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Fast Tracking More Cuts Will Hurt Families Who Are Already Struggling to Make Ends Meet

Deliberate policy choices by President Trump and Republican leaders in Congress have increased costs people pay to meet their basic needs while also taking away the federal assistance people use to help cover those costs. Now, House Republicans are signaling they want to continue using a partisan budget process that could take away even more of the help families need to afford the basics.

Last year, congressional Republicans used a process known as reconciliation to enact the biggest cuts in history to health coverage and food assistance. This process allows expedited consideration of certain budget-related legislation and is not subject to filibuster, thus requiring only 50 votes to pass in the Senate.

Congressional Republicans are turning to the reconciliation process again. Even as they move forward one reconciliation bill focused on supporting the Administration's massive immigration detention and deportation dragnet by providing multiple years of funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP), House Republican leaders are planning to push another, much broader reconciliation bill this summer. Speaker Mike Johnson has said, "we're going to move right to [another] reconciliation, what will now be 3.0," and House Budget Committee Chair Jodey Arrington has said he will seek cuts to programs that help families meet their basic needs to help pay for higher defense spending in a next reconciliation bill.

This comes as households across the country are dealing with higher prices from tariffs and the war in the Middle East and as many people with lower incomes are having food and health care assistance taken away by last year's Republican reconciliation legislation.

There is a serious risk that if the President and Republicans in Congress pursue another reconciliation bill, they will once again target people with low incomes and the supports they need to afford the basics for deep cuts — a replay of how Republicans used the same process to enact last year's health and food assistance cuts, which already are causing significant harm.

Millions Have Already Lost Food Assistance

More than 3 million people lost help buying groceries through SNAP from July 2025 through this past January. This dramatic drop cannot be explained by a rapid improvement in people's economic well-being or reduced need for help affording food. Indeed, the sharp decline in the number of people receiving SNAP is almost surely driven by initial implementation of new cuts and other fallout from the past reconciliation legislation, also known as H.R. 1.

Many people have had their food assistance taken away due to the law's harsh eligibility restrictions, including imposing new red-tape-laden work requirements on older adults, veterans, and families with children age 14 and older. In addition, the law has taken food assistance away from many immigrants who are in the country lawfully, including refugees and others who have been granted humanitarian protections. (Those here without a documented status have long been ineligible for SNAP.)

Others are losing SNAP due to actions states have begun to take as a result of H.R. 1 slashing billions of dollars in federal SNAP funding and imposing these enormous costs on states. If a state can't make up these massive federal cuts with tax increases or spending cuts elsewhere in its budget, it will have to cut its SNAP program (such as by restricting program access) or it can opt out of the program altogether — terminating food assistance entirely in the state.

In response to the cost shift, some states are undertaking drastic and harmful efforts to reduce their payment error rates, which will determine the share of SNAP benefit costs states will be forced to cover. Actions states are taking now to rapidly reduce those rates are already cutting eligible people off SNAP by making it harder for them to apply and renew their eligibility for the program. In Arizona, the number of people receiving food assistance has dropped by more than half, a warning sign for other states. In short, an increasing number of people are at significant risk of having their food assistance taken away if Congress fails to extend to all states the delay in the cost shift that's now available to just a handful of states.

Millions Are Losing Health Coverage

The health care agenda Republicans have pursued over the last year is also harsh. The Congressional Budget Office projected that about 15 million people will have their health coverage taken away and become uninsured because of the cuts in H.R. 1 and the expiration of the premium tax credit enhancements, which Republicans refused to extend even as they extended trillions in other tax cuts.

Allowing those premium tax credit enhancements to expire is already driving up people's premiums and causing many to drop coverage. Some 1.2 million fewer people signed up for marketplace health coverage by January 2026 compared to last year's open enrollment period, and the true size of the enrollment decline will be higher as data on how many people who signed up for coverage paid their premiums are released this summer.

Georgia is a cautionary tale, with more than 374,000 people in that state alone dropping marketplace coverage between the end of open enrollment in mid-January and mid-April (this is on top of the 186,500 drop in the number of people in the state who initially signed up for coverage during open enrollment). Other state-based marketplaces are also reporting that more people are dropping coverage as the year progresses. Many people who remain enrolled in the marketplace have been forced to switch to plans with lower premiums but skimpier coverage and higher out-of-pocket costs, making it far costlier for them to access care. But even with this move to lower-premium plans, premium costs overall have climbed significantly, with the share of enrollees paying more than $500 per month out of their own pocket doubling from 2025 to 2026.

The rise in health care coverage costs and cuts will only accelerate as H.R. 1's more than $1 trillion in cuts for Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) marketplaces fully take effect. These include provisions that will take coverage away from people who don't meet a harsh work requirement for Medicaid or can't navigate the red tape to prove they are working or meet an exemption requirement, other provisions that make it harder to get and stay enrolled in Medicaid and ACA marketplace coverage, new restrictions on how states finance their Medicaid programs, and the elimination of federal funding for Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and ACA marketplace premium tax credits provided to most categories of immigrants living lawfully in the U.S. (People without a documented immigration status were already ineligible for these programs prior to H.R. 1's passage.)

Despite the harm that's already been done, some Republicans in Congress are pushing for more cuts, including through the fast-track reconciliation process. President Trump and some congressional Republicans have suggested further cuts in basic needs programs, which would take help away from people who are eligible and need it despite claims that the cuts relate to fraud. Credible cases of fraud should be addressed, but last year's cuts, which were also defended this way, are taking health coverage and food assistance away from millions of eligible people. There is a serious risk that if Republicans in Congress move ahead with another partisan reconciliation bill, they will take away more of the help that everyday families need to afford the basics.

President Trump campaigned on making it easier for people to afford necessities like feeding their family, paying the rent or mortgage, getting gas for their car, and seeing a doctor. Now 16 months into his term, these affordability challenges have mostly gotten worse, especially for people with low or moderate incomes. These concerns are reflected in consumer sentiment as measured by the University of Michigan falling in April to the lowest level ever recorded.

And even as people's cost of living continues to rise, the job market has softened, with the hiring rate at a low level not seen since the low point of the pandemic. This weakening in the labor market has had a particularly severe impact on Black households, with their unemployment rate rising to 7.3 percent in April, the highest since October 2021, and young workers seeing higher unemployment rates across all education levels.

These warning signs should tell congressional Republicans to reassess their current path, and to turn toward choices that would make it easier for families to afford the basics. Instead, they may continue full speed ahead with more devastating cuts — and people across the U.S. will pay the price.