

WE CAN MAKE 2022 THE YEAR WE REDUCE CHILD POVERTY BY HALF EQUITABLY

TO FULFILL THE GOAL OF CUTTING CHILD POVERTY WE MUST FOCUS ON CHILDREN IN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

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INTRODUCTION

For many families, 2021 was a markedly difficult year marked by new variants of Covid-19, a challenging return to schools, high unemployment and high inflation. The year also had moments of celebration: the rollout of vaccines, the gradual re-opening of the economy and especially the momentous expansions of the federal safety net. Through multiple pandemic relief bills, the federal government made an unprecedented investment in children, which lifted millions of children out of poverty. This federal spending is estimated to have cut child poverty in 2021 by more than half relative to 2018 (Wheaton et al., 2021). Without the safety net or pandemic-related relief, child poverty would have been 30.1% (Wheaton et al., 2021).

However, even with this historic investment in children, millions of children were excluded because their eligibility for pandemic relief and the safety net are tied to their immigration status and that of their parents. For example, non-citizen children, who have some of the highest poverty rates, have not benefitted from the expanded Child Tax Credit in the American Rescue Plan. Although they were eligible until 2018, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of that year made them ineligible by requiring that children have a Social Security Number to receive the credit. Unfortunately, the American Rescue Plan failed to restore that eligibility, excluding these children from this key benefit.

A year before the pandemic, a landmark report of the National Academies of Sciences (National Academies of Sciences, 2019) had shown that even with significant expansions of safety net programs, Hispanic children and children in immigrant families would experience a lower reduction in poverty than other children. To examine more closely the reasons for the high poverty rates and lower poverty reducing effect of social programs on children in immigrant families, we partnered with [UnidosUS](#) under a grant from the W.T. Grant Foundation and the Spencer Foundation titled “Including Children of Immigrants in the Post-Pandemic Economic Recovery Efforts and Safety Net.” This brief synthesizes two recent peer-reviewed papers written through that collaboration: “[Restoring an Inclusionary Safety Net for Children in Immigrant Families: A Review of Three Social Policies](#),” (Acevedo-Garcia, Joshi, Ruskin, Walters, & Sofer, 2021) and “[Including Children in Immigrant Families in Policy Approaches to Reduce Child Poverty](#)” (Acevedo-Garcia, Joshi, Ruskin, Walters, Sofer, et al., 2021). In these papers, we show that racism has been expressed in social policy as a complex set of exclusions based on immigrant stratification by legal status. These exclusions deny full access to the safety net not only to undocumented immigrants, but also to legal immigrants and U.S. citizen children in immigrant families. In turn, these exclusions have serious negative effects on citizen children in mixed-status families. These exclusions consequently both limit our ability to reduce poverty among children in immigrant families and prevent us from lowering further the overall child poverty rate.

In this brief, we focus on three key safety net programs: the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), the Child Tax Credit (CTC), and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). We discuss policy options to reduce poverty among children in immigrant families, which will help us both lower the total child poverty rate and restore equity to the social safety net.

If we fail to restore eligibility for children in immigrant families, our efforts to reduce child poverty will continue to be incomplete, unfair, and harmful for these children. More broadly, if we fail to make the new federal investments in children permanent, the child poverty rate will grow again. While the nation made significant progress in reducing child poverty in 2021, most of the new federal spending on children will end or wind down after 2021, and spending on children will be back to pre-pandemic levels by 2024 (Hahn et al., 2021). The eight policy options outlined in this brief would help further reduce child poverty and reduce inequities between children in immigrant families and other children as well as inequities by race/ethnicity and nativity.

The pandemic response showed that the federal government can improve children’s lives, but this positive trend will last only if the government continues to prioritize its investment in children. Funding decisions not only have the power to improve the lives of children today; they are a crucial investment in our nation’s future.

WHAT ARE THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS OF REDUCING POVERTY?

Poverty causes negative child outcomes, especially when it occurs in early childhood or persists through a large portion of childhood. Many programs that alleviate poverty—either directly by providing income transfers, or indirectly by providing food, housing or medical care—have been shown to improve child wellbeing. The National Academy of Sciences Committee identified 20 individual policy solutions that have the potential to reduce child poverty (100% of the Supplemental Poverty Measure) and deep poverty (50% of the Supplemental Poverty Measure) in the United States by half within ten years (see Appendix). The committee’s simulations showed that no single program or policy option could meet the goal of reducing child poverty by one-half. To achieve the goal of reducing poverty by half in ten years, the committee developed four policy packages, two of which achieved the goal (see Appendix). The cost of these packages is substantial (\$90 to \$111 billion a year) but small compared with the total national costs of child poverty, which are estimated to range between \$800 billion and \$1.1 trillion per year.

