

THE BUDGET RECONCILIATION ACT OF 2025

HARMS TO IMMIGRANT
CHILDREN AND
FAMILIES



JULY 2025

THE BUDGET RECONCILIATION ACT OF 2025: HARMS TO IMMIGRANT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Congress passed legislation, which became law on July 4, 2025, that will have immediate and lasting negative impacts on all families, with particular harm caused to mixed-status families. This legislation seeks to drastically cut funding for Medicaid and SNAP and bar eligibility to health coverage, food assistance, and tax credits to instead funnel that money as tax breaks for the wealthy and funding for immigration enforcement actions that separate families and traumatize children.¹

Immigrants are foundational to our communities. One in four children have an immigrant parent, and the vast majority of those children are U.S. citizens. Policies restricting access to programs for immigrants and other attacks on immigrants harm all children living in mixed-status families. When children and families suffer, so do our communities and our economy. This legislation is dangerous and will harm all families, regardless of citizenship or status.

Barring immigrants from eligibility to federal support and increasing immigration enforcement will cost states, localities, and our GDP.² Cutting funding from programs children and families need to thrive to then fund immigration enforcement actions that separate families is cruel. Immigrants—both undocumented and those authorized to be here—and U.S. citizens alike have been subject to immigration enforcement actions without due process.³ Increased funding for immigration enforcement actions will only accelerate and heighten the rate at which the rights of children and families are violated.

The legislation will:

- **Increase the Number of Children in Poverty**
- **Weaken Medicaid for all Families and Shift the Costs onto States**
- **Strip Health Coverage from Children and Families**
- **Leave Children and Families Hungry and Shift Costs onto States**
- **Eliminate Services and Support for Unaccompanied Children**
- **Create a Wealth Test for Immigrant Children and Families**
- **Fund Mass Deportations and Separate Families**

Children in Immigrant Families By the Numbers

- 18.4 million, or 1 in 4, children have an immigrant parent.⁴
- 5.8 million children have an undocumented parent.⁵
- 2.6 million citizen children in the U.S. only have only an undocumented parent(s) and are at risk of being left with no parents in their home under an immigration enforcement action.⁶
- 1.3 million children are themselves undocumented.⁷
- 2.5 million children are noncitizens, including green card holders.⁸
- 755,000 children have had a green card for under five years and are subject to barriers to health coverage in some states.⁹
- Over half a million U.S. citizen children have a parent with TPS or DACA status.¹⁰
- 99,000 unaccompanied children were released to sponsors in the U.S. in fiscal year 2024.¹¹
- 27,400 children were granted refugee status in 2023—45 percent of all cases that year.¹²
- 5,600 children were granted asylum in 2023—28 percent of all cases that year.¹³
- 107,000 children have Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) and are stuck in a backlog waiting to receive green cards.¹⁴

WILL INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN POVERTY

Before 2017, all children, regardless of immigration status, were eligible for the Child Tax Credit (CTC) as long as their parents met the eligibility requirements and filed taxes. However, the passage of the first Trump Administration's Tax Cuts and Jobs Act stripped eligibility for the CTC from children with Individual Tax Identification Numbers (ITINs). This resulted in about one million children losing access to the CTC.¹⁵

Signed into law on July 4, 2025, the budget reconciliation legislation will not only continue to exclude children with ITINs, but goes even further to cut off CTC eligibility for up to 2.6 million U.S. citizen children with a Social Security Number (SSN), simply because their only caregiver lacks an SSN.¹⁶

The poverty rate among U.S. citizen children in mixed-status families is 31.5%—more than three times that of citizen children in households where all members are citizens.¹⁷ Losing the CTC will force many low-income families into, or deeper into, poverty.¹⁸ Taking away this critical help at such an important time will hurt these kids' economic security and deny them the help they need to thrive—and it will have lifelong consequences.¹⁹ Due to these provisions and continued exclusions from the 2017 Trump Tax bill, nearly 4 million children will be barred from the CTC nationwide. Additionally, excluding children from the CTC could result in a loss of up to \$8.7 billion in revenue for states and localities.²⁰

Undocumented Immigrants Pay Taxes Too

Undocumented immigrants work and pay taxes; in fact, over an estimated five million immigrants who don't qualify for SSNs obtain ITINs specifically for the purpose of being able to pay the taxes they owe.²¹ In 2022, undocumented immigrants paid nearly \$100 billion in federal, state, and local taxes, contributing to the revenue that sustains schools, parks, and roads across every community in the country.²² However, more than a third of their tax dollars go to programs they are barred from accessing, such as Social Security, Medicare, and unemployment insurance. In 40 states, undocumented immigrants pay higher state and local tax rates than the top 1 percent of households in the state.²³ Along with administrative actions to weaken privacy for ITIN-filers and share their data with DHS, stripping the CTC from these households further penalizes immigrants who are simply trying to work and pay their taxes, and that will result in less revenue for the investments that we all rely on.²⁴ All families who file taxes should be eligible for the CTC, and every other tax credit or deduction, regardless of their immigration status.

