

8/15/2025

To Whom It May Concern:

I write in support of PolicyEngine’s application for a Public Benefit Innovation Fund grant. I am pleased to collaborate with PolicyEngine on their Policy Library project, an initiative to create a permanently archived collection of safety net policy documents.

The lack of a comprehensive and open-source documentation of key safety net policy and program rules hinders both research and service delivery. Identifying and encoding these program parameters, however, is massive undertaking. These rules vary widely across time and place, are recorded in various sources, and are sometimes not publicly available. The few research teams who have made the investment to collect this information have understandably make their resulting directories proprietary. The cost to access them can be prohibitive, hindering research and often precluding frontline organizations from using them. Through the Policy Library, PolicyEngine promises a definitive solution to this problem.

I am currently partnering with PolicyEngine to measure how enrollment in safety net programs such SNAP, Medicaid, TANF, WIC, SSI, and housing assistance, and the structure of these programs plus tax policies, affects recipients’ work incentives. Our project leverages unique access to restricted use data on household income and program enrollment. We will use PolicyEngine’s microsimulation tool to compute households’ benefit-inclusive effective marginal tax rates. This project is possible thanks to PolicyEngine’s ongoing work to identify and encode detailed rules for these programs over time and across many jurisdictions. This project also demonstrates our investment in comprehensive policy modeling infrastructure. As part of our collaboration, my team will:

- Contribute policy documents from our research archives to help seed the library
- Test the platform for academic use cases, particularly multi-program interaction analysis
- Provide feedback to ensure the library serves researchers studying participation gaps and benefit cliffs

The Policy Library addresses critical challenges our researchers face: policy documents frequently disappear from government websites, making it impossible to conduct longitudinal analysis or verify historical eligibility rules. Beyond our immediate needs for rules encoding, permanent access to these documents will enable new research approaches: using LLMs with authoritative policy context to analyze participation gaps, documenting state-level implementation differences, studying how policies evolve in response to economic conditions, and preserving the full context of policy intent through implementation guidance. The library promises to enhance our ability to study safety net programs, questions around take-up and access, their long-term benefits to recipients, and more.

I support this important infrastructure project and look forward to collaborating with the team at PolicyEngine on its development.

Sincerely,

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