

Members of State Commissions on Poverty and Opportunity Urge Federal Action on Poverty Measure

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Rebecca Blank
Under Secretary for Economic Affairs
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20230

U.S. Senator Chris Dodd
448 Russell Building
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Jim McDermott
1035 Longworth HOB
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Under Secretary Blank, Senator Dodd, and Representative McDermott:

As members of state economic opportunity and poverty reduction task forces that are currently in operation or have completed their mission, we write to urge the federal government to move forward in implementing a modernized income poverty measure.

In trying to assess the economic well-being of our states and the progress of policy efforts to create greater economic opportunity, we have come to know very well the limitations of the current measure. The current income measure is based on outdated assumptions about the expenses of the American family. A more comprehensive measure is needed that would consider the increased financial burden of housing, childcare, and health care on the modern American family while recognizing the benefit of critical work supports such as tax credits, food stamps, and other non-cash subsidies. Indeed, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) made recommendations over a decade ago to address just these concerns.

As the current official poverty definition is established by an Office of Management and Budget directive, we understand that the Executive Office of the President is authorized to make changes to the current measure. Alternatively, Congress could pass legislation that calls for a modernized measure. While we appreciate that other valuable metrics for measuring the experience of poverty could help round out an income-based framework, we believe that a modernized income measure that follows the NAS recommendations is a critical first step.

We look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

Members, State Task Forces (see signatories below)

<u>Name</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Title</u>
*Melanie Bridgeforth	AL	Voices for Alabama's Children	Policy Analyst/Kids Count Director
Ron Gilbert	AL	Alabama Arise	Policy Director
Marcie Porter	AL	Low Income Housing Coalition of Alabama	President
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Mark Waller	CO	Legislature	Representative
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Robert L. Genuario	CT	Office of Policy and Management	Secretary
Lile Gibbons	CT	Legislature	Representative
Norma Gyle	CT	Department of Public Health	Deputy Commissioner
Susan Hamilton	CT	Department of Children and Families	Commissioner
Mary Ann Handley	CT	Legislature	Senator

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Michelle Hayward	CT	Department of Corrections	Correctional Counselor Supervisor
Christine Keller	CT	Connecticut Superior Court- Juvenile Division	Chief Administrative Judge
Dennis King	CT	Department of Transportation	Manager of Community Advocacy
Lindy Lee Gold	CT	Department of Economic and Community Development	Community Development Specialist
Michael Meotti	CT	Department of Higher Education	Commissioner
Mary Mushinsky	CT	Legislature	Representative
Mark Polzella	CT	Department of Labor	Director of Labor Operations - Employment Services
Michael P. Starkowski	CT	Department of Social Services	Commissioner
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Keith Hall	KY	Legislature	Representative
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* names added after the original letter was sent