

August 21, 2012

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 changed the face of welfare in America. The bill included a work requirement for all able-bodied parents eligible for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). The requirement was mandatory and absolute. Welfare to Work was the largest reform to our country's welfare system in history, and it was a resounding success. Employment in America soared and child-poverty hit an all-time low. Welfare to Work was successful because the requirement to work was at its core. Getting individuals into employment gave them hope for a brighter future and allowed them to gain independence and self-sufficiency for themselves and their family.

The Department's recent informational memorandum released on July 12th giving states the ability to opt-out of the very work requirements which have proven successful over the past 15 years is alarming. It is our opinion that HHS does not hold the authority to offer such a waiver, as the work requirement falls within section 407 of the welfare reform law, clearly outside of the waiver authority for the department. The work requirement was the centerpiece of the 1996 reform law and intentionally set-aside by Congress so as not to be among those items that are waiver eligible.

We would respectfully ask that the department reconsider its actions and instead focus on strengthening the work aspects of our welfare system.

Sincerely,



Sam Brownback
Governor of Kansas