To eliminate asset limits employed by certain Federally-funded means-tested public assistance programs, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. Coons (for himself, Mr. Brown, Mr. Booker, Mr. Durbin, Mr. Van Hollen, Ms. Harris, Mr. Leahy, Mr. Sanders, Mr. Kaine, and Mr. Casey) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

A BILL

To eliminate asset limits employed by certain Federally-funded means-tested public assistance programs, and for other purposes.

1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
3 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.
4 (a) Short Title.—This Act may be cited as the
5 “Allowing Steady Savings by Eliminating Tests Act” or
6 the “ASSET Act”.
7 (b) Table of Contents.—The table of contents for
8 this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
Sec. 2. Findings; Sense of Congress.
Sec. 3. States prohibited from imposing asset limits on programs funded by Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) grants.
Sec. 4. Eliminating asset limits in the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP).
Sec. 5. Eliminating asset limit in Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).
Sec. 6. Updating and indexing the resource limit for supplemental security income (SSI).
Sec. 7. Effective date.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS; SENSE OF CONGRESS.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds as follows:

(1) Many means-tested public assistance programs limit eligibility for benefits on the basis of the assets of a family, such as savings and other resources. Such asset limits impede the ability of needy families to improve their financial circumstances and thereby reduce their dependence on public assistance programs.

(2) Restricting eligibility for public assistance programs on the basis of assets negatively affects the financial security of low-income families. For example, to avoid losing eligibility for public assistance under an asset limit, a family may avoid mainstream financial services such as bank accounts, or refrain from acquiring and saving resources that would enable the family to weather an unanticipated expense.

(3) The risk that people who don’t need public assistance will take advantage of public assistance programs in the absence of asset limits is low, in
part because most applicants for public assistance have very few assets, must meet strict work requirements, and usually may only participate in a program for a limited time.

(4) Evidence from States that have eliminated asset limits suggests that the administrative cost savings associated with the elimination of asset limits outweigh any increases in payments made to beneficiaries.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that certain Federally-funded means-tested public assistance programs should not utilize asset limits to restrict eligibility for assistance under those programs.

SEC. 3. STATES PROHIBITED FROM IMPOSING ASSET LIMITS ON PROGRAMS FUNDED BY TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF) GRANTS.

(a) No State Limitation on Allowable Financial Resources.—Section 408(a) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 608(a)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(13) No asset or resource limit.—A State to which a grant is made under section 403 shall not apply any asset or resource limit for eligibility of a
family for any benefit, assistance, or service provided under the State program funded under this part.”.

(b) Conforming Amendments.—Section 408(f) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 608(f)) is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking “or resources”; and

(2) in paragraph (1)—

(A) in the paragraph header, by striking “AND RESOURCES”;

(B) by striking subparagraph (B);

(C) by redesignating subparagraph (C) as subparagraph (B); and

(D) in subparagraph (B) (as so redesignated), by striking “and resources” each place it appears.

(e) Delay Permitted if State Legislation Required.—

(1) In General.—In the case of a State to which a grant is made under section 403 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 603) that the Secretary of Health and Human Services determines requires State legislation (other than legislation appropriating funds) to meet the requirements of paragraph (13) of section 408(a) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 608(a)), such State shall not be regarded as failing
to comply with the requirements of such paragraph before the first day of the first calendar quarter that begins after the close of the first regular session of the State legislature that begins after the date of enactment of this Act.

(2) 2-YEAR LEGISLATIVE SESSION.—For purposes of paragraph (1), in the case of a State that has a 2-year legislative session, each year of the session shall be considered to be a separate regular session of the State legislature.

SEC. 4. ELIMINATING ASSET LIMITS IN THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP).

