MEMORANDUM

January 30, 2020

To: Members of the Subcommittees on Government Operations, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, Economic and Consumer Policy, and Environment

Fr: Committee Staff

Re: Series of Hearings on Administration Actions that Threaten the Welfare of Children

On February 5 and 6, the Committee will be conducting an in-depth, two-day series of hearings held by four of its subcommittees to examine the negative effects of regulations proposed by the Trump Administration relating to children. This unique and extensive series of hearings will assess the detrimental impact of the Administration’s actions on child poverty, housing, hunger, and health.

I. POVERTY

On February 5, 2020, at 10:00 a.m., in room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building, the Subcommittee on Government Operations will convene a hearing on “A Threat to America’s Children? The Trump Administration’s Proposed Changes to the Poverty Line Calculation.” The purpose of the hearing is to examine the negative effect on children if the Official Poverty Measure (OPM) is calculated with a lower inflation rate and how the current OPM inadequately addresses the needs of families with low incomes.

The Census Bureau updates the poverty threshold annually for price changes using the CPI as the inflation rate indicator. The Department of Health and Human Services then updates poverty guidelines, which federal agencies use to determine eligibility for parts of Medicaid, the Children’s Health Insurance Program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Head Start, and other federal programs essential to children’s health and wellbeing.¹

On May 7, 2019, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requested public comments on the Census Bureau’s estimation of the OPM, including on alternative measures of

inflation that could be used to calculate the poverty line in lieu of the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The Trump Administration’s proposal to use an inflation measure other than the CPI could lower income-eligibility cutoffs for families that rely on these critical federal support programs, ultimately reducing or eliminating essential services for millions of individuals, including hundreds of thousands of children.

Witnesses:

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY)

Sister Simone Campbell
Executive Director, Network Lobby

Mr. Indi Dutta Gupta
Co-Executive Director, Center on Poverty, Georgetown Law

Ms. Amy Jo Hutchinson
Organizer, Healthy Kids and Families Coalition, West Virginia

II. HOUSING

On February 5, 2020, at 2:00 p.m., in room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building, the Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties will convene a hearing on “A Threat to America’s Children: The Trump Administration’s Proposal to Gut Fair Housing Accountability.” The purpose of this hearing is to examine how children could be harmed by the Trump Administration’s proposed rule to weaken the enforcement of the Fair Housing Act.

The Fair Housing Act, enacted in 1968 as Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act, prohibits housing discrimination on the basis of race or color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status, or disability. The Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing provision of the Fair Housing Act requires entities receiving grants from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to “affirmatively further” equal housing opportunity for all.


On January 7, 2020, HUD announced a proposal to redefine the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing provision to reduce the rigor and accountability of HUD’s fair housing oversight. The proposed rule “reflects an ideology that ignores structural discrimination and its human cost, as well as our government’s statutory responsibility to address the ongoing legacies of intentional segregation.”

**Witnesses:**

**Ms. Ateira Griffin**  
Chief Executive Officer and Founder, BOND, Inc - Building our Nation’s Daughters

**Ms. Ellen Lee**  
Director of Community and Economic Development, City of New Orleans

**Dr. Megan Sandel**  
Principal Investigator, Children’s Healthwatch, MD at Boston Medical Center

**Mr. Jorge Andres Soto**  
Director of Public Policy, National Fair Housing Alliance

### III. HUNGER

On **February 6, 2020, at 10:00 a.m., in room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building**, the Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy will convene a hearing on “A Threat to America’s Children: The Trump Administration’s Proposed Changes to Broad Based Categorical Eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.” The purpose of this hearing is to examine how a proposal by the Trump Administration would aggravate food insecurity among children both at home and at school.

SNAP is the nation’s largest food assistance program, providing nutrition benefits to 42 million people with low incomes. More than 68% of SNAP participants reside in families with children. According to the pediatric research center Children’s HealthWatch, childhood food insecurity is associated with poor child health, increased risk for delayed development, and decreased intellectual and emotional readiness to start school.

---


On July 24, 2019, the Trump Administration proposed a rule to limit authorities available to states to expand eligibility for SNAP. According to an analysis from the Department of Agriculture, 684,000 households with children would lose SNAP eligibility if Broad Based Categorical Eligibility is eliminated. The analysis also found that nearly a million children would likely lose direct enrollment in programs that provide no-cost school meals.\(^{10}\)

**Witnesses:**

**Ms. Lisa Davis**
Senior Vice President, No Kid Hungry Campaign, Share our Strength

**Mr. Zach Pethan**
Principal, Jefferson Elementary, Sheboygan Area School District

**Ms. Diane Sullivan**
Advocate, Witnesses to Hunger

**Ms. Tega Toney**
Teacher, Oak Hill High School, Fayette County Schools

**IV. HEALTH**

On **February 6, 2020, at 2:00 p.m., in room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building**, the Subcommittee on Environment will convene a hearing on “A Threat to America’s Children: The Trump Administration’s Proposal to Undermine Protections from Mercury Air Toxics Standards.” The purpose of this hearing is to examine the effectiveness of the current Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (MATS) rule in protecting children’s health and how children would be harmed by the Administration’s effort to undermine the MATS rule.

The MATS rule, finalized in 2012, restricts the amount of mercury and other toxic emissions that can be released by coal- and oil-fired power plants. A significant indirect health benefit of the MATS rule is that it reduces the amount of fine particulate matter pollution in the atmosphere, including methylmercury exposure.\(^{11}\)

Despite the proven health benefits of the MATS rule, in 2018 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that it would be revising the Supplemental Cost Finding for

---


\(^{11}\) See, e.g., Environmental Protection Agency, *Healthier Americans* (Dec. 7, 2016) (online at www.epa.gov/mats/healthier-americans); see also Alessandra Antunes dos Santos et al., *Methylmercury and Brain Development: A review of Recent Literature*, Journal of Trace Elements in Medicine and Biology (Dec. 2016) (online at www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5011031/).
the MATS rule, which included a determination that the significant health benefits and lives saved from reduced emissions of fine particulate matter should not be counted.12

Witnesses:

Dr. Laura Anderko
Director, Mid-Atlantic Center for Children’s Health and the Environment, Georgetown University

Reverend Mitch Hescox
President and Chief Executive Officer, Evangelical Environmental Health Network

Ms. Heather McTeer Toney
National Field Director, Mom’s Clean Air Force


---