

Trump budget a disaster for women and families ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Despite his promises, he would sacrifice the needs of ordinary people to reward millionaires, billionaires, and big corporations.

The new Trump budget proposal is a disaster for women and families. It slashes trillions of dollars from food stamps, health care and other safety net programs that working families need to make ends meet. It includes a paid leave proposal that is nothing more than lip service – unworkable and not what families need. All to fund massive tax breaks for corporations and the wealthiest 1 percent.

The day before Trump unveiled his budget, 9to5 released a new report, “Mothers Know Best,” about low-income parents’ experiences with low-wage work, public assistance and child care. In one of our 9to5 parent groups, Shawntae from Boston said, “They want us to do self-sufficiency, but then they take away everything we need to do it.” The Trump budget proposal takes away even more.

Crippling Medicaid by over \$1 trillion in cuts will leave many millions of people without health coverage. Untreated health problems will make it harder for people to work. Medical expenses are a leading cause of bankruptcy and financial ruin for uninsured working families. A single mother with two children working full-time and earning \$12 an hour would be eligible for Medicaid today, but not under the Trump budget.

Cutting nearly \$200 billion from food assistance will make millions of people hungrier, with especially damaging consequences for children. We have decades of evidence that the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/food stamps) helps children to do better in school, to be healthier, and to earn more as adults. SNAP is also proven to contribute to strong local economies, especially in tough economic times. The Trump budget would recklessly take food off families’ kitchen tables. Parents participating in 9to5’s discussion groups talked about wages and monthly expenses and how running out of food was a constant possibility. In Atlanta, Sheila pointed out that “without SNAP people wouldn’t be able to feed their children.”

Despite Trump’s claims of prioritizing child care, his budget fails to include resources to keep families from losing the child care assistance they need to keep children safe and thriving, and to keep parents in the workforce.

Already, a lack of child care subsidies, disregard for children with special needs, wages much too low to buy market child care, and a universal lack of child care leaves millions of children unsafe and parents in turmoil.

9to5 members say that sometimes loss of aid is based on a new rule or a budget cutback. In Colorado, a mom explained that when she moved over a county line to be closer to her new job, she lost her child care voucher because in her state the rules change county-to-county. Then, she lost the new job because she didn’t have child care. In a more extreme scenario in Georgia, the state office had simply stopped taking children’s names on a wait-list for future child care subsidies, regardless of their eligibility. So why is Trump proposing a budget that would result in less accessible and affordable child care? Oh yeah, so his millionaire and billionaire friends and profitable corporations can pocket more of the tax dollars that your family and mine pay.

Trump’s paid leave plan only offers leave to new parents, leaving millions behind and ignoring the fact that more than three-quarters of people who currently take unpaid family and medical leave do so to care for themselves or a family member. It wouldn’t help people like Sonya, in Georgia, whose family struggled financially when she had to take unpaid leave to care for her father when he was diagnosed with cancer. It wouldn’t help moms who need bedrest during a difficult pregnancy, or moms like Tomika in Wisconsin, whose daughter was born prematurely and died tragically after just one week. Tomika was no longer eligible for maternity leave, and finances forced her to go back to work just a week after burying her daughter.

Even for parents of new children, this plan does not deliver. It short-changes families by relying on already overburdened state unemployment insurance programs. It calls for providing paid leave benefits by cutting benefits for unemployed workers. It also keeps the wage replacement for new parents too low to help low- and middle-income families. Trump’s budget would push families deeper into poverty, and put all of our communities at risk. Marilyn, a 9to5 Georgia member, states matter-of-factly, “Self-preservation is the strongest human instinct. People are going to survive, and they are going to take care of their kids. If they don’t have the necessary resources and are denied the assistance they rely on, it makes all of us less safe.”

Trump's budget message couldn't be clearer – despite his promises, he would sacrifice the needs of ordinary people to reward millionaires, billionaires, and big corporations. Congress should make sure this outrageous plan is dead on arrival. Congress needs to protect the safety net from cuts, adequately fund vital programs that assist low- and middle income families, and pass the FAMILY Act which would establish paid family and medical leave insurance that is accessible, affordable, and adequate. That's what families need.

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