One simulated policy though, a \$3,000 per child per year child allowance, would produce a substantial poverty reduction of 41%, and it would meet the goal of cutting deep poverty in half. This child allowance inspired the expanded Child Tax Credit in the American Rescue Plan Act. In July, the first payment of the expanded Child Tax Credit lifted 3 million children from poverty and is estimated to slash child poverty by 40% in a typical year (Acs & Werner, 2021; Parolin et al., 2021). However, the expanded Child Tax Credit is set to expire after one year. The reconciliation bill would extend the expanded credit only into 2023, and it does not make it permanent. Our leaders have a historic opportunity to reduce child poverty. To do so, and to do so equitably, it is essential that we make the expanded Child Tax Credit permanent *and* fully refundable, and that we restore eligibility for children without Social Security Numbers to avoid further entrenching inequities.

The policy options and packages in the 2019 National Academies report were estimated to have different impacts in different subgroups of children. Although virtually all of these options reduced poverty across all of the subgroups considered—e.g., subgroups by race/ethnicity, nativity, family structure, parental employment, and child age—there were disparate impacts by race/ethnicity and nativity. Black children had the largest decreases in poverty, while Hispanic children and children in immigrant families benefited relatively less. The next section outlines gaps in current poverty reduction efforts for Hispanic children and children in immigrant families.

WHERE DO INEQUITIES EXIST IN CURRENT POVERTY REDUCTION EFFORTS?

Poverty reduction efforts underserve children in immigrant families, a group who are nearly entirely (91%) U.S. citizens and who constitute 26% of all U.S. children (Acevedo-Garcia, Joshi, Ruskin, Walters, Sofer, et al., 2021). Many immigrants, including immigrants lawfully present in the U.S., have restricted eligibility for anti-poverty programs, which hurts their citizen children. Even when families meet eligibility criteria—such as being low-income and working—children in immigrant families have restricted access because eligibility for the safety net is tied to not the child’s needs, but to their parents’ immigration status. Although these restrictions are purported to exclude so-called “less deserving” immigrants (i.e., undocumented immigrants or legal immigrants with less than five year of qualified status), it is impossible to do so without hurting citizen children, as 75% of citizen children in

immigrant families live in mixed-status families (i.e., families in which at least one member is not a citizen) (Acevedo-Garcia, Joshi, Ruskin, Walters, & Sofer, 2021).

Related factors exacerbate these inequities in poverty reduction efforts. Due to the heightened anti-immigrant climate, immigrant families are often reluctant to access social programs that can mitigate economic hardship even when they or their children *do* qualify, putting them at greater risk for child poverty. Furthermore, although immigrant parents have higher employment rates than other adults, human capital and labor market factors make these parents more likely to hold low-wage jobs that do not offer protections such as health insurance (Earle et al., 2014). As a result, while 9.9% of non-immigrant families live in poverty, 20.9% of U.S. born children in immigrant families live in poverty (National Academies of Sciences, 2019).

Hispanic children are especially affected by these circumstances. The majority of immigrants in the U.S. are Hispanic, and Hispanic children are the largest group of children in poverty: 41% of all children in poverty are Hispanic (about 4 million children) (National Academies of Sciences, 2019). One important reason why Hispanic children have the highest poverty rates is that immigrant restrictions on use of the social safety net have stronger negative effects on Hispanic children. Although 95% of Hispanic children are U.S. citizens, more than 50% have at least one immigrant parent, and about 25% have an undocumented parent (Acevedo-Garcia, 2021).

