

For the Congressional Record
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Introducing the Women's Option to Raise Kids (WORK) Act

MR. STARK: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce legislation that will recognize the hard work that all mothers engage in each day.

In the past week, presumptive Republican Presidential nominee Mitt Romney has said that he believes "all moms are working moms." I agree. Unfortunately, if you are a low-income mother, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program punishes you if you decide to stay home to care for your young child. Our laws should reflect the value of care giving work done by *all* mothers.

Current law does not count low-income stay-at-home parents who are raising young children as meeting the necessary Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) work requirement. Current law also bans states from counting these individuals toward that state's work participation rate, which can result in financial penalties if not met. This effectively bars low-income parents who choose to stay home to raise their young children from access to the financial support of TANF.

The WORK Act would recognize that raising children is, in fact, work. The legislation would amend current TANF law to provide states the option to maintain a safety net for poor parents. Low-income parents could receive job training or search for work, or they could raise their children until they are school-aged without fear of being pushed deeper into poverty. This is the same option that wealthy families enjoy.

I urge all of my colleagues to show that they understand the importance of all mothers and the care they provide by supporting the WORK Act.