

In the dark of the night ... are children getting hurt?

In the last days of the lame-duck session of 2014, Governor Snyder signed a bill requiring people on welfare to undergo drug testing before receiving benefits. If welfare recipients are “suspected” of drug abuse, they would be required to undergo such drug testing. If they refuse, they would lose benefits for at least six months; if they fail the test they would be offered treatment the first time and would become ineligible for benefits after second positive test.

The bill will become effective on October 1, 2015 and will be implemented in three counties (to be determined by the department of Human Services) for a period of one year, before being extended to all counties in Michigan.

While it could be justified to test welfare recipients, the main problem with this bill is that the penalty (suspension of benefits) will impact mainly the children of welfare recipients who represent the largest number of those receiving the benefits of our welfare system. The problem of hunger for children in Michigan is a real problem as seen again and again in our schools. Is it justified to penalize children for the “sins” of the parents?

While treatment for drug users should be highly recommended, the elimination of benefits will hurt the “most vulnerable” – the children. If you care about this issue, please contact your representative.

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