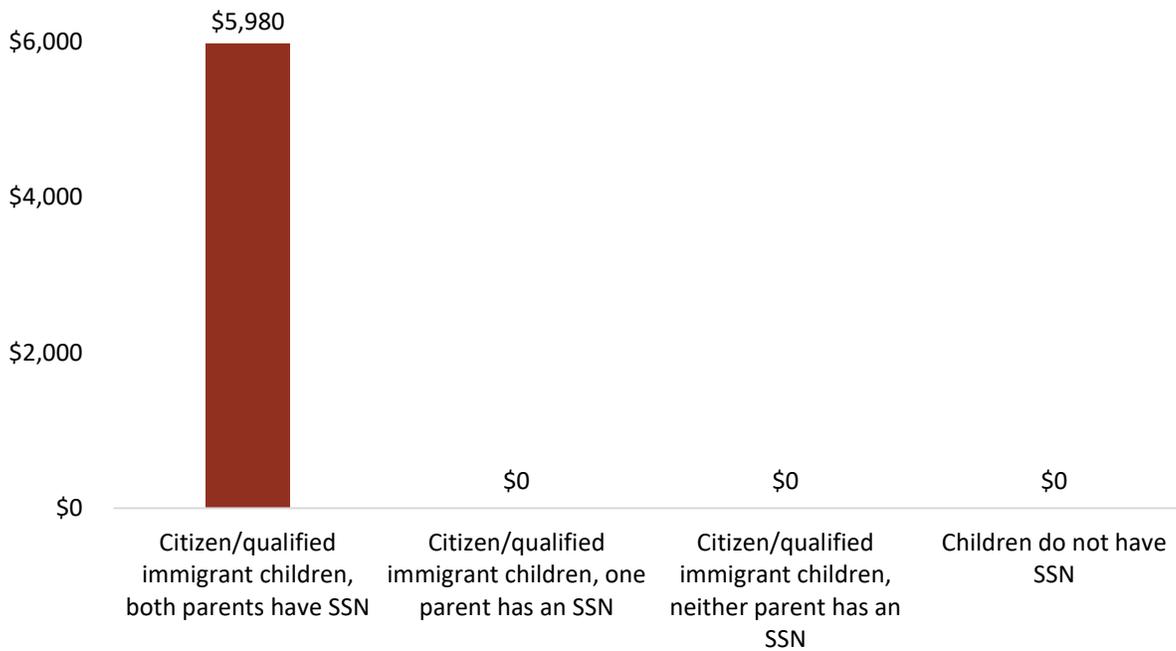
We note that this stratification by immigration legality is a form of structural discrimination that classifies immigrants into categories and assigns these categories different degrees of deservingness and access to social policies and programs. Legality is not just a distinction between undocumented and legal immigrants, but a continuum that has been codified into social policy to also include legal immigrants (who have had qualifying status for less than five years) and U.S. citizen children and spouses in immigrant families (Acevedo-Garcia, Joshi, Ruskin, Walters, & Sofer, 2021).

How do these factors work together to exclude children in immigrant families from the social safety net?

- *First, policies contain categorical eligibility exclusions based on immigrant status or membership in an immigrant family.*
- *Second, the income eligibility for immigrant families is stricter than for other families (because the income of the immigrant's sponsor to come to the U.S. is considered in calculating income eligibility).*
- *Third, racialized administrative burden lowers immigrants' participation in social programs.*
- *Finally, a heightened anti-immigrant climate has led to a stronger connection between use of the safety net and immigration policy. e.g., a 2017 proposal to expand safety net programs included in the public charge rule.*

For example, due to these exclusions, U.S. citizen children in immigrant families are denied thousands of dollars in public assistance because of the type of tax identification number their immigrant parents use to pay their taxes. As shown in Figure 1, under current immigrant eligibility rules, a household with two citizen children or qualified immigrant children, two working parents with Social Security Numbers (SSN), and an annual earned income of \$25,000 would receive nearly \$6,000 from the EITC (Acevedo-Garcia, Joshi, Ruskin, Walters, Sofer, et al., 2021). In stark contrast, a similar household with the same income in which both—or even one—working parents do not have Social Security Numbers would not receive the EITC at all.

Figure 1. Earned Income Tax Credit for Two-Parent, Two-Child Families with Incomes at \$25,000, 2021



Source Acevedo-Garcia, Joshi, Ruskin, Walters, Sofer, et al., 2021.

