Affirmative Brief: Drug Testing for Welfare

Introduction
Currently, welfare recipients do not have to submit to any drug testing in order to receive public benefits, including welfare assistance. Some recipients are using public assistance to buy drugs instead of living essentials for themselves and their families.

That is why I stand…

Resolved: (that) The state of California should require that welfare recipients pass mandatory drug tests to receive welfare benefits.

Observation I: Definitions

A. Welfare: Aid in the form of money or necessities for those in need.
B. Illicit Drugs: Drugs that are unlawful to possess, manufacture, sell, or use.
C. T.A.N.F.: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a government program that gives cash assistance to needy families with dependent children, and to pregnant women, to help them meet the basic needs of their children. This cash assistance can be used to help families with housing, utilities, and clothing costs. It is sometimes called "welfare."
D. Substance Abuser: The overindulgence in and dependence of a drug or other chemical leading to effects that are detrimental to the individual's physical and mental health, or the welfare of others.

Contentions

I. Some people receiving public assistance are using illegal drugs.

A. Drug use was higher in welfare-receiving households than in non-welfare receiving households and 50% higher in welfare-receiving households that also received food stamps.


Drug use was higher in households with welfare recipients than in neighboring households without welfare recipients … the adjusted odds of reporting past-year drug use were nearly 50% higher in households in which a member received welfare assistance than in neighboring households in which no members received such assistance.
B. The odds of drug use in welfare-receiving households are 60% higher than in non-receiving households.


Given the large percentage of households that received food stamp benefits, we compared drug use among those who received food stamps as one of the benefits; those who did not receive food stamps, but received other benefits; and non-welfare recipients. The adjusted odds of drug use in households with food stamp recipients was 60% higher than in households without food stamp recipients.

C. Impact: California has a budget problem and can’t afford to give money to drug users.

By giving money to drug users, California can’t afford to assist other more worthy individuals and agencies, like the disabled, public education, etc.

II. Currently, California is not testing welfare recipients for drug use.

A. The system doesn’t allow or encourage confrontation of substance abusers.

1. Government workers are not allowed to directly confront substance abusers.


Despite statements that most substance abuse problems would eventually be identified by the system, workers in both programs preferred that clients with alcohol or drug problems self-identify. This proved consistent with the overall reform philosophy of clients' self-sufficiency and personal accountability. It also accorded with policies that constrained workers from directly confronting substance abusers.

2. Some government workers are convinced that many are using government money for drugs.


“You would never convince me that a parent who is addicted is using their cash on their children rather than their addiction,” Brandom said. “Those tax dollars are for people who are going back to the work force, not for illegal recreation.”
B. Existing policies, such as the Gramm Amendment, are ineffective.

1. The Gramm Amendment allows a lifetime ban on food stamps and TANF for individuals with felony convictions for illegal drug possession, use, or distribution occurring after August 22, 1996.


The 1996 Gramm Amendment (no. 4935) imposed a lifetime ban on food stamps and TANF aid to individuals with felony convictions for illegal drug possession, use, or distribution occurring after August 22, 1996. States were, however, allowed to modify or revoke the TANF ban. Currently, 28 states have passed such legislation.

(NOTE: The above evidence is provided in case I’m asked where I got the information on the Gramm Amendment.)

2. The Gramm Amendment authorizes states to use chemical testing to screen new TANF applicants or to otherwise detect illicit substance use, but only Michigan was implementing testing.


The 1996 welfare reform includes several provisions that target the use or sale of illegal substances. Section 902 of welfare reform also authorized states to use chemical testing to screen new TANF applicants or to otherwise detect illicit substance use (P.L. 104-193). Some states are contemplating such testing, although Michigan appears to be the only state that has attempted to implement suspicionless, population-based testing.

For these reasons, we recommend adopting the following 4-plank Plan.

Plan

I. Agency – This plan will be administered by the California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHS).

(If pressed: The California Health and Human Services Agency who currently oversees the distribution of welfare will oversee the plan. The CHHS is the agency providing the aid, and should be the ones to properly screen and select those who should be receiving public assistance.)

II. Mandates

A. All individuals applying for welfare will be required to take a urinalysis drug test from an independent drug testing agency prior to being qualified to receive welfare.

B. Follow-up drug tests will be performed randomly, at least once a year while recipients are receiving aid.
III. **Enforcement**: Those failing the drug test or declining to be tested will not receive any welfare benefits as follows:
   A. 1\textsuperscript{st} Offense: Loss of benefits for 6 months
   B. 2\textsuperscript{nd} Offense: Loss of benefits for 1 year
   C. 3\textsuperscript{rd} Offense: Loss of benefits indefinitely

IV. **Funding/Staffing**
   A. Initial funding for reallocation of the general fund money.
   B. The program will become self-funding as beneficiaries will be dropped when they fail to pass the drug tests.
   C. Contracts will be negotiated with qualified drug-testing agencies to provide an inexpensive effective test.

Adoption of this plan will result in the following advantages:

**Advantages/Solvency:**
1. Welfare recipients will be encouraged to become sober, and will be able to gain steady employment and eventually stop needing state aid.
2. A sober worker is a better worker, and will be able to maintain their employment.
3. State money will be spent on essentials and will help the children of welfare recipients, as the money earmarked to help them will not be used to purchase drugs.
4. The State Budget will be in less crisis, as less money will be needed to administer and fund the welfare program, improving the quality of life in our state for everyone.

**Conclusion**
By voting Affirmative, California will become a state with fewer drug addicts and more productive citizens.