(a) IN GENERAL.—

(1) ELIGIBLE HOUSEHOLDS.—Section 5 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2014) is amended—

(A) in subsection (a), in the first sentence, by striking “and other financial resources”;  
(B) by striking subsections (g) and (j);  
(C) by redesignating subsections (h), (i), (k), (l), (m), and (n) as subsections (g), (h), (i), (j), (k), and (l), respectively; and  
(D) in subsection (h) (as so redesignated)—
(i) in paragraph (1), by striking “and resources” each place it appears; and

(ii) in paragraph (2)—

(I) by striking subparagraph (B);

and

(II) by redesignating subparagraphs (C) through (E) as subparagraphs (B) through (D), respectively.

(2) Eligibility disqualifications.—Section 6 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015) is amended—

(A) by striking subsection (h); and

(B) by redesignating subsections (i) through (s) as subsections (h) through (r), respectively.

(3) Research, demonstration, and evaluations.—Section 17 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2026) is amended—

(A) by striking subsections (h) and (i); and

(B) by redesignating subsections (j) through (n) as subsections (h) through (l), respectively.

(b) Conforming amendments.—

(1) Section 5 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2014) is amended—
(A) in subsection (a), in the second sentence, by striking “and (r)” and inserting “and (q)”; and
(B) in subsection (d)—
   (i) in paragraph (1), by striking “subsection (k)” and inserting “subsection (i)”;
   and
   (ii) in paragraph (10), by striking “subsection (k) of this section” and inserting “subsection (i)”.

(2) Section 6 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015) is amended—
(A) in subsection (d)(4), by striking “subsection (o)” each place it appears and inserting “subsection (n)”;
(B) in subsection (f), in the third sentence, by striking “and financial resources”;
(C) in subsection (q) (as redesignated by subsection (a)(2)(B)), in paragraph (1)(B), by striking “subsection (k)” and inserting “subsection (j)”;
(D) in subsection (r) (as redesignated by subsection (a)(2)(B)), in paragraph (2)—
   (i) by striking “allowable financial resources and”; and
(ii) by striking “(g), (i), (k), (l), (m), and (n)” and inserting “(h), (i), (j), (k), and (l)”.

(3) Section 7(i)(1) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2016(i)(1)) is amended by striking “section 6(o)(2) of this Act” and inserting “section 6(n)(2)”.

(4) Section 11(e)(22) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2020(e)(22)) is amended by striking “section 6(i)” and inserting “section 6(h)”.

(5) Section 16 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2025) is amended—

(A) in subsection (a)(9), by striking “section 17(n)” and inserting “section 17(l)”; and

(B) in subsection (h)—

(i) in paragraph (1)—

(I) in subparagraph (B)(ii), by striking “section 6(o)” and inserting “section 6(n)”;

(II) in subparagraph (E)—

(aa) by striking “section 6(o)(3)” each place it appears and inserting “section 6(n)(3)”;

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(bb) by striking “section 6(o)(2)” each place it appears and inserting “section 6(n)(2)”; and

(cc) in clause (ii)—

(AA) in subclause (III), by striking “section 6(o)(4)” and inserting “section 6(n)(4)”; and

(BB) in subclause (IV), by striking “section 6(o)(6)” and inserting “section 6(n)(6)”; and

(III) in subparagraph (F)(ii)(III)(ee)(AA), by striking “section 6(o)” and inserting “section 6(n)”;

(ii) in paragraph (5)(C)(iv)(I), by striking “section 6(o)(2)” and inserting “section 6(n)(2)”.

(6) Section 17 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2026) is amended—

(A) in subsection (k) (as redesignated by subsection (a)(3)(B))—
(i) by striking “subsections (l) through (n)” each place it appears and inserting “subsections (k) through (m)”; and

(ii) in paragraph (2)(E), by striking “section 6(l)(2)” and inserting “section 6(k)(2)”;

(B) in subsection (l) (as redesignated by subsection (a)(3)(B)), in paragraph (4)(A)(i)(II), by striking “and financial resources (as described in section 5(g))”.

(7) Section 18(g)(2) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2027(g)(2)) is amended by striking “section 5(h)” and inserting “section 5(g)”.


