



HB378: Require workfare participation for SNAP recipients

Sponsor: [Peggy Webb](#) (R) HD 43, Billings

[Bill Text](#)

HB 378 proposes to take away food assistance from people including parents and older workers who don't prove every month that they are participating in a workfare program, are working enough hours, or meet an exemption.

HB 378 will hurt Montana workers:

- HB 378 is a threat to the roughly 37,900 working Montanans who live in households that get help putting food on the table through SNAP. In 2017, one in every 13 workers in our state participated in SNAP.
- This proposal puts workers at risk of being cut off of vital food if they do not prove each month to DPHHS that they are working enough hours. They would also be at risk of losing SNAP if they get sick or have to care for a sick child and can't get enough hours to meet the requirement.

HB 378 puts struggling families and older adults at risk. This proposal would:

- **Hurt thousands of children in our state.** The harsh requirements in this proposal will put kids at risk because parents with kids age 6 and up will lose SNAP if they are unable to prove that they meet all of the requirements of this proposal. When parents lose SNAP, it makes it harder for them to feed their kids.
- **Harm people with health conditions and caregivers.** People with physical or mental health conditions — and those caring for elderly or disabled family members — could have their food assistance taken away because they can't meet the expanded requirements or struggle to provide the necessary documentation to prove they should be exempt for these requirements.
- **Harm older workers.** This proposal would apply to older adults between the ages of 50 and 59, who could be hit disproportionately hard. Research shows that older workers face specific challenges to finding a job, including age discrimination, health and ability struggles, and caregiving responsibilities. Because of these challenges, many older adults may struggle to participate in a workfare program or to provide the necessary documentation for an exemption.

The proposal would be costly and difficult for our state to implement and administer:

The proposed legislation would mandate participation in a workfare program for parents with children aged 6 and older and for adults up to age 59 (with an exemption for those able to verify a disability), if they are not working and not participating in an employment and training program.

To determine who should be required to participate in mandatory work programs, the state would have to create enormous new reporting and paperwork systems — which will be expensive and hard to navigate for SNAP administrators and participants alike — in order to track hours of employment or participation in work programs for tens of thousands of SNAP participants every month. To implement this new policy, the federal government mandates states carry out the following requirements:

- ✓ Under federal law, the state will be required to screen and assess each participant to identify federally-required exemptions from work requirements and to determine whether a

workfare assignment is needed. If appropriate, the state must then make a fitting assignment for individuals.

- ✓ The state would have to ensure that there is a workfare program for each of the thousands of individuals throughout the state who will lose food assistance if they are unable to comply with this requirement. It would be extremely costly and difficult for the state to establish new programs in every area where a SNAP participant subject to mandatory workfare lives. This proposal would require the state agency to identify workfare programs across the state, oversee and supervise these programs and track participation of participants in these programs. Identifying a sufficient number of workfare programs would be extremely difficult if not impossible. Many non-profits have limited capacity to supervise volunteers and opportunities for work experience positions are especially limited in rural areas of the state where very few non-profits exist.
- ✓ Lastly, under federal law, states are required to reimburse each individual for the “reasonable and necessary costs” of participating in workfare. SNAP participants have little to no income and will need help paying for transportation to a workfare program and afterschool care services for their children. While the federal government will reimburse the state for 50 percent of the cost of providing these services, the state must pay the remaining 50 percent of the cost.

Requiring SNAP participants to volunteer at a local non-profit or government agency will do little to help struggling participants gain consistent employment and could actually make the process harder for many participants.

- Workfare programs require SNAP participants to perform community service in government agencies or non-profits. There is little evidence that participation in workfare leads to consistent employment or positive changes in wages. Volunteering at a local non-profit or government agency is not proven to help participants gain necessary skills to improve their opportunities to find work.
- SNAP participants who can work do work. Requiring workers who are between jobs to volunteer at local non-profits or government agencies could make it harder for these workers to take the necessary steps to find and secure a job to support their families while doing very little to help them gain the skills that they need to find more consistent and better paying work.
- Along with providing little or no benefit to participants, establishing a statewide workfare program would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to implement. Non-profits in our state do not have the capacity to supervise the thousands of volunteers that would be placed into this program. This would be particularly true in the rural areas of our state where significantly fewer non-profits and government offices exist.