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WILL INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN POVERTY

The Child Tax Credit Helps Children Thrive

- The CTC substantially reduces child poverty by supporting families who are more likely to have low-wage jobs that provide fewer benefits and fewer work protections.²⁵
- Providing families with additional income during a child's early development has been shown to have substantial long-term benefits for the child's health and educational attainment, better birth outcomes, higher lifetime earnings (and tax payments) and a more secure retirement.²⁶
- It also attributes to reduced risk factors, such as decreased involvement in the child welfare system, and lower costs in terms of healthcare, crime and child protection.²⁷
- Estimates show that child poverty exacts a cost of \$800 billion to \$1.1 trillion in lost economic output annually, suggesting that reducing child poverty is among the smartest investments we can make as a society.²⁸
- In 2021, Congress temporarily expanded the CTC and child poverty declined by nearly half, food insecurity declined 25% among households with children, financial stress among parents decreased, and parents could more easily afford essentials for their children.²⁹
- In 2021, the most common ways that families reported spending their expanded monthly CTC payments were toward bills, food and groceries, and rent and mortgage payments.³⁰

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State	ITIN children excluded in 2017 Trump Tax Bill	Citizen children with only an ITIN-eligible parent(s)	Total number of children impacted by CTC exclusions	Potential Budgetary Loss to States in the First Year
United States	1,301,510	2,657,200	3,958,710	\$8,709,162,000
Alabama	7,072	26,500	33,572	\$73,858,400
Alaska	603	500	1,103	\$2,426,600
Arizona	23,332	65,700	89,032	\$195,870,400
Arkansas	9,607	17,700	27,307	\$60,075,400
California	200,206	459,800	660,006	\$1,452,013,200
Colorado	19,638	42,300	61,938	\$136,263,600
Connecticut	19,492	21,000	40,492	\$89,082,400
Delaware	1,690	7,500	9,190	\$20,218,000
District of Columbia	1,972	1,600	3,572	\$7,858,400
Florida	140,078	162,600	302,678	\$665,891,600
Georgia	39,914	104,300	144,214	\$317,270,800
Hawaii	5,406	5,100	10,506	\$23,113,200
Idaho	2,899	13,700	16,599	\$36,517,800
Illinois	34,636	120,900	155,536	\$342,179,200
Indiana	14,783	31,200	45,983	\$101,162,600
Iowa	7,570	16,900	24,470	\$53,834,000
Kansas	7,775	24,900	32,675	\$71,885,000
Kentucky	4,931	10,900	15,831	\$34,828,200
Louisiana	14,783	13,000	27,783	\$61,122,600
Maine	666	200	866	\$1,905,200
Maryland	47,701	64,600	112,301	\$247,062,200
Massachusetts	34,939	26,800	61,739	\$135,825,800
Michigan	14,992	22,300	37,292	\$82,042,400
Minnesota	11,564	22,600	34,164	\$75,160,800
Mississippi	1,679	6,200	7,879	\$17,333,800

Matthew Lisiecki, Kevin Velasco, and Tara Watson, "What will deportations mean for the child welfare system?," Brookings, April 22, 2025, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/what-will-deportations-mean-for-the-child-welfare-system/>. Analysis using Center for Migration Studies 2022 estimates of state-by-state undocumented population (<http://data.cmsny.org/>). Analysis assumed all undocumented children have a parent who filed taxes using an ITIN and received the CTC valued at \$2,200.

WEAKENS THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM FOR ALL FAMILIES, LEAVE CHILDREN UNINSURED, AND SHIFT COSTS TO STATES

Undocumented immigrants have always been ineligible for federally funded Medicaid, Medicare, and health insurance provided through the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Before the budget reconciliation law, coverage for immigrant communities was limited to certain “qualified non-citizens” such as green card holders (who must often wait five years before being eligible for Medicaid), refugees, trafficking and domestic violence victims, humanitarian parolees, asylees, and others.³¹

However, the budget reconciliation law now:

- Strips Medicaid, Children Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Medicare, and premium tax credits under the ACA eligibility for previously eligible, lawfully present immigrants, including refugees, asylees, and survivors of domestic violence
- Decreases the FMAP rate for Medicaid emergency services for immigrants that would otherwise be eligible for coverage under Medicaid expansion

Cutting Medicare Eligibility Will Devastate Older Immigrants and Their Families

Barring immigrants from programs they contribute toward is wrong, especially for Medicare, which requires older adults to have contributed for at least a decade to be eligible. In 2023, immigrants, including those stripped of coverage, paid over \$650 billion in federal, state, and local taxes, including \$58 billion in contributions toward Medicare.³²

People work and contribute to programs like Medicare with the expectation that they will have access to that support when they are older and retired or can no longer work due to disability. Pulling the rug out from under them will leave millions of older individuals and individuals with disabilities uninsured. Ultimately, not having health coverage hurts not only these individuals, but their families and children as well, as they might have to fund the care for their aging parents completely out of pocket. Medical debt is the leading cause of bankruptcy in the U.S. and this exclusion will only exacerbate that harm.³³

