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Statement of The Honorable Tom Reed
Member of Congress
Before the Subcommittee on Human Resources
Of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means
June 3, 2015

Thank you, Chairman Boustany, Ranking Member Doggett, and all the members of the Subcommittee. As a former member of this Subcommittee, it is an honor to appear before you today to discuss important reform measures within the Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI) program.

Too often federal policies directed at supporting individuals and families in poverty do not require results, leaving too many Americans in need with too few opportunities to break the cycle of poverty. What we do know is that education, even a high-school diploma, is a key to higher earnings and a propensity to be employed, which can help break the cycle of poverty that many youth in America are faced with. That is why I introduced H.R. 2511, the *School Attendance Improves Lives (SAIL) Act*.

The *SAIL Act* will require youth ages 16 and 17 receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to attend school with appropriate but limited exceptions when the health of the child does not permit school attendance. I care about our nation's youth and I want them to reach adulthood with the skills they need to succeed. It is imperative to encourage and incentivize young people to stay in school and build a future full of opportunity, self-sufficiency, and economic success. This encouragement must begin with the parents of children receiving SSI. Parents must provide the best opportunities for their children to succeed. Letting children on SSI drop out of school is not fair to them and it leaves them far less equipped to succeed as adults. It is for this reason that high school dropouts have the highest rate of unemployment today. My bill improves accountability within the SSI program to ensure children do not find themselves in this position.

Roughly 66 percent of youth on SSI are still on the program at age 19, which drastically increases the likelihood that they will remain on SSI well into their adulthood. One reason children on SSI continue to receive benefits for extensive lengths of time is that the program does not offer incentives for personal success. This measure is one way to ensure those receiving SSI continue toward the path to self sufficiency. We can and must do better for those in this program. Thirty percent of children ages 17 and 18 on SSI are not attending school. By requiring children to remain in school as they receive SSI, these individuals will increase their likelihood of graduation, obtaining employment and breaking out of poverty. Attending school enables these children to achieve their true potential.

Poverty affects more than 46 million Americans. It is imperative that we work to address this issue by giving those in need the tools to empower themselves. Emphasizing education by including accountability measures within SSI is an important step towards achieving this goal.

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