who are already experiencing economic hardship from receiving necessary food by imposing new, stringent work requirements on certain adults - including those who live in areas with high unemployment - in order to qualify for SNAP benefits; and

WHEREAS, Revoking food assistance does not create work opportunities in areas currently lacking jobs, increase hours for part-time workers, or address barriers some individuals face that prevent them from working; and

WHEREAS, Every dollar spent on SNAP generated \$1.70 in economic activity. Since SNAP benefits are 100% federally funded, imposing time limits or sanctions on receivers of SNAP means those individuals will lose federal SNAP dollars that would otherwise be spent in local supermarkets and farmers markets; and

WHEREAS, Medicaid provides health insurance to 2.9 million Pennsylvanians, many of whom are children, seniors, or disabled. Many adult Pennsylvanians receive Medicaid because they are unable to work or to find suitable work or to get enough work hours or pay to enable them to get other forms of health insurance; and

WHEREAS, House Bill 2138 would impose strict work requirements on receivers of Medicaid. According to the Pennsylvania Human Services Secretary, implementing a requirement of work or community engagement as a condition for eligibility could cost as much as \$650 million and take 300 staffers to put in place. The legislation has no provisions for additional job training or assistance for Medicaid recipients; and

WHEREAS, Most working Medicaid enrollees cannot get health insurance from their jobs. 8.7% of Philadelphia residents currently have no healthcare at all. The bill is projected to increase the cost of Medicaid and decrease the number of Philadelphians receiving Medicaid; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphians with serious health concerns already have great difficulty navigating public benefits and filling out the correct paperwork. HB 2138 would force workers to turn in even more paperwork to show their hours worked. The new paperwork requirement could cause eligible Philadelphians to lose healthcare coverage because of challenges with navigating the new bureaucracy. If Philadelphians lose Medicaid because they cannot get jobs or cannot navigate new bureaucracy, the City of Philadelphia will face increase costs as its City health centers treat more people without health insurance; and

WHEREAS, Most Medicaid recipients who can work, do. Nationally, 60% of adults under 65 on Medicaid are already working, and 78% have at least one worker in the family. 80% of those who are not working are either in school or cannot work due to illness, disability, or being a caregiver to other family members; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby urge the Pennsylvania House of Representatives to Reject House Bills 1659 and 2138, which would create stringent employment requirements for Pennsylvanians using SNAP and Medicaid benefits.