

Senate Bill 551 will punish parents struggling to keep up with child support payments by taking away their food assistance. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) and the Child Support Enforcement (CSE) program are both important in providing critical assistance to families with low incomes, but this punitive policy has been proven time and time again to do more harm than good.

1. Mandating child support payments is not likely lead to increased payments.
2. This bill could increase food insecurity among children, survivors of abuse, and other unintended populations.
3. This policy is expensive to implement and will result in increased red tape for already over-extended case workers.

**Mandating child support payments is not likely lead to increased payments.**

- Because this policy targets parents with very low incomes, many of whom are under-employed or lack stable work, it is highly unlikely that they will be able to provide regular support.
- The reality is that participation in Child Support Enforcement is already high for SNAP families. Over the past 20 years, the total amount of financial support paid by parents has increased by 22 percent.<sup>1</sup>
- There are already incentives for parents to participate in CSE but removing food assistance from parents will only make it more difficult for them to make regular child support payments.

**Senate Bill 551 could increase food insecurity among children, survivors of abuse, and other unintended populations.**

- In the states that have implemented this policy, families have lost SNAP even when they had a justification for not wanted to participate in the CSE program. In some cases, survivors of domestic violence lost SNAP because they did not know that they would have qualified for an exemption. A 2015 study in Texas found that more than 4 in 10 mothers who did not receive any type of child support were survivors of

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<sup>1</sup>Wolkomir, Elizabeth and Stacy Dean, 2019. Child Support Cooperation Requirements in SNAP Are Unproven, Costly, and Put Families at Risk. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: Washington, D.C. Accessed at: [https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/child-support-cooperation-requirements-in-snap-are-unproven-costly-and-put#\\_ftn16](https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/child-support-cooperation-requirements-in-snap-are-unproven-costly-and-put#_ftn16)

abuse.<sup>2</sup> In other cases, burdensome and complex bureaucracy and administrative errors have resulted in families losing SNAP benefits, despite their efforts to comply.

- This policy does not capture the reality that many parents are already providing informal support to their children through co-parenting, purchasing supplies like clothing and diapers, or providing financial support when able.

**Studies have shown that this bill will cost the state millions to implement and will result in few dollars reaching families.**

- Because SNAP is a federally administered program, all of the costs of implementing Senate Bill 551 will fall upon the state, while all of the potential savings of decreased SNAP benefits will go to the federal government.
- According to the Department of Health and Human Services, estimates of the cost of implementation will exceed \$5.6 million in order to make necessary data systems changes as well as rewriting policy, forms and documents. A similar study done by Utah found implementation could cost up to \$3.6 million.<sup>3</sup>
- Last year, North Carolina ran a similar pilot program where it required Child Care Subsidy recipients in three counties to cooperate with CSE in order to receive the subsidy.<sup>4</sup> NC DHHS reported that the program costs \$2 million to operate and resulted in just \$7,300 worth of child support payments to families. The department recommended against the policy.

**There are better and more efficient ways to address poverty among North Carolina's families by focusing on building good, quality jobs that pay a living wage.**

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<sup>2</sup>Child & Family Research Partnership, 2015. Child Support Unpacked: Examining the Factors Associated with Order Establishment and Compliance in the Texas Child Support System. The University of Texas at Austin: Austin, TX. Accessed at: <https://childandfamilyresearch.utexas.edu/child-support-unpacked-examining-factors-associated-order-establishment-and-compliance-texas-child>

<sup>3</sup> Rosenbaum, Dottie, 2018. House Farm Bill's SNAP Changes Are a Bad Deal for States and Low-Income Households. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: Washington, D.C. Accessed at: <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/house-farm-bills-snap-changes-are-a-bad-deal-for-states-and-low-income>

<sup>4</sup> North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, 2019. Child Case Subsidy Recipients to Cooperate with Child Support Services/Demonstration Project. Accessed at: [https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Portals/0/documents/pdf/S/SL\\_2017-57\\_Section\\_11B\\_7\\_a\\_Child\\_Care\\_Subsidy\\_Cooperation\\_Final.pdf?ver=2019-03-26-161758-447](https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Portals/0/documents/pdf/S/SL_2017-57_Section_11B_7_a_Child_Care_Subsidy_Cooperation_Final.pdf?ver=2019-03-26-161758-447)