



The Honorable Darin LaHood, Chair
U.S. House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Work and Welfare

September 1, 2026

Dear Chair LaHood,

On behalf of the millions of Americans we represent, thank you for highlighting “[Welfare Reform at 30: Restoring the Promise of Work and Personal Responsibility in Federal Welfare Programs](#).”

All Americans should be able to pursue their version of the American Dream by contributing to their communities and serving others. Today’s welfare programs may provide a safety net for those who fall on hard times, but they can create barriers to people getting back on their feet when they are able.

The *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996* was a bipartisan overhaul of the U.S. welfare system that replaced Aide to Families with Dependent Children with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families. Those changes led to a significant reduction in dependence on taxpayer-funded assistance by encouraging many to return to work and empowering states to innovate within the program.

Congress recently built on the 1996 welfare reform with program integrity measures in the *Working Families Tax Cuts Act* last year. AFP sees [opportunities to expand](#) block grants as well, especially in health and welfare programs, to refocus programs on those who need them while expanding pathways for able-bodied adults to earn their own success.

In addition, Representative Blake Moore and Senator Jon Husted’s [Upward Mobility Act](#) offers a five-year pilot program for ambitious states to show what is possible when Congress lets state policymakers innovate. In particular, the Moore-Husted bill calls on states to eliminate the benefit cliffs that trap far too many in poverty and keep the American Dream out of reach.

Finally, federal welfare programs, among many other policy areas, are scattered across committee jurisdictions and often outside of the annual appropriations process. Procedural hurdles stand in the way of members of Congress coordinating and otherwise updating many federal programs. Fortunately, Rep. Blake Moore [has also proposed](#) that Congress do a [real budget](#) every year involving all members through a bottom-up process. Reviewing all spending and revenue offers incredible potential for members to forge consensus again and again to improve federal activities.

We appreciate your interest in protecting those in need and unleashing American potential.

Sincerely,

Kurt Couchman
Senior Fellow in Fiscal Policy
Americans for Prosperity