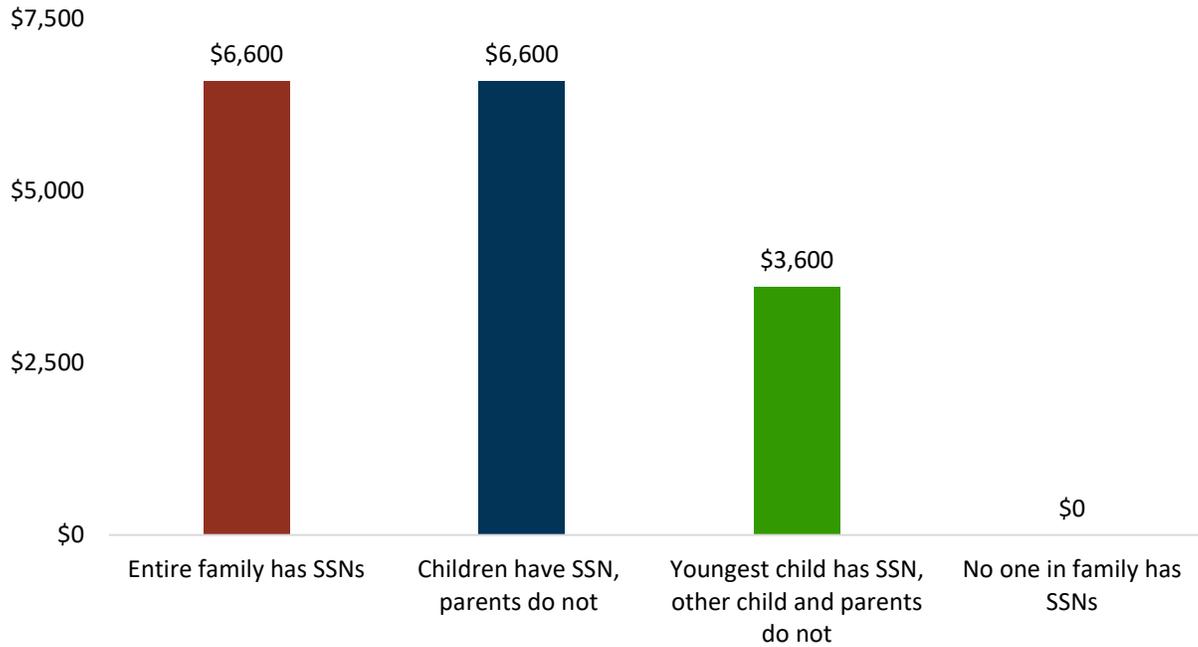
Note: Qualified immigrant children are assumed to have a Social Security Number. This figure shows the upper bounds of what a family might get if they actually enroll in/access programs for which they are eligible. In reality, families refund amount, if any, will depend on their tax liability and many families do not enroll due to administrative burden, fear of public charge, and chilling effects of the five-year bar.

For the Child Tax Credit (CTC), a family of four where all members have Social Security Numbers, *or* a family where just the children have Social Security Numbers, can receive up to \$6,600. In mixed status families, where one child has a Social Security Number and the other does not, only the child with a Social Security Number receives a credit. However, a family with two children without Social Security Numbers cannot receive the Child Tax Credit at all. This exclusion was created in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2018.

Previously, all eligible children could receive the Child Tax Credit, regardless of what type of tax identification number they had. This exclusion means that parents lose out on thousands of dollars to invest in their children.

SNAP benefits for immigrant families also may be hundreds of dollars lower because benefits are prorated—calculated based on the number of eligible members of the family, which excludes immigrants who have had qualifying status for less than five years and undocumented immigrants (Walters et al., 2021). Accordingly, as shown in Figure 3, an all-citizen family of four would receive \$569 as their monthly SNAP benefit. In contrast, a family with two lawful permanent resident parents who have not had five years of qualifying status would receive a reduced benefit of \$459 due to proration. If the parents are undocumented, the benefit would be even lower, at \$193. Children who are undocumented immigrants are ineligible for SNAP benefits. These exclusions can be detrimental to health outcomes: a growing number of causal studies of more inclusive SNAP policies (e.g., states that don’t implement federal restrictions) find beneficial effects for the health of U.S. citizen children in mixed status families and reduced physician visits for low-income immigrant adults (East, 2018; Hoynes et al., 2016).

