



Letter: Poverty myths

For the Monitor

Monday, December 29, 2014

Rep. Dick Marple would have us believe that those on public assistance coast comfortably along on \$39,750 a year on the backs of hardworking taxpayers (Monitor letters, Dec. 22). He wants to deep-six government anti-poverty programs and put churches in charge of charity. Try reading the full report, representative.

Even the Cato Institute acknowledges that its figures apply only in very narrow circumstances, since almost nobody actually uses all the programs they might, in theory, be eligible for. Case in point: housing.

High New Hampshire shelter costs coupled with insufficient public housing produces wait lists that commonly exceed five years. Translation: Recipients can't use public housing when there's none available. Subtract that from the \$40,000. As for child care and federal student aid (Pell grants and loans), must we point out that loans have to be repaid, and that counting them as income now obscures the liability they turn into upon the student's graduation? Again, only a small proportion of New Hampshire recipients qualifies for these benefits.

Marple's suggested Plan B – church charity – is preposterous. Today's churches are hard-pressed to pay already overworked staff, heat drafty sanctuaries and keep walks shoveled. Where do these churches get the funds to help families scrape up rental deposits, cover car repairs and buy prescriptions they can't afford? What personnel do these churches hire to ensure that applications reflect reality and funds are well-spent?

Perhaps the representative should try shadowing a real-life TANF recipient for a couple of months instead of reading Cato's fantasy-based reports.

JANE HUNT

Concord