



"BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL" IGNORES AND WORSENS POVERTY IN DETROIT AND AMERICA

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By Bob Weiner and Bayley Sandler

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President Donald Trump's so-called "One Big Beautiful Bill", now passed by one vote in the House and two in the Senate, touts large tax cuts, higher take home pay, and a more secure border – which all sound positive if we do not look too closely at how these changes will come about. This "legacy defining bill," as Representative Buddy Carter (R-GA) called it in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, is cutting many benefits for lower income individuals, which is what would allow such large tax cuts. It appears Republican value systems pushing tax breaks for the very wealthy are motivating these representatives to cut poor people's access to basic health care, food, education, and pension protections.

The "Big Beautiful Bill" Ignores and worsens poverty in Detroit and America.

For the sake of the uber-wealthy, poorer individuals are being ignored, and poverty is being treated as something that no longer exists in America. However, poverty is not a dead issue and cannot be treated as such. Now that the bill has been signed into law, it is more important than ever to be informed of what the legislation's passage entails. This way, voters are knowledgeable as the next elections approach (2026 and 2028) and feel encouraged to make their voices heard, especially those in poverty and their advocates.

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As of 2023, 36.8 million people were beneath the poverty line. According to the Census Bureau's Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM), that is 11.1% of the population throughout the continental United States. That sounds like a small percentage but take a quick walk around the more rural cities in America and it is obvious that poverty is alive and well. Michigan has a poverty rate of 13.5%, but 35.02% of the population in Detroit is living beneath the poverty line.

With that same 2023 census, we learned that each month up to 42.1 million people use Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs (SNAP) – formerly called food stamps. Additionally, 71.2 million Americans are enrolled in Medicaid, as of January 2025. Looking at Michigan, 14.7% of its population receive SNAP and 26% are enrolled in Medicaid. Each of these programs is integral for supporting impoverished communities, providing basic needs like food and healthcare.

With the passage of the “Big Beautiful Bill”, though, these programs will be slashed, and the action will significantly impact the livelihood of those living in poverty. When Iowa Senator Joni Ernst was confronted with the truth that people will die due to their loss of coverage, she simply said, “Well, we all are going to die.” This comes from the same woman whose campaign ads so sensitively

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featured hog castration. But Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY, former majority Leader) just added, “Get over it.”

To understand how policy can deeply impact the livelihood of those living in poverty, it is important to recognize how it has evolved over time. With President Obama in the White House, there were 46.7 million Americans living in poverty. Fluctuation in poverty rates is common, spiking up to 15% of the population in 1983, 1993, and 2011. In 2019, the poverty rate was at an all-time low with only 10.5%, dropping to 7.8% in 2020 due to government relief efforts with COVID-19.

Simply put, poverty cannot be set aside as just another partisan issue. It has cut through every presidency. Yet programs like Medicaid and SNAP are now politicized. There are currently limits to how much a family or individual can make to be eligible for Medicaid. However, the “Big Beautiful Bill”: makes the qualifications stricter and creates more hoops for the subscribers to abide by. An adult without children would now have to work at least as much as 80 hours per month to receive proper coverage. Additionally, the subscribers’ eligibility will be rechecked every six months, making it easier for those enrolled to be dropped from their coverage. This creates a burden for both the patient and the state system. With new copays and a ban on coverage, Medicaid will become more of a

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challenge, in some cases virtually impossible, to remain enrolled in than a helpful and potentially lifesaving service.



Bayley Sandler

Additionally, the passage of this legislation will result in 16 million people losing their health coverage, through the Medicaid and

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Obamacare cuts, by 2034. And yet, Senator Mitch McConnell thinks that these Americans will just “get over it.” In contrast, Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) is fighting to protect Medicaid. Schumer succeeded in having the Senate Parliamentarian reject the Medicaid cuts as policy rather than money as required. “This win saves hundreds of billions of dollars for Americans to get healthcare, rather than funding tax cuts to billionaires.” However, no one can count on the Republicans here – they will likely still offer alternatives to continue taking away millions of peoples’ health care.

For those enrolled in the SNAP program with dependents, there are also new work requirements to continue their eligibility. Not only will this cut food accessibility in impoverished homes, but also each states’ free school meal program. Many programs, like free school lunch, use SNAP benefits to determine a family’s eligibility. So, losing SNAP benefits will reduce their access to other programs that are focused on lower income individuals. As the number of SNAP members drop due to the new requirements, so will the federal reimbursements that states receive when providing such programs.

We think the distorted policies against the poor in the bill are unconscionable and inhumane.

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While House Majority Leader Steve Scalise and Speaker Mike Johnson were and are both for the bill, it is their state that has the country's highest rates of poverty. According to the Census Bureau, 18.9% of Louisiana's population lives below the poverty line. These representatives are so focused on praising President Trump and supporting his agenda that they are voting against their people. They advertise a middle-class tax cut, but the reality will be the long-term huge gain for the wealthy and large benefit costs for the poor. In the end, it will be the children who are born into impoverished families who are most impacted by the passage of this bill. If it is all about protecting the future of America, they should be the priority – not lining the pockets of those already extremely wealthy.

Robert Weiner is a former spokesman in the Clinton and Bush White Houses and senior staff for Congressmen John Conyers, Charles Rangel, Claude Pepper, Ed Koch, Sen. Ted Kennedy, and 4-Star Gen. Barry McCaffrey. Bob is a member of The PuLSE National Advisory Board.

Bayley Sandler is a Policy Analyst at Robert Weiner Associates and the Solutions for Change Foundation, and a rising junior at Brandeis University.

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