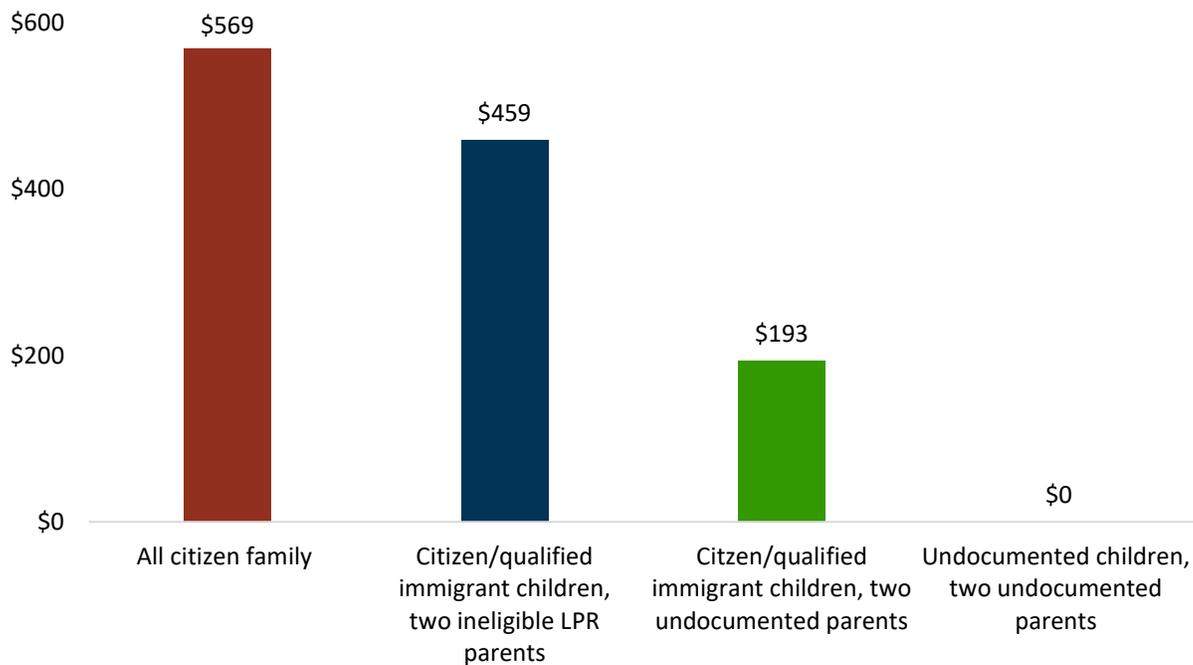
Figure 2. Child Tax Credit for Two-Parent, Two-Child Families (Ages 4 and 8) with Incomes at \$25,000, 2021



Source: Authors adaptation of Acevedo-Garcia, Joshi, Ruskin, Walters, Sofer, et al., 2021

Note: These Child Tax Credit Simulations are based on the temporary expansion of the program under the American Rescue Plan Act. This figure shows the upper bounds of what a family might get if they actually enroll in/access programs for which they are eligible. In reality, families refund amount, if any, will depend on their tax liability and many families don't enroll due to administrative burden, fear of public charge, and chilling effects of the five-year bar.

Figure 3. Monthly SNAP Benefit for Two-Parent, Two-Child Families with Incomes at \$25,000, 2021



Source: Walters et al., 2021

Note: Qualified immigrant children are not subject to the five-year bar for the SNAP program.

The research evidence furthermore suggests that children in immigrant families face significant access barriers related not only to program eligibility but also to other factors such as administrative burden, language, and fear of immigration enforcement (Acevedo-Garcia, Joshi, Ruskin, Walters, & Sofer, 2021). Across federal safety net programs such as the EITC, child care subsidies and SNAP, [*eligible immigrant families have lower take-up rates compared to families of U.S. citizens*](#) (Acevedo-Garcia, Joshi, Ruskin, Walters, Sofer, et al., 2021). This inequity has serious negative implications for children in immigrant families, as several rigorous studies find that these social programs are effective both in reducing child poverty and in improving parent and child outcomes (National Academies of Sciences, 2019).

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE CHILD POVERTY EQUITABLY

MAKE THE CHILD TAX CREDIT PERMANENTLY REFUNDABLE WITHOUT A MINIMUM INCOME LIMIT

Although almost 90% of children qualify for at least a partial Child Tax Credit, there are striking inequities in eligibility by income and race/ethnicity (IRS, 2021). Prior to the American Rescue Plan Act, if the Child Tax Credit was larger than what the taxpayer owed, up to \$1,400 of the \$2,000 credit was paid as a tax refund. But, to receive this refund, children’s families needed to earn at least \$2,500. Children in families with no or very little earnings were ineligible for the Child Tax Credit or received only a partial credit. Therefore, prior to the expanded Child Tax Credit, families in the lowest income quartile received on average \$1,600 less from the child tax credit (refundable and nonrefundable) than middle-income families (Tax Policy Center, 2021). This refundability exclusion has had negative effects on Black and Hispanic families who are more likely to live in deep poverty (National Academies of Sciences, 2019). A recent study found that, prior to the expanded Child Tax Credit, only half of Black and Hispanic children were eligible for the full Child Tax Credit, compared to about three-quarters of White and Asian children (Goldin & Michelmore, 2021).

