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Oklahoma Policy Institute

2018 POLICY PRIORITY: STOP ATTACKS ON OKLAHOMA'S SAFETY NET

Background

When our friends and neighbors fall on hard times, a safety net is there to help them get back on their feet. For Oklahoma families, SoonerCare and food assistance through SNAP are a lifeline during tough economic times, and research shows that their positive benefits far outlast the time families need them. Furthermore, these public-private partnerships are vital to the state economy, especially in small towns and rural communities. Our safety net programs are rightfully central to the promises we make to each other as a society.



However, some out-of-state groups seek to undermine Oklahoma's safety net. Legislation requiring Oklahoma to impose new, expensive, and needlessly stringent eligibility and verification procedures for basic medical care and food assistance would keep truly needy families from getting the help they need.

This legislation is a costly solution in search of a problem, as the fraud and abuse the organizations pushing these bills claim they want to stop is virtually nonexistent. In fact, because the majority of SoonerCare and food assistance funds are federal, this legislation would spend scarce state dollars to save federal pennies.

This legislation has appeared in more than a dozen states, including Oklahoma, in previous years, and the organizations promoting them are more interested in advancing their agenda than helping Oklahoma families.

The Solution

Oklahoma legislators should reject legislation that seeks to grow wasteful bureaucracy while pretending to protect our effective and efficient safety net.

What You Can Do

Contact your state Representative and Senator and ask them to reject legislation that would make it harder for Oklahoma families to get the help they need by imposing new and costly requirements. In addition, remind them that Oklahoma's fraud and abuse rates for basic medical care and food assistance are very low, and that they can stay low if the agencies administering them have the resources to run the programs properly.

You can look up your Senator and Representative at <http://okpolicy.org/find-your-legislator/>, call the House switchboard at 405-521-2711, and call the Senate switchboard at 405-524-0126.

To receive SMS advocacy alerts on important economic security issues, text OKECON to 51555.