



## Welfare Programs Harm Recipients

Patrick Marvin

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America's \$700 billion per year welfare system is actually doing more harm than good, and is hurting the very people it is intended to help.

That's the subject of a new research-filled book on our welfare system, "[The Human Cost of Welfare](#)." Authors Phil Harvey, the Chief Sponsor of the DKT Liberty Project, and Lisa Conyers, the Director of Policy Studies for the project, conducted a comprehensive evaluation of welfare programs throughout the nation, and came to many troubling conclusions.

Through interviews with hundreds of welfare recipients, they found that not only does our welfare system fail to offer opportunities for advancement or improvement, but it traps individuals and families in the very poverty it is designed to eliminate.

Even worse, many welfare programs are actually "anti-work," as they encourage welfare recipients to turn down employment so they can continue receiving benefits and government assistance. Through the "benefits cliff" that cuts off individuals after they start earning money, and a culture that discourages employment, welfare beneficiaries are actually held back from obtaining employment and rising up.

"The cost to us as taxpayers, while it is very high, is not as bad as the cost being paid by the beneficiaries of welfare," said Harvey at a [recent discussion](#) at the CATO institute.

"What we found out, when we started looking at welfare programs, is that they actually put people in a position where work is a threat, rather than a reward," added Conyers. "The whole psychology around work changes when you are on these programs."

These findings mirror what has long been known in Maine – which is that a bloated and ineffective welfare system only encourages generational poverty.

Thankfully, Gov. Paul LePage and many Republicans in Augusta have made reforming Maine's welfare system, and bringing our state from poverty to prosperity, a top-priority.

Through common-sense reforms such as work requirements for able-bodied and childless adults, rolling back eligibility for Medicaid, placing a 5-year cap on welfare benefits, requiring drug-testing for recipients convicted of drug crimes and prosecuting cases of welfare fraud, Maine has drastically limited its wasteful welfare spending.

Maine now leads the nation for its reduction in the number of people dependent upon the SNAP program. It has reduced its number of TANF cases from 15,000 to less than 5,000 and it has decreased the size of the Medicaid program by over 70,000 people.

These reforms have not only empowered Maine citizens and helped put our state back to work, but they've saved millions of taxpayer dollars and helped ensure our neediest citizens receive the help they deserve.

Hopefully, other states and the federal government will take notice of these proactive reforms which have been championed by Maine, and will reform their own welfare systems.