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Editorials

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Letters to the editor

Workfare and the poor

The real purpose of workfare has always been and always will be to reduce the number of people on-aid by harassing the least fortunate in our society by convincing them that it is easier to steal or prostitute to feed their families than to receive public assistance to which they are legally entitled.

There are many other aid programs in America that reach people who are not poor. They are not required to work off these benefits.

Some argue that welfare mothers don't work. This is not true. Welfare mothers work harder than many other people in our society. It is very hard work to raise children all by yourself on a meager monthly aid payment of \$506.

Workfare was never intended to assist the poor, or to build their "self-esteem and provide work experience." This may be the public re-

lations purpose of the program, but that's where it stops.

Welfare mothers, who on the average spend two years on AFDC, then get a job or get married, have a very strong work ethic. They would rather work than get welfare, according to numerous studies published by the federal government.

If welfare mothers are to work, they should be able to hold their heads up high and say, "I am a working person and not a welfare recipient." Workfare does not do this. Workfare recipients are resented by regular paid workers as workers who will one day take their jobs away, which is not far-fetched.

As welfare recipients they do not have the same benefits that other workers have. They're not able to function the same way the

other workers do in the work place. Workfare recipients cannot afford to eat the same kind of lunch that other workers do. They cannot afford to participate in the various office functions as other workers. If anything, workfare may very well reduce the person's self-esteem rather than restore it.

We, representing the poor, oppose mandatory workfare, but see no problem with a workfare program that is voluntary and will ensure that the self-esteem of the poor will not be diminished. That will ensure that workfare recipients will not replace regular employees or cause the employer to stop hiring regular employees. Workfare participants should be rewarded for the work they do, which is in addition to raising their children by themselves.

— Kevin M. Aslanian
President, Welfare Recipients League