



J. Kevin Stitt  
Office of the Governor  
State of Oklahoma

**FILED**

January 26, 2026  
Secretary of State  
State of Oklahoma

**EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT  
EXECUTIVE ORDER 2026-02**

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WHEREAS, it should never pay more to remain on government assistance than to engage in productive, income-producing work; and

WHEREAS, at their inception, federally-established welfare programs and expenditures were intended to operate as a temporary safety net that would assist Americans in hard times, not open-ended, permanent subsidies that enable individuals to refrain from work and self-sufficiency; and

WHEREAS, Oklahoma administers a variety of public assistance programs in coordination with the federal government, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Women, Infants and Children (WIC), among other programs, via a variety of state agencies, including the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, the Oklahoma Health Care Authority, the Oklahoma State Department of Health, the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, and other relevant state agencies; and

WHEREAS, over time, due to poor design and the federal government's failure to prioritize work and self-reliance, federally-established welfare programs have increased exponentially in cost, disincentivized work, and handcuffed states like Oklahoma who desire to administer the programs in more innovative ways that will move benefit recipients from welfare to work and self-sufficiency; and

WHEREAS, there is no better social welfare program than a job, which honors individual dignity, self-sufficiency, and economic mobility; and

WHEREAS, it is the policy of my administration that we measure compassion by the number of individuals who no longer need welfare assistance because they are working and have become self-reliant rather than the number of individuals who are added to the welfare rolls and thus dependent on government assistance; and

WHEREAS, the Trump administration has invited states to seek waivers from federal agencies to pursue innovative strategies in their administration of overly bureaucratic federal programs and has indicated willingness to permit maximum flexibility for states; and

WHEREAS, I have long advocated that Congress convert federal spending programs into block grants, whereby states would be empowered to create innovative solutions based on their own unique circumstances, save taxpayer dollars, and operate as fifty (50) "laboratories of democracy," as intended by the framers of the U.S. Constitution; and

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WHEREAS, the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Oklahoma protect the rights of citizens to life, liberty, and property, and it is the responsibility of the State to administer public welfare programs in a manner that strengthens individual independence and reinforces while also preserving the dignity of work; and

WHEREAS, there is longstanding evidence that certain federal benefit program structures create “benefit cliffs,” whereby individuals and families are disincentivized to work because they face abrupt losses in assistance when modest increases in income occur, thereby discouraging gainful employment and economic advancement; and

WHEREAS, my administration believes that work, vocational training, and education are fundamental to both personal success and community prosperity, in line with Oklahoma’s policy under 56 O.S. § 230.50-73, which provides for employment and training programs designed to foster self-sufficiency;

WHEREAS, it is the policy of my administration to assert maximum administrative control over programs operating within its jurisdiction and to seek federal waivers and delegations of authority where permitted by federal law in order to reduce bureaucratic overhead, streamline eligibility determinations, and better align welfare policy with the goal of moving individuals from welfare to work; and

WHEREAS, the people of Oklahoma deserve transparency, accountability, and efficiency in all programs funded by state and federal taxpayers and demand that these programs promote work, education, and personal responsibility rather than long-term dependency; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, J. Kevin Stitt, Governor of the State of Oklahoma, pursuant to the powers vested in me by Sections 1 and 2 of Article VI of the Oklahoma Constitution and to the fullest extent permitted by law, do hereby order the following:

### **Comprehensive Welfare Program Review**

1. The Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS), the Oklahoma Health Care Authority (OHCA), the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) and the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission (OESC) shall conduct, within ninety (90) days of the date of this Order, a comprehensive review of all state and federal welfare programs administered or overseen by the State of Oklahoma, including but not limited to TANF, SNAP, Medicaid and WIC, to:
  - a. Identify instances of “benefit cliffs” and other disincentives to work and propose recommendations to eliminate disincentives to work and smooth the transition from assistance to employment.
  - b. Identify and quantify administrative error rates;
  - c. Evaluate current fraud detection and prevention protocols and align them with national best practices;
  - d. Review eligibility prerequisites to ensure they remain accurate, evidence based, and consistent with state statutes; and

- e. Identify any other components of the programs that disincentivize work or otherwise promote dependency rather than self-reliance and make recommendations for incentivizing work.
2. Each agency's findings shall be compiled into a written report titled "*The Oklahoma Welfare to Work Report*" ("Report"), which shall be submitted to the Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate. The Report shall make recommendations for federal waivers and other policy, statutory, and administrative actions to achieve the purposes of this Order.
3. All agencies are directed to establish a standardized framework of metrics and evaluation criteria to support the consistent and frequent assessment of eligibility requirements and effectiveness of welfare programs.

### **Federal Waivers and Program Flexibility**

1. DHS, OHCA, OSDH and OESC are directed to identify all federal statutory and regulatory provisions under which the State of Oklahoma may apply for waivers or alternative program arrangements allowing for state-based administration with reduced federal management.
2. Such waiver applications shall be submitted to the appropriate federal agencies within one hundred and twenty (120) days of this Order.

### **Work, Training, and Participation Incentives**

1. DHS, OHCA, OSDH and OESC shall, consistent with any applicable state and federal law, ensure that all eligible adult recipients are directed toward opportunities for employment, job readiness, or education that promote economic independence.
2. OESC shall collaborate with federal, state, local, and private workforce development entities to align job postings and publications with high-demand occupations identified throughout Oklahoma, and to otherwise promote the purposes of this Order.
3. Agencies shall collaborate to identify opportunities in which public-private partnerships, the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, and the Be a Neighbor Initiative can contribute to promoting upward mobility, economic independence, and the reduction of long-term reliance on welfare programs.
4. Agencies, to the extent permitted by federal and state law, shall design pilot programs to test the elimination of disincentives associated with increased earnings and shall report on program outcomes.

### **Program Integrity and Auditing**

1. Agencies shall deploy identity verification systems and interagency data matching consistent with privacy protections under state and federal law to ensure accuracy of benefits distribution.

2. Agencies shall jointly evaluate the feasibility of developing and implementing standardized metrics and criteria applicable across all agencies for welfare benefit programs, ensuring that such measures are regularly updated to support consistent assessment, eligibility determination, and program utilization review.

## **Reporting and Implementation**

1. Within one hundred and eighty (180) days of this Order, all agencies subject to it shall submit an implementation plan summarizing corrective actions, progress toward federal waiver applications, and proposed legislative changes if necessary.
2. Annual progress updates shall be presented to the Governor and the Legislature thereafter, to be made publicly available on each agency's website within one hundred and eighty (180) days of this order and on or before January 1<sup>st</sup> of subsequent years.

## **General Provisions**

1. If any provision of this Executive Order or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder and the applicability of the provisions to other persons or circumstances shall not be affected.
2. This Executive Order shall be distributed to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President pro Tempore of the Senate, all Cabinet Secretaries, and agency heads for implementation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Oklahoma to be affixed at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, this twenty-sixth day of January, 2026.

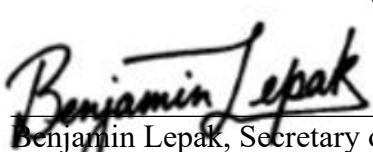
**BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA**



J. Kevin Stitt



ATTEST:



Benjamin Lepak, Secretary of State