The American Rescue Plan Act addressed this inequity by making the Child Tax Credit fully refundable without a minimum income limit, thus making the Child Tax Credit accessible to some the poorest children and making benefit amounts more equitable for low- and middle-income families. [*Making the Child Tax Credit permanent and fully refundable and making eligible children whose parents have no or very little income are critical steps for reducing child poverty equitably.*](#)

RESTORE ELIGIBILITY FOR THE CHILD TAX CREDIT TO CHILDREN WITHOUT SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2018 made over one million children ineligible for the Child Tax Credit, most of them Hispanic immigrant children, by requiring children to have a Social Security Number to qualify. Previously, all children—whether they used a Social Security Number or an Individual Tax Identification Number for tax purposes—were eligible for the Child Tax Credit. This eligibility requirement means that parents of children without Social Security Numbers have thousands of dollars less in resources to invest in their children—both their noncitizen children and their U.S. citizen or other lawfully present siblings (see Figure 1).

Restoring eligibility to all non-citizens is a racial/ethnic equity issue. While requiring children to have a Social Security Number appears race-neutral, it disproportionately harms Hispanic children in immigrant families because they are less likely to have a Social Security Number or a sibling without a Social Security Number. [*Restoring eligibility for children without Social Security Numbers is essential for making the reconciliation package equitable by race/ethnicity and family immigration status.*](#)

ALLOW ALL LAWFULLY PRESENT IMMIGRANTS TO ACCESS FEDERAL PROGRAMS WITHOUT DISCRIMINATORY WAITING PERIODS

While many Americans may know that access to health care and the social safety net is restricted for undocumented immigrants, they are often unaware that it is also restricted for legal immigrants and their families. In 1996, welfare reform created the five-year bar to restrict legal immigrants' access to safety-net programs. With few exceptions, the five-year bar requires legal immigrants to have a qualifying status for five years before they can receive benefits such as SNAP, Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, even if they are otherwise eligible. While the five-year bar is race-neutral on its face, it was motivated by racist rhetoric and policy analysis that accused Hispanic immigrants of taking advantage of public benefits and even committing fraud (Minoff et al., 2021). In practice, it disproportionately harms Hispanic families, who are more likely to be low-income immigrants than any other group.

Approximately 3.5 million children in poverty (36% of all children in poverty) live in mixed-status immigrant families, and because of the five-year bar, many of these children are deprived of important benefits (Acevedo-Garcia, Joshi, Ruskin, Walters, & Sofer, 2021). For instance, citizen children with legal immigrant parents still under the five-year bar cannot receive subsidized child care funded by Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, even if they are otherwise eligible (Matthews, 2017). In the case of SNAP, the five-year bar reduces the amount of SNAP benefits for children in immigrant families, including citizen children (Walters et al., 2021).

The five-year bar disproportionately harms Hispanic immigrant families by denying them needed benefits, lowering benefit levels, and increasing administrative burden and reluctance to use social programs even when families qualify. This institutional racism denies children in immigrant families, most of whom are U.S. citizens and Hispanic, the full benefit of the safety net. [Eliminating the five-year bar \(as proposed, for example, in the LIFT the Bar Act\) would be a significant step toward reducing child poverty equitably for Hispanic children in immigrant families.](#)

MODEL IMMIGRANT EITC ELIGIBILITY AFTER COVID-19 PANDEMIC ECONOMIC IMPACT PAYMENTS

Over 1.6 million U.S. citizen children in poverty (approximately 17% of all children in poverty) are denied the Earned Income Tax Credit because one or both parents pay taxes with an Individual Tax Identification Number, instead of a Social Security Number (Acevedo-Garcia, Joshi, Ruskin, Walters, Sofer, et al., 2021). However, these are precisely the children who could benefit the most from the EITC. Poverty rates for citizen children in families with undocumented members is three times higher (31.5%) than for children in households where all members are citizens (10.2%) (National Academies of Sciences, 2019).

EITC eligibility could instead follow the precedent set by the 2021 pandemic Economic Impact Payments, which went to U.S. citizens regardless of whether a family member had a Social Security Number. [At a minimum, making families with otherwise qualified children with Social Security Numbers eligible for the EITC—regardless of the form of identification their parent uses to file taxes—would reduce child poverty for children in immigrant families, most of whom are Hispanic and U.S. citizens.](#)

EQUALIZE BENEFIT LEVELS IN THE SNAP PROGRAM BY ELIMINATING THE PRORATION OF BENEFITS BASED ON IMMIGRATION STATUS OF THE FAMILY

SNAP is one of the most powerful tools we have to reduce food insecurity and child poverty (National Academies of Sciences, 2019). The Biden administration recently announced the largest permanent increase in SNAP benefits in the program's history (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2021), but if left unchanged, existing immigrant eligibility rules would result in millions of children living

in immigrant families (most of whom are Hispanic) benefiting less from this increase. A few changes to SNAP eligibility requirements can go a long way to ensuring that we invest equitably in all our children.