WEAKENS THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM FOR ALL CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Leaving Parents Uninsured Hurts Children

A parent's access to health coverage is closely linked to their child's enrollment in and usage of coverage, as well as their development.³⁴ Cutting access to health coverage for immigrant parents will impact their children, the vast majority of whom are U.S. citizens, and will exacerbate the number of children in mixed-status households without health coverage. Uninsured rates for U.S. citizen children of immigrants are double that of their peers with citizen parents, despite having the same eligibility for federal health care programs.³⁵ When parents have health insurance coverage, children are more likely to access the routine and preventive health care they need to be healthy and thrive.³⁶ Lack of health care coverage and the inability to afford medical costs leads to significant burdens on families.³⁷ For uninsured parents, this can mean choosing between feeding their children or receiving needed treatment and medical care to maintain a healthy life and, therefore, provide and support their children.³⁸

The Budget Reconciliation Bill Hurts our Hospitals, Healthcare System, and Economy

Cuts to Medicaid and increases to the number of uninsured people will lead to increased burdens on our already strained health care system. Paying for health coverage to maintain someone's good health is much less costly than continued use of emergency visits because an individual is uninsured. When children in immigrant families don't have health insurance, they are more likely to end up in the emergency room.³⁹ Because the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act requires access to emergency care to all individuals regardless of their status or ability to pay, hospitals will face increased rates of uncompensated care. If the federal government pushes more people to become uninsured by making cuts to Medicaid or limiting eligibility for health coverage, hospitals and health care centers will face increased costs and could shutter or limit services, further exacerbating medical deserts across the country, especially in rural areas. Nearly 50 percent of all U.S. residents currently live in health care deserts, and 28 million people live within a hospital desert, more than 30 minutes away from care in an emergency.⁴⁰ There is no hospital in the country that only serves immigrants—if a hospital closes or services are reduced, U.S. citizens in that area will be impacted as well.

WEAKENS THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM FOR ALL CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Immigrants that lose access to the APTC could see their monthly premium rise by an average of **\$545 a month**– the difference between paying **\$888 a year for health coverage compared to over \$5,600 a year.**

State	Average monthly premium for those currently eligible for the APTC	Average Increase in monthly premium for those that lose access to the APTC	State	Average monthly premium for those currently eligible for the APTC	Average Increase in monthly premium for those that lose access to the APTC
United States	\$74	\$545	Missouri	\$62	\$559
Alabama	\$44	\$605	Montana	\$102	\$532
Alaska	\$115	\$990	Nebraska	\$87	\$600
Arizona	\$69	\$455	Nevada	\$99	\$456
Arkansas	\$88	\$503	New Hampshire	\$150	\$319
California	\$135	\$551	New Jersey	\$137	\$536
Colorado	\$138	\$432	New Mexico	\$86	\$571
Connecticut	\$146	\$772	New York	\$340	\$451
Delaware	\$169	\$580	North Carolina	\$69	\$568
District of Columbia	\$443	\$296	North Dakota	\$111	\$474
Florida	\$49	\$592	Ohio	\$79	\$501
Georgia	\$41	\$579	Oklahoma	\$58	\$558
Hawaii	\$74	\$545	Oregon	\$199	\$497
Idaho	\$44	\$605	Pennsylvania	\$134	\$521
Illinois	\$115	\$990	Rhode Island	\$109	\$459
Indiana	\$69	\$455	South Carolina	\$52	\$520
Iowa	\$88	\$503	South Dakota	\$99	\$592
Kansas	\$135	\$551	Tennessee	\$46	\$588
Kentucky	\$138	\$432	Texas	\$34	\$539
Louisiana	\$146	\$772	Utah	\$52	\$462
Maine	\$169	\$580	Vermont	\$192	\$875
Maryland	\$443	\$296	Virginia	\$87	\$402
Massachusetts	\$49	\$592	Washington	\$173	\$456
Michigan	\$41	\$579	West Virginia	\$74	\$1,096
Minnesota	\$216	\$313	Wisconsin	\$118	\$569
Mississippi	\$30	\$575	Wyoming	\$96	\$910

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WEAKENS THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM FOR ALL CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

In 2023, immigrants contributed over **\$650 billion** in federal, state, and local taxes, including over **\$58.8 billion** in Medicare contributions, alone. Congress now strips coverage from immigrants who have paid into Medicare for decades.

