

## Even with Child Tax Credit partially restored, Children’s Food Shortage and Federal Housing Cutbacks Imminent in House

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Even with the child tax credit partially restored in House legislation, there are two issues slated from Republican cutbacks that make us all wonder what kind of country we live in—food assistance for children and housing for the poor of all ages. Sometimes states’ rights are not such a good thing. Republicans are working to cut back on the most basic necessities for Americans. And even with the child tax credit action in the House, it's not yet a done deal in the Senate. Senate Republicans like Chuck Grassley (R-IA) are challenging the "cost", not recognizing that the credit ends a big portion of child poverty.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) program on Jan. 10, 2024. This plan includes 35 states, all five U.S. territories, and four Tribes. This program would provide “permanent summer grocery benefits” for children across the country. Several states benefit from this program; Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut and many more including Michigan.

15 states did not approve the program. 13 of the 15 remaining states are run by Republican governors. States include Alabama, Alaska, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont and Wyoming.

The governors have given varying reasons for refusing to take part, from the price tag to the fact that the final details of the plan have yet to be worked out. Gov. Kim Reynolds (R-IA) said she saw no need to add money to a program that helps food-insecure youths “when childhood obesity has become an epidemic.” She continued her statement from the New York Times.

“If the Biden administration and Congress want to make a real commitment to family well-being, they should invest in already existing programs and infrastructure at the state level and give us the flexibility to tailor them to our state’s needs,” said Gov. Kim Reynolds.

Gov. Jim Pillen (R-NE) gave his reason saying, “I don’t believe in welfare” in the Washington Post. Food deserts rise in inner cities like Detroit and Republicans do nothing but complain. USDA describes EBT program’s impact.

“In total, the states, the U.S. territories, and the Tribes that have committed to launching the Summer EBT program in summer 2024 will serve close to 21 million children, providing a total of nearly \$2.5 billion in grocery benefits.”

USDA predicted several eligible states and tribes for this program will increase and be provided in 2025. The USDA stated that \$120 for every child in a select family will be provided. This is to “buy food at grocery stores, farmer’s markets or other authorized retailers” starting this summer 2024. Children will not go hungry this summer, especially inner city children.

The \$79 billion Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act has a Child's Tax Credit (CTC) in the bill. Low-income families qualified under CTC will be offered up to \$2,000, per child, in tax credit. Families will be offered as much as \$1,600 in 2023 in tax returns and increases up to \$2,000 by 2025. The bipartisan tax cut package bill passed a 357-70 vote, enhancing CTC, boosting three tax breaks for businesses and enhancing tax credit for construction or rehabilitation of rental housing targeted at lower-income households on Jan. 31, 2024. The bill restores approximately half of the Covid-era child tax credit that reduced child poverty by 40%. The bill is now in the Senate.

“You know I’ve been told that a half a loaf is better than none,” said Rep. Danny Davis (D-Ill), commenting after the vote. But in the Senate, Grassley politicized the bill in his statement saying, “If we pass it, it makes Biden look good.” Actually, it makes everyone look good if it also passes the Senate and becomes law.

More needs to be done. Addressing food desert issues in cities by delivering fresh produce at farmer's markets from local farms in low-income communities and providing transportation assistance to higher quality, affordable grocery stores would stop desperate families' food shortages. Solutions to housing cutbacks include more housing vouchers and state grants, rental assistance for low-income Americans and discussing rent control affordability for Americans in need. There are many areas where Congress needs to act, to have the kind of country we want to live in.

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