

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4472

To eliminate the requirement that, to be eligible for foster care maintenance payments, a child would have been eligible for aid under the former program of Aid to Families with Dependent Children at the time of removal from the home.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 24, 2019

Mr. LEWIS introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means

A BILL

To eliminate the requirement that, to be eligible for foster care maintenance payments, a child would have been eligible for aid under the former program of Aid to Families with Dependent Children at the time of removal from the home.

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.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Look-back Elimination
5 Act of 2019”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds as follows:

1 (1) As part of President Franklin Delano Roo-
2 sevelt’s New Deal, the Social Security Act of 1935
3 included the creation of the Aid to Dependent Chil-
4 dren program as a way to provide Federal support
5 to poor children. Over time, this program became
6 the Aid to Families with Dependent Children
7 (AFDC) program and provided assistance to strug-
8 gling families for over 60 years.

9 (2) Part E of title IV of the Social Security Act
10 provides primary Federal funding for child welfare
11 services. Under that part, the Federal Government
12 pays a portion of the cost of providing Federal foster
13 care and adoption assistance benefits for eligible
14 children.

15 (3) In 1996, when Congress replaced the AFDC
16 program with the Temporary Assistance for Needy
17 Families (TANF) program, Congress also fixed the
18 income eligibility requirement for Federal foster care
19 and adoption assistance benefits at a level based on
20 the income thresholds established by the States
21 under their former AFDC programs. This income
22 eligibility requirement is now commonly referred to
23 as the “AFDC look-back standard”.

24 (4) At that time, many States had established
25 very strict household income requirements in order

1 for children to be eligible for AFDC benefits. As a
2 result of this very strict requirement, many children
3 in the Federal foster care and adoption assistance
4 programs are ineligible to receive a wide range of
5 Federal benefits, services, and activities. For exam-
6 ple, this outdated, restrictive standard prevents the
7 State of Georgia from providing assistance to more
8 than half of the children in the child welfare system.

9 (5) Forced to adhere to a stagnant standard,
10 States increasingly struggle to administer Federal
11 foster care and adoption assistance programs and
12 provide services to those children most in need. As
13 inflation increases, fewer children are eligible to re-
14 ceive Federal benefits, and States struggle to pro-
15 vide services from other, limited local and State re-
16 sources.

17 (6) Although the AFDC look-back standard still
18 applies to the Federal foster care program, the Fos-
19 tering Connections to Success and Increasing Adop-
20 tions Act of 2008 completely eliminated the AFDC
21 look-back standard in the Federal adoption assist-
22 ance program in 2018.

1 **SEC. 3. ELIMINATION OF THE AFDC ELIGIBILITY REQUIRE-**
2 **MENT IN THE FOSTER CARE MAINTENANCE**
3 **PAYMENTS PROGRAM.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 472(a) of the Social Secu-
5 rity Act (42 U.S.C. 672(a)) is amended—

6 (1) in paragraph (1), by striking “specified”
7 and all that follows and inserting “or caretaker into
8 foster care if the removal and foster care placement
9 met, and continues to meet, the requirements of
10 paragraph (2).”; and

11 (2) by striking paragraphs (3) and (4).

12 (b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 470 of
13 such Act (42 U.S.C. 670) is amended by striking “who
14 otherwise would have been eligible for assistance under the
15 State’s plan approved under part A (as such plan was in
16 effect on June 1, 1995)”.

17 **SEC. 4. SENSE OF THE CONGRESS.**

18 It is the sense of the Congress that—

19 (1) the AFDC eligibility requirement for Fed-
20 eral foster care and adoption assistance benefits
21 should be eliminated and replaced with income eligi-
22 bility standards that are based on modern, balanced
23 criteria that treat all children equally; and

24 (2) the Secretary of Health and Human Serv-
25 ices should collaborate with Members of Congress

- 1 and child welfare advocates in developing any modi-
- 2 fied standards.