State	Federal, State, and Local Taxes Paid	Immigrant Tax Contributions to Medicare	State	Federal, State, and Local Taxes Paid	Immigrant Tax Contributions to Medicare
United States	\$651,976,100,000	\$58,821,800,000	Missouri	\$3,300,000,000	\$355,700,000
Alabama	\$2,213,800,000	\$229,300,000	Montana	\$360,400,000	\$26,000,000
Alaska	\$522,300,000	\$69,500,000	Nebraska	\$1,614,400,000	\$162,100,000
Arizona	\$11,100,000,000	\$1,000,000,000	Nevada	\$5,800,000,000	\$600,800,000
Arkansas	\$1,496,600,000	\$161,900,000	New Hampshire	\$1,290,500,000	\$151,900,000
California	\$168,100,000,000	\$13,900,000,000	New Jersey	\$39,900,000,000	\$3,300,000,000
Colorado	\$7,700,000,000	\$749,700,000	New Mexico	\$1,971,100,000	\$185,800,000
Connecticut	\$9,100,000,000	\$773,700,000	New York	\$74,800,000,000	\$5,700,000,000
Delaware	\$1,394,300,000	\$137,600,000	North Carolina	\$11,400,000,000	\$1,200,000,000
District of Columbia	\$2,486,400,000	\$204,400,000	North Dakota	\$371,900,000	\$43,000,000
Florida	\$49,800,000,000	\$5,100,000,000	Ohio	\$7,300,000,000	\$722,800,000
Georgia	\$15,800,000,000	\$1,600,000,000	Oklahoma	\$2,249,000,000	\$243,800,000
Hawaii	\$3,500,000,000	\$265,100,000	Oregon	\$5,600,000,000	\$500,800,000
Idaho	\$853,700,000	\$107,300,000	Pennsylvania	\$13,600,000,000	\$1,200,000,000
Illinois	\$27,500,000,000	\$2,300,000,000	Rhode Island	\$1,766,400,000	\$163,900,000
Indiana	\$4,100,000,000	\$440,000,000	South Carolina	\$3,500,000,000	\$345,800,000
Iowa	\$1,721,200,000	\$194,100,000	South Dakota	\$243,200,000	\$31,200,000
Kansas	\$2,184,300,000	\$222,000,000	Tennessee	\$4,400,000,000	\$446,100,000
Kentucky	\$1,784,700,000	\$184,300,000	Texas	\$58,100,000,000	\$6,000,000,000
Louisiana	\$2,127,600,000	\$204,000,000	Utah	\$3,100,000,000	\$334,500,000
Maine	\$625,800,000	\$69,100,000	Vermont	\$504,000,000	\$40,700,000
Maryland	\$15,800,000,000	\$1,400,000,000	Virginia	\$18,300,000,000	\$1,700,000,000
Massachusetts	\$20,400,000,000	\$1,900,000,000	Washington	\$22,900,000,000	\$2,200,000,000
Michigan	\$8,300,000,000	\$858,100,000	West Virginia	\$450,300,000	\$45,200,000
Minnesota	\$6,200,000,000	\$583,200,000	Wisconsin	\$3,400,000,000	\$380,700,000
Mississippi	\$711,200,000	\$62,900,000	Wyoming	\$233,000,000	\$24,800,000

"Immigrants in the United States," American Immigration Council, <https://map.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/locations/national/>.

WILL LEAVE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES HUNGRY AND SHIFT COSTS ONTO STATES

Undocumented immigrants have always been ineligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Before the budget reconciliation law, access to SNAP for immigrant communities was limited to certain “qualified non-citizens,” such as green card holders, refugees, and asylees. Even green card holders must often wait five years before being eligible for SNAP.⁴¹

However, the budget reconciliation law now strips lawfully present immigrants from accessing SNAP, limiting the program to non-citizens who are green card holders and certain Cubans, Haitians, and Pacific Islanders. Lawfully present immigrants, such as refugees, asylees and survivors of domestic violence are now ineligible for SNAP.

Access to nutrition can have a serious impact on a child's mental and physical well-being in both the short- and long-term, yet immigrant families disproportionately experience food insecurity.⁴² Additional barriers to food assistance will harm the millions of children who live in households with an immigrant parent. Because the amount a household gets in SNAP is dependent on the number of qualified household members, a parent losing access to SNAP means that a household could receive up to \$244 less per month to help put food on the table.⁴³

Excluding Families from SNAP Hurts the Economy and Shifts Costs to Food Banks and States

The need for food does not vanish if families become excluded from SNAP. Instead of the well-resourced federal government providing food, the assistance for families and children to avoid food insecurity would instead come from already stressed state budgets, food banks, and pantries.

