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House Children and Seniors Committee

Chairwoman Concannon and Members of the Committee:

March of Dimes leads the fight for the health of all moms and babies. We appreciate this opportunity to provide a letter of support for HB 2371. March of Dimes supports measures that reduce barriers to women receiving SNAP benefits and are profoundly concerned about the implications of the current bill.

One of the national priorities for March of Dimes is to reduce the burden of and disrupt lifelong economic insecurity. SNAP plays a critical role in the health and nutrition of women, children and families. It is the first line of defense against hunger for low-income residents. Access to SNAP plays a central role in assuring the health of a pregnant woman and her child (Borders, Grobman, Amsden, & Holl, 2007; Laraia, Siega-Ritz, & Gunderson, 2010) and the contribution of SNAP to achieving optimal nutrition and health outcomes is well-documented (Hoynes, Schanzenbach, & Almond, 2016). The evidence shows that SNAP benefits can decrease family poverty and food insecurity (Ratcliffe, McKernan, & Zhang, 2011).

Denying SNAP food assistance to women while pregnant can have serious health implications for both mother and baby, as food insecurity has been associated with poor pregnancy outcomes, including low birth weight and gestational diabetes. (Borders, Grobman, Amsden, & Holl, 2007). Pregnant women who gained access to SNAP (then called food stamps) when the program was gradually expanded nationwide in the 1960s and the early 1970s gave birth to fewer low birth weight babies (Almond, Hoynes, & Schanzenbach, 2011). For children, food insecurity is associated with higher rates of poor health and asthma (Gunderson & Ziliak, 2015). Children living in a family receiving SNAP are less likely to be sick than their peers (Sonik, 2015). The current pandemic crisis has not only disproportionately affected the most vulnerable individuals in our communities with the burden of disease and economic impacts, it has especially burdened these populations in regard to food insecurity (Hernandez & Holzclaw, 2021). SNAP benefits decrease family poverty and food insecurity (Ratcliffe, McKernan, & Zhang, 2011).

There are multiple factors to support the passage of this bill:

- Denying SNAP benefits for parents puts children at increased risk of food insecurity, and makes it more difficult for struggling families to learn work and thrive.
- Current law likely upsets informal child care arrangements.
- These kind of onerous requirements carry high cost for states and by extension, taxpayers at a time when states have fewer resources and staff to implement.
- There is little evidence to suggest that the current law is actually helping more families.



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March of Dimes supports HB 2371 because it decreases the burden of food insecurity for families, which evidence supports improves the health and productivity of families and the safety of children. I am happy to be of any further information or resource on this issue, and I thank you for your consideration.

For all moms and babies,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Elizabeth Lewis'. To the right of the signature, there is a small, faint stamp that reads 'WHNP-BC'.

Elizabeth Lewis, MPA, MSN, WHNP-BC, BSN, RN

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