

Office of the Governor

August 15, 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:

I write regarding the Department of Health and Human Services' Information Memorandum dated July 12, 2012, which details the intent of HHS to allow states to waive welfare work requirements under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF). Such a weakening waiver is not something Wyoming will either seek or accept. Although states have advocated for flexibility in many of the welfare programs HHS manages, for example, the Medicaid program, the July 12th Information Memorandum about TANF goes beyond any original request for flexibility.

In 1996, when welfare reform was passed, governors of both parties were consulted, and the resulting law has been the cornerstone of innovative and state-specific welfare-to-work programs. Strong federal work requirements were at the center of this reform. They embody sound policies, and they should remain intact.

The 1996 reform law has, among other things, helped individuals and families move from welfare to work. It has been most successful in our state. In Wyoming, the welfare caseload declined from 12,180 recipients in 1996 to 607 recipients in 2011. This represents an extraordinary decrease and a major accomplishment for Wyoming and for thousands of people in Wyoming who were able to change their lives for the better.

We must all continue to encourage a productive society, empowering Americans by promoting individual responsibility. I hope you will reconsider the intentions of the 1996 TANF law and reassess your authority to waive the work requirements for TANF beneficiaries. I request that HHS not undo through administrative action what the 1996 welfare reform law intended and has done.

Sincerely,



Matthew H. Mead
Governor