Excluding families will also have costs to our economy. Every dollar that goes to SNAP results in up to \$1.80 in economic ripple effects that benefit farmers, grocery stores, truck drivers, payment processors, food manufacturers, and others as the funds circulate in the local economy.⁴⁴ Less funding for SNAP means families are spending less, impacting more than 260,000 SNAP authorized retailers nationwide.⁴⁵ SNAP is one of the most responsive programs to recessions, but denying people access to it means they won't be spending benefits and stimulating the economy, thereby making it harder and longer for our economy to recover. The exclusion of hundreds of thousands of lawfully present immigrants could cost the national GDP between \$1 to \$1.7 billion in growth in just the first year, a far larger cost than the \$4 billion the Congressional Budget Office estimates the government will save from these cuts over a decade.⁴⁶

WILL LEAVE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES HUNGRY AND SHIFT COSTS ONTO STATES

Barriers Create Chilling Effects for Children

Mixed-status families include both individuals who are eligible for SNAP and those who are not. Provisions in the enacted budget reconciliation legislation will deter eligible U.S. citizen children from participating in SNAP and other supports they are entitled to. Families often navigate multiple basic needs programs, and exacerbating the chilling effect could undermine maternal and child health: if families are discouraged from accessing SNAP, they may also avoid enrolling their children in WIC, Medicaid, or school meals out of fear or confusion.

During the first Trump Administration, attacks on access to public benefits, including SNAP, resulted in participation of children in immigrant families dramatically decreasing at a rate nearly triple that of children with U.S. citizen parents.⁴⁷ The enacted legislation will result in increased food insecurity for children nationwide, which hurts people today and our nation tomorrow.

SNAP Gives Children Better Health and Economic Outcomes

Research shows that SNAP improves children's outcomes at all stages of their life. This starts before birth; babies are born healthier if their mother was able to access SNAP during her pregnancy.⁴⁸ In childhood, SNAP reduces school absences and developmental health issues. And, finally, individuals who had access to SNAP as children complete more education, have higher earnings, and live longer.⁴⁹ Given the significant gains to recipients, economists estimate that these benefits outweigh the costs of providing SNAP at a ratio of over 60 to 1.⁵⁰ Now, these benefits will not be realized for thousands of immigrants and their children.

- An estimated **50,000 children** are barred from SNAP due to the budget reconciliation act's restrictions for lawfully present immigrants.⁵¹
- Refugees and asylees are now newly ineligible for SNAP under the budget reconciliation act. **About 40 percent of refugees and asylees admitted or resettled last year were children.**⁵²
- Almost half of all households utilizing SNAP—**47 percent**—have children.⁵³
- Over **2.4 million U.S. citizen children** in a household participating in SNAP live with a noncitizen.⁵⁴

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WILL LEAVE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES HUNGRY AND SHIFT COSTS ONTO STATES

Community and Economic Impacts of the Budget Reconciliation's SNAP Exclusions			
State	Refugees, Asylees, and those granted a stay of deportation, who would lose access to SNAP	Citizen Children enrolled in SNAP who live with a noncitizen	Potential loss in GDP from excluding refugees and asylees from SNAP in the first year
United States	431,000	2,482,000	\$1,759,514,400
Arizona	6,000	64,000	\$23,457,600
Arkansas	1,000	7,000	\$4,125,600
California	30,000	710,000	\$122,472,000
Colorado	4,000	33,000	\$16,070,400
Connecticut	5,000	13,000	\$20,520,000
Florida	180,000	184,000	\$723,168,000
Georgia	3,000	79,000	\$12,117,600
Idaho	1,000	4,000	\$3,866,400
Illinois	11,000	134,000	\$45,619,200
Indiana	7,000	15,000	\$29,635,200
Iowa	4,000	6,000	\$14,688,000
Kansas	3,000	4,000	\$11,793,600
Kentucky	2,000	10,000	\$7,041,600
Maine	1,000	2,000	\$3,801,600
Massachusetts	11,000	45,000	\$46,569,600
Michigan	15,000	19,000	\$56,052,000
Minnesota	4,000	15,000	\$13,564,800
Missouri	5,000	16,000	\$20,736,000
Nebraska	7,000	10,000	\$27,064,800
Nevada	5,000	38,000	\$17,928,000
New Hampshire	1,000	1,000	\$3,607,200
New Jersey	1,000	61,000	\$4,190,400
New Mexico	2,000	32,000	\$8,208,000
New York	25,000	144,000	\$112,860,000
North Carolina	8,000	80,000	\$29,894,400
North Dakota	1,000	1,000	\$4,125,600
Ohio	7,000	21,000	\$28,879,200
Oklahoma	1,000	19,000	\$3,952,800
Oregon	2,000	41,000	\$7,603,200
Pennsylvania	16,000	34,000	\$61,516,800
Rhode Island	1,000	11,000	\$4,298,400
South Dakota	1,000	1,000	\$4,320,000
Texas	25,000	367,000	\$101,520,000
Utah	3,000	7,000	\$12,182,400
Virginia	14,000	38,000	\$53,524,800
Washington	15,000	63,000	\$58,320,000
Wisconsin	3,000	26,000	\$10,432,800

*Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2023, United States Department of Agriculture, <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/snap-FY23-Characteristics-Report.pdf>; Valeria Lacarte, Lillie Hinkle, Briana Broberg, SNAP Access and Participation in U.S.-Born and Immigrant Households, Migration Policy Institute, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/mpi_snap-brief-2023-final.pdf; CLASP analysis of the United States Department of Agriculture, "Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2023" using the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program economic multiplier

THE BUDGET RECONCILIATION ACT OF 2025 THREATENS THE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

Unaccompanied children often make arduous and dangerous journeys to reunite with family members in the United States. Over 99,000 unaccompanied children were released to vetted sponsors in fiscal year 2024.⁵⁵

The enacted budget reconciliation legislation harms the safety and well-being of unaccompanied children by compromising their ability to reunify with their families, dismantling key protections, and subjecting them to harmful screening and deportation processes.⁵⁶

Unaccompanied children are among the most vulnerable populations, and the budget reconciliation legislation not only puts them in more danger, but takes away their legal protections and services to help them navigate reunifying with their families.

