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Welfare and other similar Federal/State programs are intended to provide temporary assistance for needy families. This assistance comes in the form of direct financial deposits and other proceeds such as food stamps. Welfare dependency has increased dramatically in recent years. There has also been apparent abuse of this provision with the collection of lifetime assistance and drug use spurred by public funds. A welfare reform would allow tax payers, the providers of such funds, increased peace of mind knowing that their earnings are used for sensible purposes. In addition, there would be less of a societal financial burden necessitated by the many who take advantage of these assistance programs. Welfare programs should be reformed. Desiring a decrease in the total number of families and individuals obtaining these benefits, proposed reforms would include drug testing recipients, requiring employment, and limiting the amount of time one can spend on welfare.

Welfare applicants should be drug tested before qualifying to receive benefits. This would limit the misappropriation of public funds for the purchase of drugs (Schaberg 567). There has been significant support from the public for the implementation of this reform. Still, some contend that drug testing in this manner would be a violation of their Fourth Amendment rights. McLaughlin argues that “suspicionless drug testing of welfare applicants does not violate the Fourth Amendment because the special needs doctrine eliminates the need for individualized suspicion. The special needs doctrine is an exception to the Fourth Amendment’s warrant requirement [and] makes the warrant and probable-cause requirement impractical” (580-

81). By making drug testing a necessary qualification for anyone receiving welfare benefits, the “search and seizure” described by the Fourth Amendment does not denote suspicion on the part of the applicant, but rather holds them responsible for any assistance they receive. One of the special needs that acquits the state from violation of the Fourth Amendment is the safety interests of the public. This need would outweigh recipients’ privacy interests. Yet another reason to “implement drug testing programs [is to] protect children in welfare receiving homes from the dangers of drug addicted parents” (McLaughlin 569). Many children have been subjected to the harmful effects of living in homes of illicit drug users. By mandating that welfare applicants and recipients be drug tested, perhaps there could be more detection and prevention of these situations. “Public interest lies in insuring both that the public moneys are expended for their intended purposes and that those moneys not be spent in ways that will actually endanger the public,” namely for drug use (McLaughlin 583). A welfare reform requiring applicants and recipients to be drug tested to receive assistance should be implemented.

In addition to being drug tested, able-bodied welfare beneficiaries should be required to obtain employment throughout the course of their receiving assistance. Some contend that requiring welfare recipients to work defeats the purpose of them receiving assistance in first place. By offering life time assistance from public funds, however, generations dependent on moneys acquired by working tax payers are created. In a sense, recipients are compensated for idleness. By requiring a form of employment, they are awarded the assistance necessary, while promoting self-reliance. It would “[preserve] resources for the truly needy, [propel] enrollees toward work and a better life, and [provide] a boost to the economy (Archambault). After all, the “welfare program was designed to encourage strong family relationships and self-sufficiency” (Schaberg 574). Further, the rationale behind this purported requirement would be to “hold

recipients responsible for the assistance they receive by creating obligations on the part of the recipients and penalties for failure to fulfill these obligations” (Schaberg 568). Perhaps a penalty of a suspension from the program would be an incentive to comply with these regulations. From states who have drafted a similar welfare reform, it has been found that “millions of welfare recipients moved into the labor force, spurring greater economic growth, lower caseloads, higher employment, and lower poverty rates, particularly among the most at-risk populations. Better still, numerous studies have found that re-entering the workforce improves workers’ health and well-being, personal satisfaction, and financial stability” (Archambault). By requiring proof of employment, accountability is placed on the recipient. Simply stated, citizens collecting welfare who are able to work, should be required to work. Justice and equality would be upheld by ensuring the ones providing the assistance, namely the tax payers, aren’t left working while the recipient is provided with non-obligatory funding. By continuing to provide aid for the truly needy and necessitating employment for able-bodied ones, a welfare reform of this sort would allow one to have an earned income and perhaps cycle off the assistance program altogether.

Coupled with work requirements, welfare recipients should be allowed a maximum number of months of assistance before termination of benefits. A main goal of the welfare program, is to help needy families through temporary financial assistance in troublesome times. Therefore, a limit of time one can spend on welfare would advocate the purpose of this program. A Kansas governor recently established a reform with similar statutes. Governor Sam Brownback implemented a new law that limits life time cash assistance from 36-24 months, with the option of a 12-month extension if granted by the state (Gov. Brownback). He states “It’s necessary to decrease lifetime limit to encourage people to get back into the game” (Gov. Brownback). He further notes the effects that this reform has had on the Kansas public: “It’s

helped people get out of poverty, it's helped people have more income and in some cases, it's helped people get back their dignity to get back into the labor force" (Gov. Brownback). This outcome illustrates that time limited assistance through welfare enables recipients to become self-sufficient, productive, and contributing members of society. Many may express concern about the state these families will be left in once removed from the assistance programs. Some are inclined to picture impoverished circumstances and have generated great backlash for this implementation. However, the findings are quite contrary. A report from the Foundation for Government Accountability found that "able-bodied Kansans experienced a 127 percent rise in their income within a year of leaving the food assistance program" (Gov. Brownback). This clearly shows that requiring welfare recipients to become accountable, by setting a limit to their assistance, gives new-found vigor in providing for one's self. This 127 percent raise in income more than offsets the benefits these families would have received from assistance programs. As impressive as these results are, a nationwide reform of this sort, namely limiting the time someone can spend on welfare, would further provide positive impacts on welfare recipients and tax payers states over.

Members of society who work and pay taxes are suppliers of welfare funds, and therefore should be involved in the drafting of these proposed reforms. By putting into effect the aforementioned restructurings of the current welfare system, instead of being liabilities to taxpayers, these recipients can contribute to stimulating the economy and benefitting everyone. Congress should consider the poor state the current welfare programs are in and look to reform them. As members of the public, it should be recognized that there is not only an "interest, but an obligation to ensure public funds are used for their intended purposes" (McLaughlin 583). Change is instrumental to reducing the number of welfare caseloads and financial burden on the

public. This can be done by remodeling welfare and implementing those changes nationwide.

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