

# Children's Defense Fund

## Children's Rights

<https://www.childrensdefense.org/blog/access-to-benefits-are-essential-for-immigrant-children-to-thrive/>

## Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Twenty-five years ago, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) scratched an entitlement to cash assistance, imposed time limits on public assistance, mandated work requirements, and gave states broad discretion in administering cash assistance and a myriad of other supports for families with children.

In addition to establishing Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the 1996 law [introduced another policy sea change](#): it restricted lawfully residing immigrants access to cash assistance as well as to other critical, life-saving benefits like food stamps and health insurance. PRWORA was animated by [racist notions that only some families deserve help and support](#), and the anti-immigrant provisions of the law were also fueled by the [wrongly-held belief](#) that immigrant families were drawn to the U.S. for the promise of free cash.

The truth is immigrant children and families like all children and families deserve public benefits and income supports that promote their healthy development and well-being. Yet the laws' cruel restrictions had ripple effects, chilled access to benefits even when immigrant families were eligible, and arguably paved the path for the Trump administration's exclusionary policies and [anti-immigrant, fear-fueling rhetoric](#).

Twenty-five years later, [1 in 4 children in the U.S. are children of immigrants](#). Their access to critical public benefits is [inextricably linked to their parents'](#) immigration status and how their parents are treated in U.S. policy.

It's time to lift the bar on immigrant restrictions to public benefits. For children and this nation to thrive, lawmakers must commit to policies that promote all children's well-being and center children of immigrants.

A gift today helps children get the help they need.

The Children's Defense Fund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Our Federal Tax ID number is 52-0895622.

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Fight for children, stay informed and know when to act.