

President Trump's executive order directing agencies, including the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Department of Health and Human Services, to propose policy changes that cut people off of federal assistance programs will harm the health and well-being of our nation's youngest citizens and their families.

This proposal is particularly concerning because it utilizes the same tactics that were of concern to our founders twenty years ago. In 1998, Children's HealthWatch was founded by a group of pediatricians and health providers in cities across the country that discovered a startling trend in their clinics: declining health among infants and toddlers in families subject to sanctions under the 1996 welfare reform efforts. Our earliest [research](#) confirms their clinical observations. Young children in families whose benefits were reduced or cut off between 1998 - 2000 were more likely to be hospitalized during their lifetime and live in families who were food insecure.¹

Today, we continue to be a nonpartisan network of pediatricians, public health researchers, and policy and child health experts committed to improving children's health in America. Every day, in urban hospitals across the country, we collect data on children ages zero to four, many of whom are from families experiencing economic hardship. Over the past 20 years, we have surveyed more than 65,000 caregivers. We analyze our data and release our findings to researchers, legislators, and the public to inform public policies and practices that can give all children and their families equal opportunities for healthy, successful lives.

Our extensive research documents the robust health benefits of programs that ensure vital resources for [food](#), [housing](#) and [energy](#) assistance for children in families with low income, whether the adults can find work or not.^{2,3,4} We are thus gravely concerned about the health implications of this executive order. Out of concern for the health of young children and their families, and for the future well-being of our society, we strongly oppose any effort that removes children and families from vital health-sustaining programs.

¹ Cook JT, Frank DA, Berkowitz Ca, Black MM, Casey PH, Cutts DB, et al. Welfare reform and the health of young children. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med*, 2002;156:678-684.

² Ettinger de Cuba S, Weiss I, Pasquariello J, Schiffmiller A, Frank DA, Coleman S, et al. The SNAP vaccine: Boosting children's health. Children's HealthWatch. 2012. Available at: http://childrenshealthwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/snapvaccine_report_feb12.pdf

³ Meyers A, Cutts D, Frank DA, Levenson S, Skalicky A, Heeren T, et al. Subsidized housing and children's nutritional status: Data from a multisite surveillance study. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med*, 2005;159:551-556.

⁴ Frank DA, Neault NB, Skalicky A, Cook JT, Wilson JD, Levenson S, et al. Heat or Eat: The Low Income Energy Assistance Program and nutritional and health risks among children less than 3 years old. *Pediatrics*, 2006;118(5):e1293-e1302.