



May 18, 2023

The Honorable Joseph Biden  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear President Biden and Congressional Leaders:

The Black Women's Roundtable and National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) – historic national organizations dedicated to the equity of Black women and families – strongly urge you to ensure that any final bipartisan budget deal will reject policy changes that would increase poverty or threaten the health care and well-being of already vulnerable Americans, including millions of children of every race and in every state in our Union.

Avoiding default is critical to our national economy and our global reputation as a stable country, and the nation should raise the debt ceiling as it has done in previous years, even under Republican leadership. Indeed, this crisis should not be a crisis, and we are disappointed to see some Congressional leaders play political games with the full faith and credit of the United States. Still, it is unconscionable and cruel to resolve this crisis by placing undue burdens on our nation's sickest, hungriest, and poorest citizens while giving tax breaks to the wealthiest of us.

The House Majority-approved cuts to Medicaid, SNAP, and TANF are guaranteed to increase poverty, hunger and instability at a time when families are still recovering from the pandemic.

Additional work requirements on top of requirements that already exist are based on classist, racist and misogynist stereotypes about people who need public assistance. Moreover, research shows that work requirements and other limitations on access to social safety nets increase poverty and the rates of the uninsured and do not deliver on the faulty promise of increasing employment over time.

The Congressional Budget Office found that TANF work requirements “likely played a role in increasing the number of families in deep poverty.”<sup>1</sup> Moreover, two-thirds of families living under 200 percent of the poverty line already have at least one working family member.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Black women – who are often the target of work requirement stereotypes – have always had higher labor force participation than other groups of women despite wage gaps and workplace discrimination.<sup>3</sup> These additional unnecessary requirements would only result in greater bureaucratic challenges for both benefit recipients and administrators that states would have the burden of resolving on the ground.

We implore you to find another path forward, one that acknowledges Matthew 25, “verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

On behalf of “the least of these,” do not raise the debt ceiling by playing politics with people’s lives.

Sincerely,



Melanie L. Campbell  
President & CEO  
Convener, Black Women’s Roundtable



Shavon Arline-Bradley  
President & CEO, NCNW

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<sup>1</sup> Congressional Budget Office, “Work Requirements and Work Supports for Recipients of Means-Tested Benefits,” available at <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2022-06/57702-Work-Requirements.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Census, Table: POV-05. Primary Families by Number of Working Family Members and Family Structure, available at <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-pov/pov-05.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Labor, “Facts About Black Women in Labor Force,” available at <https://blog.dol.gov/2021/08/03/5-facts-about-black-women-in-the-labor-force>; National Partnership for Women and Families, “Black Women and the Wage Gap,” available at <https://nationalpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/african-american-women-wage-gap.pdf>.