Take Action:

HB 378 will be heard by the House Human Services Committee on **Thursday, February 7th at 3pm.**

If your legislator (or a legislator who represents your service area) is on this committee, please consider calling or sending an email in opposition to HB 378. A list of committee members with contact info is below.

- Not sure who your legislators are? <https://leg.mt.gov/map/>
- List of Committee members is below
- Contact your legislator today or in the next few days – before they vote!

If your legislator isn't on the House Human Services Committee, you can send an email to the full committee using this form: <https://leg.mt.gov/web-messaging/>

- After entering your contact information, you will choose whether to send the email to a legislator or a committee
- Select Committee
- Select (H) Human Services from the drop down menu

Sample email or phone message (PLEASE PERSONALIZE):

Subject: Please oppose HB 378, requiring workfare participation

I urge you to oppose HB 378, which will take away food assistance from vulnerable people, including parents and older workers. I am [TITLE, REPRESENTATIVE OF AN ORGANIZATION, A COMMUNITY MEMBER] and I [LIVE or SERVE PEOPLE] in your district in [CITY or COUNTY].

This bill creates an unrealistic, unnecessary, and harmful new mandate for families and individuals struggling to keep food on the table. HB 378 would require an enormous new administrative system that would be a challenge for our state, as well as SNAP participants to navigate. An error in navigating this system would mean a loss of vital food benefits. Families with children, individuals with health challenges, workers with flexible hours, and many others would be at risk.

Additionally, we have no evidence that workfare programs help people gain necessary skills or secure stable employment. And it is highly unlikely that Montana's non-profit organizations would have the capacity to offer the volunteer hours and supervision needed to implement a statewide workfare program.

Helping people who can work get good-paying jobs is crucial for families and the economy. However, this proposal to impose restrictive and unworkable requirements on SNAP participants and the state would make that harder, not easier, for tens of thousands of people.

Please oppose HB 378.

*Thank you,
[YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS OR CITY]*

House Human Services Committee, 2019:

Committee Member	Party	District	City	County(ies) in District
Abbot, Kim	D	HD 83	Helena	Lewis & Clark
Bahr, Jade	D	HD 50	Billings	Yellowstone
Bessette, Barbara	D	HD 24	Great Falls	Cascade
Buttrey, Ed , Vice Chair	R	HD 21	Great Falls	Cascade
Dunn, David	R	HD 9	Kalispell	Flathead
Dunwell, Mary Ann	D	HD 84	Helena	Lewis & Clark
Karjala, Jessica , Vice Chair	D	HD 48	Billings	Yellowstone
Kelker, Kathy	D	HD 47	Billings	Yellowstone
Lenz, Dennis , Chair	R	HD 53	Billings	Yellowstone
Mandeville, Forrest	R	HD 57	Columbus	Stillwater, Sweet Grass
Moore, Terry	R	HD 54	Billings	Yellowstone
Pierson JR, Gordon	D	HD 78	Deer Lodge	Deer Lodge, Powell, Silver Bow
Ricci, Vince	R	HD 55	Laurel	Yellowstone
Sales, Walt	R	HD 69	Manhattan	Gallatin
Sheldon-Galloway, Lola	R	HD 22	Great Falls	Cascade
Usher, Barry	R	HD 40	Billings	Musselshell, Yellowstone
Webb, Peggy	R	HD 43	Billings	Yellowstone
Welch, Tom	R	HD 72	Dillon	Beaverhead, Silver Bow
Winter, Thomas 'Tom'	D	HD 96	Missoula	Missoula

Thank you for your support and involvement! Your calls and emails truly do make a difference!

Contact Lorianne Burhop for more information, lburhop@mfbn.org, or (406) 215-1773