

**Testimony of Congresswoman Gwen Moore Before the  
House Budget Committee—Members Day  
3/23/2021**

I am so grateful for the opportunity to appear before this Committee. I served on Budget for over 10 years and miss it.

I am pleased to join members of the CBC in our “Our Power, and Our Message” campaign to discuss tax and fiscal issues that are important to the caucus and our constituents.

There is so much I can talk about, and want to talk about, but I wanted to focus my remarks on how to use this budget resolution and budget reconciliation to help end the misery inflicted by poverty on our communities.

Let’s be clear: COVID has highlighted and taken advantage of a situation in our country where not all boats were being lifted. It is no surprise that the populations disproportionately impacted by the virus were already disproportionately impacted by income inequality, criminal justice inequalities, health inequalities, and I can go on.

Those who were behind before this pandemic have suffered disproportionately, including low-income families with children. Nearly half of all families with children reported having trouble paying basic household expenses during the pandemic. For black families, that figure is nearly two-thirds. For Latino families, it is 58%. Families with children were more than 70% more likely to be skipping meals and were more than twice as likely to be behind on their rent, having more month than money.

These families—these children—need our help right now.

I point this out because we need to address these inequities. That conversation is much larger than any one bill. I get that.

But, this committee has the opportunity to help the least, the lost, and the often overlooked. It has the chance to make clear that all Americans—not just the top 1%— can receive support to make it through these turbulent times but when things return to “normal.”

Lets invest wisely.

I don't need to remind everyone that according to analysts, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) provisions, among others in the American Rescue Plan will do more to reduce child poverty in our country than all the empty rhetoric about “personal responsibility” in the decades since we “ended welfare as we know it.”

We should keep doing what is working and build on the ARP to begin a new conversation about how we help people truly escape poverty. I think it is time that we begin to discuss a new “New Deal” between the federal government and its people.

We need to reach a consensus and stop pretending that people can live off less than poverty wages for full time work.

\$7.25 per hour is the current federal minimum wage and \$2.13 per hour is the tipped minimum wage. \$2.13 per hour. This is a policy based on the premise if you are “pleasant enough” you may generate enough tips to meet basic living expenses.

Let’s stop pretending folks: you can’t make a living off nothing.

The awful truth in America is that many hard-working Americans do not make enough, especially those at the lowest end of the wage scale—to meet their needs. It’s not a moral failure, it’s a policy failure.

But that’s not what you hear. We keep hearing some of the same old tropes about welfare that were around when I was a single mom relying on our basic needs program to get through.

It wasn't some magical characteristic about me that somehow led me to this seat before you today. I did not go from welfare to Congress by dropping out of Marquette University to work, which TANF now demands of women; I was able to pursue a career in public service using government support as I went to school and raised my daughter. I thank taxpayers for the opportunity to succeed.

My story isn't an exception. The reality is that people of all races, genders, and walks of life have needed and benefitted from help from time to time.

We need the budget resolution and budget reconciliation to continue to promote proven poverty alleviation efforts...like the CTC and EITC. In 2018, the CTC pulled 4.3 million Americans out of poverty. If you are concerned about poverty, this program is a good place to start.

Children in families who receive the CTC had improved health, perform better in school, and earned higher salaries as adults.<sup>1</sup> The next budget tools that this committee considers must allow Congress to build on CTC and put in place permanent provisions to more effectively lift struggling families out of poverty.

The budget also should allow for strengthening the EITC. I have a bill, the **Worker Relief and Credit Reform or WRCR Act**, to expand the EITC, including to recognize the caregiving that tens of millions of Americans do each day, as work. It's time we acknowledge the reality that many families face.

Then we also need to look at our safety net programs. Over two decades of failed work requirements and arbitrary time limits have shown us clearly what doesn't work.

Let's invest in what works. Childcare. Let's invest in education and skills training. Our economy is changing and diversifying before our very eyes. Many of the jobs that were lost in this pandemic will not come back in the same way that they existed before, if at all.

We need to rethink and retool TANF to provide new education and training tools to help get folks with limited skills or skills that are out of date for today's job market and with other barriers to employment, get over those humps.

Some believe the best way to promote work is to call people lazy and impose punitive limits. I believe we need to reaffirm the dignity of all and provide critical supports that will keep food on the table, provide health care and childcare, and open

doors to education. The budget tools available to this committee can be critical to helping achieve that vision.

I urge this committee to not miss this opportunity.