Resolved: The United States should replace means-tested welfare programs with a universal basic income.

Katherine and I negate.

Contention One: Targeting Poverty

The problem with a Universal Basic Income, or a UBI, is 3 fold

1. A UBI is regressive

Kearney 19 finds that a UBI is the least efficient way to help the poor. By making the payment universal and unconditional, the government would be paying a lot of money to well off families, which would divert public funds away from programs for truly needy Americans.

2. A UBI is wasteful

A useful analogy of a UBI is a leaky bucket: although you may input a gallon of water, only a fraction will remain because of holes in the system. If we implement a UBI, the money must be carried from the rich to the poor in a leaky bucket. Johnson of the University of Virginia quantifies that each dollar of cost to upper-income households only provides a benefit of 29 cents to low-income households, a leakage of 71 percent.

Clearly, trying to transfer a dollar from one person to another is an inefficient way to help the most in need.

3. A UBI discourages work

The Heritage Foundation concluded that a UBI would decrease work hours by a staggering 43%. The same study also found that for each $1,000 in added benefits, there was an average $660 reduction in earnings.

Contention Two: Targeted programs uniquely benefit the poor

The success of our means-tested system is evident. According to the CBPP, means tested welfare programs lifted 39 million poor Americans out of poverty. [1]

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[1] Alt card:
https://www.cbpp.org/poverty-and-opportunity/commentary-universal-basic-income-may-sound-attractive-but-if-it-occurred
44% out of pov.

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Mogstad 19 observes that throwing cash at a person and telling them to take it from there, like a UBI proposes, will not help. Instead, programs should invest in targeted spending.

According to Soper of the Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society, vocational training programs offered through means tested welfare increased employment by 75%. Since vocational training outside of means tested programs typically cost $33,000, unemployed persons will be forced to choose between necessities such as food, clothing and housing, and extremely expensive vocational training.

Cutting welfare would also cut the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP. This is extremely problematic for two reasons.

1. A decrease in SNAP benefits by 10 percent would increase very low food security among recipients by about 29 percent, 6.5 million households[2]
2. Cutting SNAP would push more 23.5 million Americans deeper into the food desert where fresh groceries and healthy options are unavailable since SNAP requires stores to carry more types and greater quantities of nutritious food.

Greenstein 19 corroborates by using the proceeds from eliminating all means-tested programs outside health care, the result would be an annual UBI of $1,582 per person, well below the level of support most low-income families now receive, which is $49,000. Gunn 19 finds that a universal basic income that replaces means tested welfare programs would still fall short and cause the poorest to lose out by roughly $28,000 a year. This would further plunge families into deficit. Overall, the increase in poverty and hardship would be very large.

The impact is poverty.

Overall, 4.5% of U.S. deaths were found to be attributable to poverty. 133,000 deaths can be attributed to individual-level poverty, and 119,000 to income inequality. Getting rid of means welfare programs not only exacerbates the wealth gap, it also further entrenches the poor into deep poverty. To mitigate these harms, negate.

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[2] https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2013/october/effects-of-changes-in-snap-benefits-on-food-security/