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MEDIA RELEASE

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Elected Officials and Anti-Poverty, Health Care Access, Anti-Hunger, Education, and Faith-Based Groups Denounce House Speaker McCarthy's Demands to Cut Safety Net Programs including Food Stamps & Medicaid as Part of Deal to Lift Federal Debt Ceiling

Demand Speaker to Stop Holding US Economy Hostage in order to Cut Food Assistance and Health Care for Millions of People Across the Country

Wall Street, New York, April 17, 2023 -- Elected Officials and leaders from anti-poverty, health access, anti-hunger, education, human services, and faith-based groups joined New Yorkers in protesting outside the New York Stock Exchange while House Speaker Kevin McCarthy delivered a speech outlining negotiating terms for lifting the federal debt ceiling. The Republican House leadership's negotiating terms could throw an estimated 10 million people off the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known as food stamps, and threaten to exclude millions from Medicaid coverage, two of the most effective poverty fighting programs.

In New York, over 7 million people are enrolled in Medicaid, almost 4 million in Medicare, more than 7 million residents receive Social Security benefits, and over 1 million households rely on SNAP for food.

SNAP is an incredibly effective poverty-fighting program, both nationally and in New York. The program helps 40 million low-income people afford food each year. Two-thirds of SNAP recipients are families with children and over one-third of recipients are in families with older adults or people with disabilities. Research shows SNAP participation reduces food insecurity [by as much as 30 percent](#) and is even more effective among children and those facing very low food security. [Analysis](#) from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) finds that SNAP kept nearly 8 million people above the poverty line annually before the pandemic, including 3.6 million children, making it one of the [most powerful poverty-fighting programs](#). More than [2.8 million New Yorkers](#) receive SNAP benefits. More than half are in families with children and 48 percent are in families with a disabled or older adult. On average, SNAP moves more than half a million New Yorkers, including more than 200,000 children, out of poverty each year.

SNAP boosts the economy. SNAP benefits are one of the fastest, [most effective forms of economic stimulus](#) because they quickly inject money into the economy. The Congressional Budget Office and

Moody's Analytics rate SNAP expenditures as one of the most effective and efficient supports for the economy during downturns, measured on a "bang-for-the-buck" basis. Every dollar in new SNAP benefits increases Gross Domestic Product by about \$1.50 during a weak economy, according to a recent Department of Agriculture (USDA) [study](#).

"House Republicans have shown us yet again that their only priorities are to benefit the wealthy and well-connected at the expense of vital government programs and working families, seniors, children, and the disabled," said **U.S. Rep. Ritchie Torres (NY-15)**. "SNAP is an incredibly effective poverty-fighting program that helps millions of low-income people across the country put food on their table, reduces food insecurity, and helps stimulate the economy. These proposed changes by Speaker McCarthy would devastate hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who could see their nutrition benefits cut drastically and put them at risk of going hungry. I will continue to work with House Democrats to protect SNAP benefits, put people over politics, and stand up to these attacks on programs that directly help the most vulnerable among us."

"Under the guise of fiscal responsibility, Speaker McCarthy is actively threatening to cut one of the most vital and successful poverty-reduction programs operated by the federal government right now. It is not responsible - fiscally or otherwise - to cut a program that keeps children and seniors fed. I urge my counterparts in Washington to fight for SNAP, Medicaid, and a federal budget that lifts working families out of poverty," said **New York State Senator Jessica Ramos (D, SD-13)**.

"As the former Administrator of federal benefits at the local level for the largest social services agency in the country, I know firsthand how SNAP and Medicaid are not just lifesaving benefits but in the case of SNAP, also key drivers of economic activity" said **Grace Bonilla, President & CEO of United Way of New York City**, "At United Way of New York City, we see the devastating impact that cutting critical benefits has on our safety net and the community based organizations that support New Yorkers already struggling to make ends meet. We urge Speaker McCarthy to ensure that the budget is not balanced on the backs of those that served our country during the pandemic by doing the essential work that kept our economy going and those who lost breadwinners during the biggest crisis of our time."

"The Federal budget must never be balanced on the backs of people with low income and people with disabilities who have Medicaid for their insurance coverage," said **Lara Kassel, Coalition Coordinator of Medicaid Matters New York**. "Medicaid is a lifeline that keeps people well by affording them access to primary and preventive care. Unnecessary barriers to coverage - like work requirements - result in costly emergency care that can be avoided."

"In 2021, President Biden stood by struggling Americans and supported them with expanded Child Tax Credit and SNAP benefits, to name a few. These measures cut poverty and child poverty, improved health and well-being, and have led us to historic low unemployment and all-time high work participation" said **David R. Jones, President and CEO of Community Service Society of New York**— a long-time nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting economic opportunity for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers. "For the House Speaker to come in here and regurgitate cliched, antiquated and outright false claims about folks on assistance not working enough—is playing irresponsible politics with the lives of some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers."

"The proposed reduction of SNAP benefits is a short-sighted and cruel policy that would harm millions of vulnerable families – 610,000 in New York – who rely on this essential program to put nutritious food on the table," said **Dia Bryant, Ed.L.D., Executive Director, Education Trust-NY**. "It is unconscionable to cut benefits for those who are already struggling to make ends meet, and such a move would only exacerbate poverty and hunger in communities that have suffered from historic underinvestment – infants,

toddlers, people of color and the elderly. Instead of cutting benefits, we should be investing in programs that help lift families out of poverty and create a more equitable society for all."

