



**U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Work and Welfare
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
Matt Damschroder, Director
September 1, 2026**

Good afternoon, Chairman LaHood, Ranking Member Davis, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

My name is Matt Damschroder. I'm director of the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, the state agency responsible for overseeing Ohio's public assistance, workforce development, adult protective services, child support, home energy assistance and Community Services Block Grant programs.

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) was successful in reducing welfare rolls and promoting work in Ohio and across the country. Since passage, our public assistance caseloads have fallen dramatically – from more than 212,000 families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in 1995 to fewer than 4,300 families today. Between those families and child-only cases, just over 50,000 children currently receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in Ohio. In fact, about 87% of all recipients are children with child-only cases, such as those involved in a kinship care arrangement through the child welfare system.

Today, the adults remaining in Ohio's TANF cash assistance program – Ohio Works First – are those who face multiple, significant barriers to employment. Many live with physical or mental health challenges. Most have limited education. And they often lack access to reliable transportation, child care, and stable housing. These challenges are not easily addressed by one-size-fits-all public assistance work requirements.

That is why we were grateful Ohio was selected by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) last year as one of five states to participate in the federal TANF pilot program. Our pilot builds on the 30-year legacy of PRWORA giving states flexibility by allowing caseworkers to work closely with participants to develop individualized plans that address their most significant barriers to work, rather than measuring compliance using the traditional work participation rate (WPR). Under the WPR, adults are assigned to specific, limited activities they must complete or face a sanction. The pilot instead gives us the flexibility to develop performance metrics that better reflect successful outcomes – metrics that can be measured and evaluated for their return on investment.

This pilot will help reimagine the role states play in administering public assistance benefits, moving from transactional services to truly transformational investments. It also strengthens the public benefits continuum by ensuring our lowest-income adults on TANF cash assistance are ready and prepared to progress into SNAP E&T and WIOA funded programs on their path to a sustainable career, financial independence – and a legacy of overcoming poverty.

For example, our SNAP Benefit Bridge Program connects participants with a care team who can help



them address barriers, make and work a plan, and ultimately achieve financial independence. One participant, a young woman in Licking County, Ohio, who grew up relying on public assistance, says the program gave her the skills and confidence to transform her life. She's now a nurse, a married mother of three, owns her own home and is happily self-sufficient.

Our Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program (CCMEP) takes a similarly innovative approach to helping low-income 14- to 24-year-olds break the cycle of poverty. CCMEP integrates TANF and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth funding to focus on people, not programs, and offer more coordinated, individualized services. Ohio was one of the first states in the nation to attempt this degree of cross-program integration; however, braiding these funding streams can be difficult, due to misaligned federal performance measures. It would be beneficial to grant Health and Human Services waiver authority in the TANF program, as is granted to the Department of Labor for WIOA programs, in limited circumstances.

Many states, like Ohio, have taken meaningful steps to reframe assistance around a "work first" philosophy—one that recognizes benefits as a temporary support while placing employment and economic opportunity at the forefront of our interactions with recipients. Our TANF pilot is the next step in modernizing the administration of public assistance. With that said, I believe we can add to this work by increasing our focus to TANF purposes 3 and 4.

Under the leadership of Governor DeWine, we have invested in fatherhood initiatives, promoted the success sequence, and increased support for kinship care. As an example, TANF provided funding for a pilot program through the Ohio Commission on Fatherhood to teach dads about safe sleep, the importance of breast feeding, smoking cessation, and safe birth spacing. Involved fathers bring improved outcomes in communities with high infant mortality rates.

Thirty years after welfare reform, administering public benefits remains complex and challenging. We work every day to bar the door to fraudsters and those who would abuse the system, while delivering important services to eligible Ohioans.

We look forward to building on these principles, analyzing our pilot performance metrics and working with ACF, under the exemplary leadership of Assistant Secretary Alex Adams.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I will be happy to answer any questions.