(9) Section 121(b)(2)(B)(iv) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C. 3151(b)(2)(B)(iv)) is amended by striking “section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))” and inserting “section 6(n) of the
Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(n))”.

(10) Section 454 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 654) is amended—


(B) in paragraph (6)(B)(i), by striking “subsection (l) or (m) of section 6 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008” and inserting “subsection (k) or (l) of section 6 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015)”;


(e) Delay permitted if State legislation required.—

(1) In general.—In the case of a State plan under section 11 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2020) that the Secretary of Agriculture determines requires State legislation (other
than legislation appropriating funds) in order for the
plan to meet the additional requirements imposed by
the amendments made by this section, the State
plan shall not be regarded as failing to comply with
the requirements of section 11 of the Food and Nu-
trition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2020) solely on the
basis of the failure of the plan to meet those addi-
tional requirements before the first day of the first
calendar quarter that begins after the close of the
first regular session of the State legislature that be-
gins after the date of enactment of this Act.

(2) LEGISLATIVE SESSION.—For purposes of
paragraph (1), in the case of a State that has a 2-
year legislative session, each year of the session shall
be considered a separate regular session of the State
legislature.

SEC. 5. ELIMINATING ASSET LIMIT IN LOW INCOME HOME
ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIHEAP).

(a) ELIMINATION OF LIMITATIONS ON ALLOWABLE
FINANCIAL RESOURCES.—Section 2605(b)(2) of the Low-
8624(b)(2)) is amended, in the matter following subpara-
graph (B), by inserting “, and agrees that a State may
not exclude a household from eligibility in a fiscal year
solely or partially on the basis of the assets of 1 or more members of the household” before the semicolon.

(b) **Delay Permitted if State Legislation Required.**—

(1) **In General.**—In the case of a State plan under section 2605 of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 (42 U.S.C. 8624) that the Secretary of Health and Human Services determines requires State legislation (other than legislation appropriating funds) in order for the plan to meet the additional requirements imposed by the amendment made by this section, the State plan shall not be regarded as failing to comply with the requirements of such section 2605 solely on the basis of the failure of the plan to meet those additional requirements before the first day of the first calendar quarter that begins after the close of the first regular session of the State legislature that begins after the date of enactment of this Act.

(2) **2-Year Legislative Session.**—For purposes of paragraph (1), in the case of a State that has a 2-year legislative session, each year of the session shall be considered to be a separate regular session of the State legislature.
SEC. 6. UPDATING AND INDEXING THE RESOURCE LIMIT FOR SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI).

(a) In General.—

(1) Update in resource limit for individuals and couples.—Section 1611(a)(3) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1382(a)(3)) is amended—

(A) in subparagraph (A), by striking "$2,250" and all that follows through the end of the subparagraph and inserting "$20,000 in calendar year 2020, and shall be increased as described in section 1617(d) for each subsequent calendar year."; and

(B) in subparagraph (B), by striking "$1,500" and all that follows through the end of the subparagraph and inserting "$10,000 in calendar year 2020, and shall be increased as described in section 1617(d) for each subsequent calendar year.".

(2) Inflation adjustment.—Section 1617 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1382f) is amended—

(A) in the section heading, by inserting "; INFLATION ADJUSTMENT" after "BENEFITS";

and

(B) by adding at the end the following:
“(d) In the case of any calendar year after 2020, each
of the amounts specified in sections 1611(a)(3) shall be
increased by multiplying each such amount by the quotient
(not less than 1) obtained by dividing—

“(1) the average of the Consumer Price Index
for Elderly Consumers (CPI–E, as published by the
Bureau of Labor Statistics of the Department of
Labor) for the 12-month period ending with Sep-
tember of the preceding calendar year, by

“(2) such average for the 12-month period end-
ing with September 2019.”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
this section shall take effect on January 1, 2020.

SEC. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE.

Except as otherwise provided, the amendments made
by this Act shall apply to benefits for calendar months
beginning on or after the date that is 30 days after the
date of enactment of this Act.