Imposes Unprecedented and Prohibitive Fees on Unaccompanied Children

If an unaccompanied child enters the United States outside of a port of entry, there is a minimum **\$5,000 fee**, and an additional minimum \$5,000 fee if the child is ordered removed during a hearing at which they do not appeal, which is unfortunately common for children who lack attorneys for a total of at least **\$10,000** for an unaccompanied child.⁵⁷ It is unreasonable to expect children seeking safety to afford these fees and it is wrong to require a parent to pay thousands of dollars simply to be reunited with their child. By compromising the ability of unaccompanied children to enter the country, the act increases the likelihood that children will be returned to danger. Previously, there were no fees. Extensive research indicates that it is in the best interest of a child to be reunited with a loving parent or relative, instead of being unnecessarily held in government custody or returned to danger.⁵⁸ The budget reconciliation act incentivizes traffickers, who may seek to exploit children's desperation and to create debt from this fee structure to coerce children into labor, sex trafficking, or other forms of exploitation.⁵⁹

Endangers Children by Sharing Sponsor Information for Potential Enforcement

This law targets unaccompanied children's family members by requiring the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to collect information on sponsors' information that they could potentially share with immigration enforcement agencies. This will deter sponsors, including parents and other family members, from coming forward to care for children for fear of potential enforcement actions against them or their loved ones.

Consequently, many children will remain in government custody for prolonged periods. This not only compounds the trauma of children who have fled grave harm but undermines children's ability to seek legal protection, and must navigate the immigration process alone while in detention. Children experiencing distress as their reunification with their family becomes uncertain may ultimately abandon their claims for protection and request return to their countries of origin, notwithstanding their significant protection needs. Prolonged detention also creates mounting costs for the government and could lead to the creation of new facilities that are inappropriate for children's long-term care.

THREATENS THE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

Provides Funding to Examine Children’s Bodies for “Gang-Related Tattoos” and Markings

This Act provides funding to the Office of Refugee Resettlement to examine the bodies of children **at any age** and funding for officers at the border to conduct these examinations on children **as young as 12 years old**.⁶⁰ This raises deep concerns about the potential for mistreatment, abuse, or harm of children amid invasive searches with no oversight, including to young children. The reason the Department of Health and Human Services is responsible for the care of unaccompanied children, rather than the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), is because of the recognition that immigration enforcement officials lack the expertise to appropriately screen or care for children. This deeply problematic policy would do nothing to promote safety and simply subject vulnerable children to additional trauma and potential abuse.

Expands the Number of Children who can be Summarily Returned to Their Country of Origin

The budget reconciliation act alters the anti-trafficking process outlined in the TVPRA under which most unaccompanied children are transferred to the care of ORR, where they receive a robust trafficking assessment, child-appropriate services, and legal information. The prior process also facilitated due process by ensuring children can make their legal cases and have their claims for relief fully considered. The TVPRA offers more limited border processing procedures for children from Mexico and Canada that include a cursory protection screening by DHS law enforcement officials and the potential for summary removal. These screenings for children from Mexico and Canada have long raised concerns for failing to sufficiently identify trafficking and other protection concerns including return to harm for children, who may fear disclosing harms and risks they are facing to armed law enforcement officers shortly after undertaking often traumatic journeys to safety.

Under the new law, all unaccompanied children could be removed from the United States with only a cursory screening by a border official. These screenings consistently fail to identify evidence of trafficking or other protection needs. Inevitably, the bill would lead to vulnerable children being returned to grave danger—the very outcome the TVPRA was enacted to prevent.

Threatens to Return Abused Children to Harm

Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) is a critical form of humanitarian protection for children found to be unable to reunify with one or both parents due to abuse, abandonment, neglect, or similar mistreatment. Under this standard, a child fleeing abuse by one of their parents in their country of origin would be able to apply for lawful status and the ability to remain safely with their other parent in the United States. The reconciliation law effectively modifies this standard by imposing a \$250 fee for applying, where there was previously none. This provision will create more barriers for children to obtain safety and stability through SIJS and increase their risk of being returned to their abuser or encountering other harms.

