Beshear joins suit to block federal access

Legal action seeks to protect state welfare data

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Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear has joined a lawsuit in U.S. district court seeking to block President Donald Trump's administration from allowing federal agencies to review personal information about recipients of a national welfare program to ensure compliance with federal statutes and immigration laws.

The lawsuit, filed Aug. 3 by 23 states and two governors, claims a recent federal legal notice expanding government access to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families data maintained by the Office of Family Assistance would violate federal statutes and amounts to a "gross breach of personal privacy." A notice issued in June said access to the information is needed to ensure compliance with "all TANF program requirements," including work participation rates and time limits, as well as "the requirement to verify TANF recipients' citizenship or immigration status."

The lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia and names the Administration for Children and Families and Secretary Alex J. Adams as defendants, along with several related offices and officials. A request for comment sent to ACF, which issued the June 23 notice, was not immediately returned.

In a statement, Beshear said he joined the lawsuit to prevent "confidential and personal information" from being shared unlawfully.

"Social Security numbers, addresses and more are private — and we're fighting back against the Trump administration's unlawful actions to ensure they stay that way," he said. Beshear was one of two governors to join the lawsuit without backing from their state's attorney general, along with Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro.

More than 28,000 people in Kentucky currently receive TANF support, Beshear's statement said. In 2024, according to figures maintained by U.S. Congress, more than 23,000 children were among those who benefitted. Nationally, the program serves more than 2.7 million annually.

TANF, established in 1996, sends grant money to states to fund programs supporting low-income families. In the Bluegrass State that money is distributed by the Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program, known as KTAP.

The 60-page lawsuit Beshear joined argues states need flexibility to run their own programs, have been given that authority by Congress and have adopted "comprehensive programs for deterring, detecting, and stopping fraud among TANF beneficiaries." The recent call for more government access to data violates the privacy of recipients and is part of a federal push built around "unsubstantiated allegations of 'fraud' to target States' funding under the TANF program and related anti-poverty programs over the last year," it states.

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RFK Jr. unveils overhaul of rules for Head Start

Zachary Schermele
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – The Trump administration is overhauling Head Start, the preschool and child care program relied on by hundreds of thousands of low-income families.

Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. announced the changes Aug. 6, saying his agency is pursuing a drastic rewrite of the regulations governing the nation's roughly 1,600 Head Start providers.

The effort, he argued, will cut red tape and make kids healthier.

"We are removing unnecessary bureaucracy, strengthening nutrition and physical health, trusting parents and local communities, and opening Head Start to hundreds of thousands more children," he said in a statement.

But the proposal, which may be challenged in court, has alarmed many of Head Start's staunchest advocates.

It lifts certain mandates on student-to-staff ratios, which could lead to heftier workloads. It scraps certain transportation requirements, including for school bus monitors, prompting fears of barriers for parents to physically get their children to preschool. It requires that providers teach primarily in English.

The Trump administration proposal, which may be challenged in court, has alarmed many of Head Start's staunchest advocates.
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There will be fresh dietary guidelines, plus a new mandate for 30 minutes of physical activity per every 3.5 hours of classroom instruction.

In critics' eyes, throwing out longstanding federal rules – about class sizes, special education, staff background checks and more – could risk leaving children in unsafe environments.

Joel Ryan, executive director of the Washington State Association of Head Start, said the shift, which is still in its early stages, will "erode the quality" of programs across the country.

"It'll make classrooms bigger. Kids will have less one-on-one support, especially kids that have significant issues," he said. "I really see this as an effort to dismantle the program."

Alex Adams, a Kennedy deputy who runs HHS' Administration for Children and Families division, said on a call with reporters that the new proposal will simply "allow local providers to make local decisions."

"Flexibility is permission. It's not a mandate," he said.

He added that Head Start providers will still be subject to state and local regulations.

The proposal marks a new, more involved phase in the Trump administration's handling of a historically bipartisan and widely popular program.

Unexpected grant freezes began within weeks of the start of President Donald Trump's second term. Then the federal government abruptly shuttered five field offices and laid off scores of staffers in the Office of Head Start. In April 2025, USA TODAY exclusively reported that the Trump administration was aiming to fully zero out funding for the program. Officials later walked back that idea.

Now, HHS is taking a different approach. Kennedy repeatedly cites the fact that his uncle, Sargent Shriver, helped found Head Start. He touted this week that he protected the program from "draconian cuts" in 2025.

"The program works," he told reporters during a virtual briefing. "It's really important that we protect it."

HHS will publish its full proposed rule Aug. 7. There will be a 60-day public comment period.