Unlike many other safety net programs, eligibility for SNAP is determined at the child level. Provided they meet income eligibility, U.S. citizen children and lawfully present immigrant children are eligible regardless of the immigration status of other household members (Acevedo-Garcia, Joshi, Ruskin, Walters, & Sofer, 2021). However, these children's benefits may be hundreds of dollars lower than those of children in all-citizen families, because benefits are calculated based on the number of eligible members in the family. Proration excludes ineligible adults such as Legal Permanent Residents who have had qualified status for less than five years (five-year bar) and undocumented immigrants (Acevedo-Garcia, Joshi, Ruskin, Walters, & Sofer, 2021). As a result, an all-citizen family of four receives \$569 as their monthly SNAP benefit, but a family with the same income with two Legal Permanent Resident parents who have not met the five-year qualifying period receives a reduced benefit of \$459 (see Figure 3). If the parents are undocumented, the benefit is even lower at \$193. If children are also undocumented, the family is ineligible for SNAP benefits.

To make SNAP benefits more equitable, policymakers have a spectrum of policy options.

- *The government could eliminate the proration of SNAP benefits based on immigrant eligibility. This rule punishes eligible children for living in a household with ineligible immigrants.*
- *The government could also eliminate the five-year bar for qualified immigrant adults, which limits access not only to SNAP but also to other safety net programs. The five-year bar exacerbates financial hardship for immigrant families, including citizen children.*
- *The most inclusive policy option would be to restore immigrant SNAP eligibility to the rules when the program was first introduced in the 1960s: benefits were available to all noncitizens regardless of immigration status.*

ELIMINATE THE PUBLIC CHARGE RULE TO INCREASE ACCESS TO TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES AND SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME

Immigrants seeking legal permanent residence must show they are not likely to become a “public charge,” or to become primarily dependent on government benefits for a prolonged period of time. A public charge label may hurt their ability to become a permanent resident and ultimately a U.S. citizen. The research evidence suggests that confusion and fear associated with being deemed a public charge deters even eligible immigrants from participating in safety-net programs (Bernstein et al., 2020). In recent years, federal action on the public charge rule exacerbated its deterrence effect. Leaked documents in 2017 and 2018 showed the administration's plan to expand public charge definitions to include use of not only cash programs, but also some in-kind public programs, education provisions and tax credits; the final rule implemented in 2019 was not so expansive but did include cash programs, SNAP and Medicaid. Although this rule change faced immediate injunctions in the courts and was withdrawn in March 2021, perceptions surrounding it have further decreased eligible immigrants' enrollment in public programs (Bernstein et al., 2020).

At a minimum, the government can improve communication to assure immigrant families that the public charge rule does not apply to SNAP and Medicaid. *Eliminating the public charge rule for cash programs would increase access to both programs subject to the rule, e.g., Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Supplemental Security Income, and programs not subject to the rule such as SNAP, which immigrants avoid due to confusion and fear that the rule creates.*

DURING HEALTH AND ECONOMIC CRISES, PROVIDE CASH ASSISTANCE TO ALL CHILDREN WITH SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS

In a national crisis, the government must provide cash assistance (e.g. economic impact payments) to all children with Social Security Numbers, even if their parent or parents file taxes with an Individual Tax Identification Number. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) provided economic impact payments of up to \$1,200 per adult for eligible individuals and \$500 per qualifying child under age 17. But 3.7 million U.S. citizen or legal-immigrant children, as well as 1.4 million U.S. citizen or legal-immigrant spouses, were excluded from these first stimulus payments because they lived in immigrant families where at least one parent or spouse did not have a Social Security Number (Gelatt et al., 2021). Although this population became eligible under the December 2020 relief packet, the change came nine months into the pandemic, when millions of children in immigrant families had already suffered economic hardship. [At a minimum, Congress could ensure that all children with Social Security Numbers receive cash assistance during a national crisis.](#)

USE ROBUST OUTREACH AND IMPLEMENTATION TO ELIMINATE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN CREATED BY COMPLEX ELIGIBILITY RULES, CHILLING EFFECTS FROM THE PUBLIC CHARGE RULE, AND LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Existing social programs and future expansions need to be accompanied by robust outreach and implementation to reduce the administrative burden created by complex eligibility rules, chilling effects from the public charge rule, and language barriers. Thoughtful outreach and implementation should include equity considerations, or recognition that accessibility barriers may be higher for some groups such as immigrant families. Even a generous expansion like the 2021 changes to the Child Tax Credit is not helpful for some eligible families if they are not aware of it, they do not know they are eligible, or they do not know how to apply. For example, there is preliminary evidence that Hispanic take up of the Child Tax Credit is lower than that of other groups (CLASP, 2021), which is possibly due to confusion about eligibility and language barriers, as information in Spanish about the credit and applications are not widely available (Cox et al., 2021). [Thoughtful and robust outreach around and implementation of social programs can ensure that immigrant families receive the full benefits to which they are entitled.](#)

CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought significant threats to families' health and economic security. Through unprecedented investments in children, the federal government is estimated to have cut child poverty in half for 2021. But, this reduction is not permanent and has not reached all groups equitably. Due to restricted eligibility and other access barriers that hurt immigrant families, children in immigrant families and especially Hispanic children, who have some of the highest poverty rates, do not benefit as much from anti-poverty programs as other children. Without addressing exclusions that target immigrant families, the federal government will continue harming millions of U.S. citizen children in immigrant families. And without further action, federal spending on children will be back at pre-pandemic levels by 2024 and child poverty will once again rise.

Our nation's leaders have a historic opportunity to cut child poverty. The National Academy of Sciences Committee identified two policy and program packages that have the potential to cut child poverty and deep child poverty by half within ten years. The expanded Child Tax Credit is estimated to reduce child poverty by 40% in a typical year. The policy options outlined in this brief would help reduce child poverty even further, both overall and for children in immigrant families, and restore equity to the social safety net by race/ethnicity and nativity. By lifting millions of children out of poverty and doing so equitably, these policy options would make a sustained investment in our nation's economic future and social contract.

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APPENDIX. POLICIES AND PROGRAMS SIMULATED IN A ROADMAP TO REDUCING POVERTY

To guide its selection process, the Committee developed a set of criteria including: 1) the strength of the research and evaluation evidence; 2) likely reductions in the number of poor children; 3) the extent of child poverty reduction achievable within the subgroups with the highest child poverty rates; 4) cost; and 5) positive impacts on work, marriage, opportunity and social inclusion. The committee examined ten program and policy options: four were tied to work, three modified existing safety net programs, two came from other countries, and the final one modified existing eligibility rules relating to immigrants. It then formulated two variations for each of the 10 options, yielding 20 scenarios in all.

Program and policy options tied to work:

- Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC);
- Expand child care subsidies;
- Raise the federal minimum wage; and
- Implement a promising training and employment program called WorkAdvance nationwide.

Modifications to existing safety net programs:

- Expand the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program;
- Expand the Housing Choice Voucher Program; and
- Expand the Supplemental Security Income program.

Options used in other countries:

- Introduce a universal child allowance (which, in the U.S. context, can also be thought of as an extension of the federal child tax credit delivered monthly instead of once a year); and
- Introduce a child support assurance program that sets guaranteed minimum child support amounts per child per month.

Modifications to existing provisions relating to immigrants:

- Increase immigrants' access to safety net programs.

Of the two packages that achieved the goal of reducing child poverty in half over ten years, one package combined existing work-based and income support enhancements. The means-tested supports and work poverty reduction package would:

- increase EITC payments along the phase-in and flat portion of the EITC schedule;
- convert the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) to a fully refundable tax credit and concentrate benefits on families with the lowest incomes and with children under age five;
- increase SNAP benefits by 35% and increase benefits for older children, as well as providing Electronic Benefit Transfers for children through the summer; and
- increase the number of housing vouchers directed to families with children so that 70% of eligible families who are not current receiving subsidized housing would use them.

The committee estimated that this package of programs would cost \$90.7 billion per year and would achieve 50% reductions in both poverty and deep poverty for children. Since these programs are already operating, changes could be implemented rapidly and begin to reduce child poverty rates soon after implementation.

The other package that met the goal of 50% reduction in child poverty combined work incentives, economic security and social inclusion with some existing programs plus two new programs. The universal supports and work poverty-reduction package would:

- increase EITC payments by 40% across the entire schedule, keeping the current phase out range;
- convert the CDCTC to a fully refundable tax credit and concentrate its benefits on families with the lowest incomes and with children under age five;
- raise the current \$7.25 per hour federal minimum wage to \$10.25 and index it to inflation after it is implemented;
- restore program eligibility for nonqualified legal immigrants in the SNAP, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Medicaid, SSI, and other means-tested programs; and
- create a child allowance that pays a monthly benefit of \$225 per month (\$2,700 per year) per child to the families of all children under age 17.

This package combined work supports with universal supports that promote equity and social inclusion. The committee estimated that this package would cost \$111.6 billion per year.