"The proposal by the Speaker of the U.S. House, if enacted, would kick more than 610,000 New Yorkers statewide off SNAP benefits at a time when food prices are still 8% higher than this time last year. We're calling on Washington to not only sustain critical aid, but also recognize that investing in nutrition access is a smart bet – every SNAP dollar that a low-income family receives enables them to spend an additional dollar on food or other necessary items, almost always within two weeks of receiving the payment," **said Rich Buery Jr., Robin Hood CEO.** "The reality is that until policymakers prioritize the full eradication of poverty, life-saving benefits like SNAP and Medicaid must remain in place for Americans who need them."

"Food assistance for people who are hungry. Health coverage for people when they need it. These are basic things that one of the richest countries on earth should be able to figure out how to do," **said Kate Breslin, President and CEO of the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy,** a nonprofit organization that has worked for 150 years to make sure policymakers don't neglect people and communities experiencing poverty.

"Millions are already bracing for the re-evaluation of their government-supported health coverage as the Covid-19 public health emergency begins to unwind," **said Arturo Brito, President and CEO, Children's Health Fund.** "That's what makes it both shameful and irresponsible for policymakers to now propose new work requirements to the Medicaid and SNAP programs that many low-income individuals rely on to survive. Children's Health Fund adamantly opposes any policy changes that threaten the health and well-being of any American.

"This week, the Children's Defense Fund-New York will be volunteering at a local, community-based free food program for children in Harlem, First Corinthian Baptist Church's Breakfast Before Books program. Child hunger is a real crisis in America, one that is present in New York and all throughout this country. As marginalized families and communities deal with the continuing, devastating economic blows of a global pandemic coupled with inflation, this is not a time for cutting vital social service programs like SNAP, when our children, seniors, families, and millions of Americans need them most, **said Kercena A. Dozier, Executive Director of Children's Defense Fund-New York.** Speaker McCarthy and Republicans have an opportunity to lead with compassion, empathy, and a true commitment to serving the most marginalized Americans. To do so requires a commitment to ending hunger, child poverty, and other economic injustices. Choosing corporations over hungry children and seniors is not the way to lead and serve the American people. We are calling on Speaker McCarthy and the Republican caucus to do more and not less for marginalized children, youth, families, and their communities."

"Medicaid is the crown jewel of our nation's health care system, particularly for low- and moderate-income individuals and families, and it must be preserved and improved, not slashed and scaled back," **said Mark Hannay, Director of Metro New York Health Care for All.** "Throwing people off Medicaid by hassling them with new red-tape bureaucratic barriers will just toss the burden and cost back onto cash-strapped states to deal with, along with already overwhelmed and underfunded safety net providers."

Additional Background

Proposed work requirement changes would harm millions of families.

Under current SNAP rules, adults ages 18 to 50 are limited to three months of SNAP benefits every three years unless they are working or in a work or training program at least 20 hours a week. Some individuals are exempt from this requirement, such as those who live with children in the household, those determined to be physically or mentally unfit for work, pregnant people, and others determined to be

exempt from the three-month time limit. Today, states can waive the above work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) depending on their state's labor market circumstances. The changes proposed by Representative Johnson (H.R. 1581) and referenced in Leader McCarthy's letter to President Biden would dramatically expand the population subject to time limits and work requirements by:

- 1) Raising the age limit from 50 to 64;
- 2) Subjecting adults with no young children in the household (under age 7) to the work requirements; and
- 3) Severely restricting states' ability to waive the work requirements for ABAWDs in areas of high unemployment.

[Analysis](#) from Center on Budget and Policy Priorities shows that nationwide, **more than 10 million people, about 1 in 4 SNAP participants, live in households that would be at risk of losing food assistance benefits under H.R. 1581.** That includes about 6 million people who would potentially be newly subject to the time limit and at risk of losing SNAP, and about 4 million children who live in families that could have their SNAP benefits reduced, harming the entire household. Specifically, [estimates](#) show these changes would decrease or terminate benefits for:

- Approximately 3 million adults up to age 65, primarily parents or grandparents, who live in households with school-age children, as well as up to 4 million children aged 7 to 18 who live in these households, if their parents or other adults in the family are not able to meet the requirement.
- Approximately 2 million older adults, aged 50 to 64, who do not have children in their homes but are a population more likely to face health issues and may be less equipped to find work in a changing labor market.
- Adults living in states with elevated unemployment rates that are no longer able to use waivers. The bill would substantially limit states' current flexibility to temporarily waive this harsh time limit in areas where there aren't enough jobs; only areas with unemployment over 10 percent would be eligible for waivers.
- In New York, estimates **show 610,000 New Yorkers' SNAP benefits would be under threat** if the above changes are implemented. An additional **126,000 New Yorkers could see their nutrition benefits cut** through the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, due to the proposed cuts to all non-defense discretionary programs.

SNAP's existing time limit reduces participation in SNAP and fails to increase employment.

Expanding the impact of these requirements will only harm families more as [research](#) shows that current time limits and work requirements do not increase employment or earnings. A recent [study](#) found that the time limit cut SNAP participation among those subject to it by more than half (53 percent), with no effects on employment and earnings overall. Another recent [study](#) found SNAP participation was cut between 7 and 32 percentage points a year after the reinstatement of the time limit, again with no evidence of improved earnings or employment.

Medicaid is a vital program for our nation. It provides insurance coverage for those who would otherwise be uninsured, it is our de-facto long-term care program, it is the financial foundation of our health care delivery system and safety net providers, and it is a critical public health program during times of disease outbreaks, natural disasters, and man-made violent attacks. Our nation's leaders need to robustly support it so that it can continue to fill all these roles for us for the future.