



L I E S   T H E   L E F T   T E L L S :

# The Myth of the “Welfare Cliff”

## THE PROBLEM

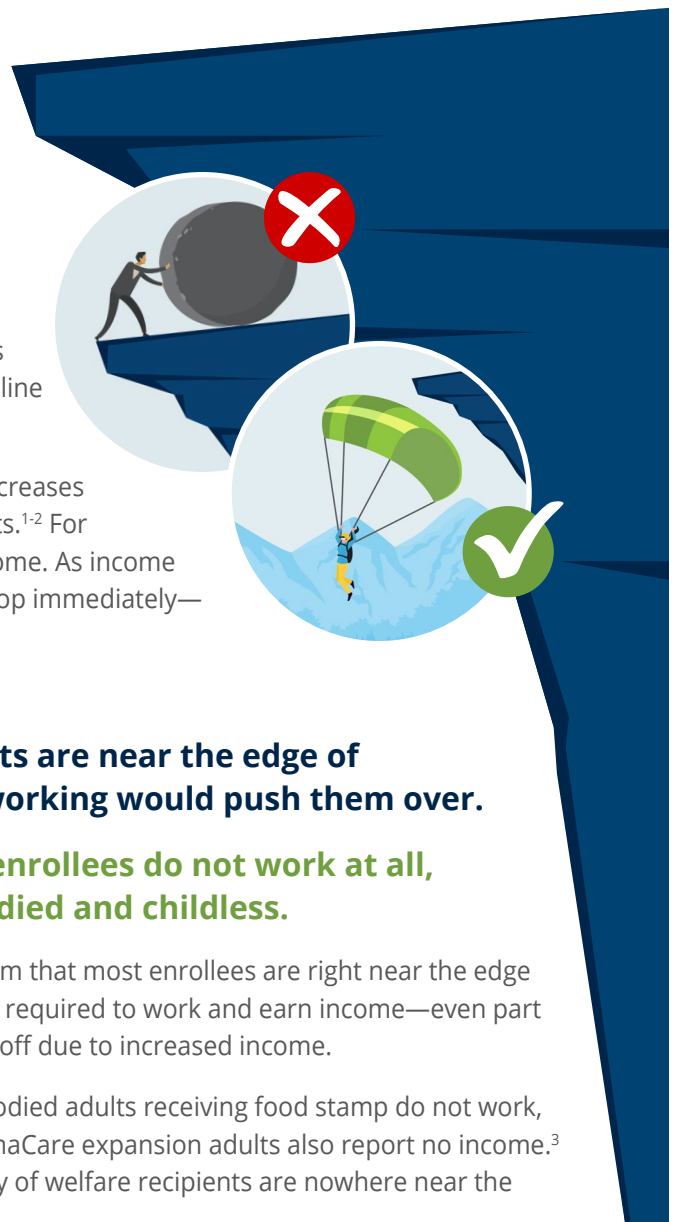
The “cliff” myth is a scare tactic used often by those who want to use welfare to keep people trapped in government dependency. But the truth is that welfare is already built to trap people instead of moving them towards self-sufficiency through work.

**MYTH #1: Enrollees are thrown off the “welfare cliff” without a parachute.**

**REALITY: Major welfare programs include off-ramps, transitioning enrollees out of welfare down a long slope, not off a cliff.**

Welfare proponents argue that there is a “cliff” that individuals fall off once they reach a certain income level, leading to a decline in total resources.

The reality is welfare benefits are gradually reduced so that increases in income accumulate more quickly than the decline in benefits.<sup>1-2</sup> For example, benefits in food stamps are calculated based on income. As income increases, benefit amounts slowly ratchet down, but do not stop immediately—and are more than offset by increases in earnings from work.



**MYTH #2: Most recipients are near the edge of the “welfare cliff” and working would push them over.**

**REALITY: Most welfare enrollees do not work at all, even if they are able-bodied and childless.**

Dependency advocates claim that most enrollees are right near the edge of the cliff, and that being required to work and earn income—even part time—would push them off due to increased income.

But 62 percent of able-bodied adults receiving food stamp do not work, while 55 percent of ObamaCare expansion adults also report no income.<sup>3</sup> As a result, a large majority of welfare recipients are nowhere near the edge of their eligibility limits.



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**MYTH #3:** Leaving welfare is worse than being trapped in government dependency.

**REALITY:** When people move from welfare to work, their incomes double as they find employment and fulfillment across hundreds of industries.

Leftist activists presume that leaving welfare is a bad thing that leaves folks worse off.

Able-bodied adults leaving the food stamp program in Maine and Missouri saw their incomes double.<sup>4</sup> When families left cash welfare in Kansas, their incomes tripled.<sup>5-6</sup> When able-bodied adults on Medicaid in Arkansas were required to work, thousands found meaningful employment in countless industries.<sup>7</sup>

## BOTTOM LINE

**The cliff doesn't exist—welfare benefits are a gently declining hill. Benefits are slowly reduced as the individual earns more money and eventually frees themselves from the grasp of government dependency.**

### SOURCES

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