**THREATENS THE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF
UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN**

State	Unaccompanied Children Released to Sponsors in FY24
United States	99,372
Alabama	1,675
Alaska	10
Arizona	1,229
Arkansas	872
California	10,819
Colorado	1,746
Connecticut	1,093
Delaware	456
District of Columbia	223
Florida	9,487
Georgia	4,115
Hawaii	26
Idaho	218
Illinois	2,715
Indiana	1,931
Iowa	722
Kansas	712
Kentucky	1,278
Louisiana	1,687
Maine	112
Maryland	3,652
Massachusetts	2,366
Michigan	749
Minnesota	1,102
Mississippi	511

State	Unaccompanied Children Released to Sponsors in FY24
Missouri	969
Montana	63
Nebraska	718
Nevada	638
New Hampshire	66
New Jersey	4,348
New Mexico	233
New York	6,956
North Carolina	4,064
North Dakota	50
Ohio	2,068
Oklahoma	912
Oregon	737
Pennsylvania	1,985
Rhode Island	377
South Carolina	2,143
South Dakota	189
Tennessee	3,500
Texas	13,071
Utah	736
Vermont	17
Virginia	3,631
Washington	1,460
West Virginia	67
Wisconsin	820
Wyoming	48

CREATES A WEALTH TEST FOR IMMIGRANTS

Rather than taxing the rich their fair share, the budget reconciliation takes aim at some of the most marginalized people in our society, including asylum seekers, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders, and immigrant children who have been abused, abandoned, or neglected.

The enacted budget reconciliation legislation greatly increases and, in many cases, creates new exorbitant fees to act as barriers to immigration status, protections, and work authorization. These predatory fees will impose significant hardship on immigrant communities and families who are seeking legal status.

Establishing unattainable fees will put immigrant families' employment and safety at stake. The financial burden will especially be difficult for immigrant families with children, who will be required to cover the cost of fees levied upon each child. The added fee of thousands of dollars over multiple years for employment renewal takes away necessary funds that families and children need to survive.

The enacted legislation creates a significant wealth test for immigrants looking to adjust their status, even under humanitarian categories. These fees will make it harder for families to adjust their status together if at all, unless they have thousands of dollars to pay the government. The legislation circumvents basic due process by imposing steep fees for appealing cases or filing motions to reconsider or reopen cases in immigration courts. The effect of these fees means that fewer people will be able to adjust or renew their status, get work authorization, or become U.S. citizens, even if they have been in the U.S. for many years. The fees punish immigrants while increasing the workload of the already constrained and backlogged U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, which experienced layoffs earlier this year.⁶¹

The Budget Reconciliation Bill Would Establish Prohibitive Fees for Families Across the Country

- Registration fees for people applying for TPS will be increased to \$500 from \$50 with initial employment authorization costing at least \$550 (previously there was no fee) and an employment renewal fee of at least \$275 every year (decreased from \$470).⁶² A TPS holder could be paying a total of \$1,325 to register and maintain their employment authorization for 18 months.
- If an unaccompanied child enters the United States outside of a port of entry, there is a minimum \$5,000 fee, and an additional minimum \$5,000 fee if the child is ordered removed during a hearing at which they do not appeal, which is unfortunately common for children who lack attorneys for a total of at least \$10,000 for an unaccompanied child. It is unreasonable to expect children seeking safety to afford these fees. Previously, there were no fees.
- Asylum seekers must pay \$100 for an asylum application, and \$550 per year for work authorization and \$275 annual renewal fee. Until now, the U.S. has never charged a fee for seeking asylum.
- Immigrant children who have been abused, abandoned, or neglected by their parents must pay \$250 to apply for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status; currently, there is no fee for this application.

These fees are in addition to thousands of dollars in increased fees to adjust status, file an appeal, and/or fees for lawyers. These increases will lead to children and families not being able to adjust or maintain status and increased debt for immigrant families. See endnote 63 for more information about fee changes.

FUNDS MASS DEPORTATIONS AND SEPARATES FAMILIES

On top of excluding immigrant children and families, and in some cases U.S. citizen children in mixed-status families, from critical programs like Medicaid, SNAP, and the Child Tax Credit, the budget reconciliation bill takes funding that should be supporting families to instead further harass, detain, deport, and separate children from their families.

As enacted, the budget reconciliation legislation increases funding for detention facilities, including family detention facilities, by up to \$45 billion and increases funding for immigration agents and operations by up to \$32 billion. This would result in a budget that is 4 times more than ICE's annual detention budget and builds on decades of alarming increases in immigration enforcement spending.⁶⁴

IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT HARMS MILLIONS OF CHILDREN

- An estimated 5.8 million children—the majority of whom are U.S. citizens— have at least one undocumented parent and run the risk of being separated from them due to detention or deportation.⁶⁵
- Of those children 2.6 million citizen children are at risk of being left with no parent in the case of being separated by detention or deportation.⁶⁶
- As the Trump Administration continues to strip status and protections from more immigrants, the number of children impacted by these policies will grow.

