

**“STATE FLEX”:
OFFERING STATES OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE
A BROAD RANGE OF PROGRAMS**

The Republican bill allows States to tailor various programs serving low-income families to State and local needs.

1. The Republican bill provides for “State flex” authority to coordinate TANF, Workforce Investment Act, Food Stamps, Housing, Child Care, and other programs to better serve recipients.
2. Waivers must integrate 2 or more programs with the goal of:
 - supporting working individuals and families;
 - helping families escape welfare dependency;
 - promoting child well-being; and
 - helping parents build stronger families.
3. Waivers are designed to encourage States to try innovative approaches to strengthen service systems and provide more coordinated and effective service delivery.

“State Flex” authority will NOT allow States to undermine program integrity or increase entitlement spending.

1. The Republican bill allows any Cabinet agency with authority over a program that would be affected by a demonstration project to “veto” the proposal if the Secretary deems it will not achieve the program’s goals or purposes.
2. “State Flex” applications must be submitted jointly by affected State and/or Substate entities. Therefore, a State could not submit a waiver affecting a local program it does not have authority over without the local program’s express approval and vice versa.
3. Secretaries must report to Congressional Committees within 90 days about “State Flex” applications and how they handled them.
4. The proposal requires evaluations and reports to test the effectiveness of the strategy, another protection against potential abuses.

5. All States submitting requests for waivers must prove cost neutrality, to the satisfaction of the agencies affected and the Office of Management and Budget, before a project can be approved.

The Republican bill will not affect important Civil Rights and other protections.

1. States may not apply to waive protections of Civil Rights or nondiscrimination laws, the purposes or goals of any program, the Fair Labor Standards Act, environmental protections, or health and safety requirements.
2. States are also prohibited from waiving the maintenance of effort requirements.

“State Flex” has the potential to dramatically improve other social service programs the way welfare waivers improved the former AFDC program.

1. Washington doesn't always know best. States have traditionally been laboratories of innovation and ought to be encouraged to apply the lessons learned from welfare reform to other programs serving similar populations.
2. States have long sought authority to align multiple programs serving similar or the same populations. This allows States to try individualized approaches, tailored to local needs.