

Ohio Poverty Law Ctr. Director fears welfare recipients could be forced to pay money they don't owe

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• By: Sarah Buduson, newsnet5.com

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A 5 On Your Side investigation uncovers concerns about a new Ohio plan to collect welfare overpayments.

Eugene King, the director of the Ohio Poverty Law Center said some welfare recipients could be forced to pay the state money they don't owe.

David Dawson, the deputy director of The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, also expressed concern about the potential for errors.

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services recently sent out 22,500 collection notices to welfare recipients.

The notices instruct the recipients to pay their balances within 30 days or the state will seize the money from the recipients' Ohio tax returns.

King said he has received about 150 complaints about the notices.

Dawson said he knows of about 25 complaints.

They said many of the complaints are from recipients who claimed they have already paid their bills and are having troubling locating proof of their payments.

Two viewers contacted NewsChannel5 Investigator Sarah Buduson with the same complaints.

Some of the notices involved outstanding balances that are up to 20 years old.

A spokesperson for Rep. Dennis Kucinich said the congressman is contacting the U.S. Department of Agriculture about the collection notices.

The spokesperson said the USDA recently changed a rule that prohibited states from collecting overpayments that were more than 20 years old.

Officials from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services did not respond to NewsChannel5's request for information or a comment Wednesday.

We are continuing to investigate the collection notices.

Keep checking newsnet5.com for the latest information about the welfare overpayments.

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