Funding the Detention of Children

The controversial practice of jailing families was revived by the Trump Administration despite the fact that health experts have confirmed time and again that there is simply no safe way to detain a child.⁶⁷ Research has consistently found that detaining a child for any length of time is harmful to their immediate safety and well-being, as well as their long-term development.⁶⁸

The American Academy of Pediatrics has found that Department of Homeland Security facilities, including family detention centers, fail to meet basic standards of care for children, such as inadequate or inappropriate immunizations, delayed medical care, insufficient education services, and very limited mental health services.⁶⁹ These conditions can be particularly dangerous for young children, as demonstrated by the deaths of children held in such facilities.⁷⁰ Additionally, the enacted legislation will allow the federal government to jail children indefinitely, contrary to the Flores settlement, which governs how children in detention must be treated.

FUNDS MASS DEPORTATIONS AND SEPARATES FAMILIES

Increased Funding for Immigration Enforcement Separates Families and Traumatizes Children

The acceleration of immigration enforcement actions has already led to the deportation of many long-residing immigrants without due process, many of whom are parents. In some cases, U.S. citizen children have been deported with their parents with limited to no opportunity for parents to make informed decisions or preparations.⁷¹ Ramped-up immigration enforcement is contributing to a climate of fear and instability for entire communities. Particularly chilling has been Trump's rescission of a 2021 "protected areas" memo, which limited immigration enforcement actions in essential locations, like hospitals, child care centers, schools, public demonstrations, and places of worship.⁷² Versions of the policy have existed across Republican and Democratic presidential administrations for over 30 years.⁷³

Research shows that immigration enforcement actions create a climate of toxic stress that is harmful to a child's development, and children who are separated from their parents due to deportation suffer the most detrimental impacts to their well-being.⁷⁴ The deportation of a parent, in particular when that parent is the primary income-earner for a family, can undermine family economic security, with one study showing that deportation could decrease a family income by as much as 47 percent.⁷⁵ Even children who accompany their parents to the country to which they are deported experience negative mental health and other developmental harms as well as barriers to accessing health care and education.⁷⁶

THE BUDGET RECONCILIATION ACT OF 2025

FUNDS MASS DEPORTATIONS AND SEPARATES FAMILIES

Over 5.8 million children, the vast majority of whom are U.S. citizens, could be impacted by the Trump Administration's mass deportation. The Trump administration has already shown a disregard for due process, detaining and deporting both immigrant and U.S. citizen children, separating parents from their children right in front of them, and have promised to return to family detention. **Any funding increases to this administration's immigration enforcement agenda will only increase the rate at which children in the United States are traumatized and hurt.**

State	Undocumented children	U.S. citizen or green card holder children with an undocumented parent	Total children that could be impacted by ICE enforcement
United States	1,301,510	4,508,000	5,809,510
Alabama	7,072	41,000	48,072
Alaska	603	1,000	1,603
Arizona	23,332	123,000	146,332
Arkansas	9,607	28,000	37,607
California	200,206	910,000	1,110,206
Colorado	19,638	74,000	93,638
Connecticut	19,492	40,000	59,492
Delaware	1,690	11,000	12,690
District of Columbia	1,972	3,000	4,972
Florida	140,078	247,000	387,078
Georgia	39,914	151,000	190,914
Hawaii	5,406	9,000	14,406
Idaho	2,899	16,000	18,899
Illinois	34,636	196,000	230,636
Indiana	14,783	52,000	66,783
Iowa	7,570	31,000	38,570
Kansas	7,775	42,000	49,775
Kentucky	4,931	17,000	21,931
Louisiana	14,783	23,000	37,783
Maine	666	3,000	3,666
Maryland	47,701	97,000	144,701
Massachusetts	34,939	61,000	95,939
Michigan	14,992	45,000	59,992
Minnesota	11,564	37,000	48,564
Mississippi	1,679	9,000	10,679

State	Undocumented children	U.S. citizen or green card holder children with an undocumented parent	Total children that could be impacted by ICE enforcement
Missouri	11,341	23,000	34,341
Montana	181		181
Nebraska	6,249	28,000	34,249
Nevada	10,290	78,000	88,290
New Hampshire	196	5,000	5,196
New Jersey	65,410	181,000	246,410
New Mexico	4,271	25,000	29,271
New York	83,086	226,000	309,086
North Carolina	42,907	159,000	201,907
North Dakota	793	2,000	2,793
Ohio	13,436	40,000	53,436
Oklahoma	10,807	50,000	60,807
Oregon	11,171	51,000	62,171
Pennsylvania	26,168	64,000	90,168
Rhode Island	7,378	11,000	18,378
South Carolina	9,495	41,000	50,495
South Dakota	1,797	5,000	6,797
Tennessee	24,700	70,000	94,700
Texas	214,910	875,000	1,089,910
Utah	9,262	41,000	50,262
Vermont	1,044		1,044
Virginia	33,697	87,000	120,697
Washington	32,651	137,000	169,651
West Virginia	414		414
Wisconsin	11,550	38,000	49,550
Wyoming	378	4,000	4,378

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