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Starmer Calls Fixing Welfare a 'Moral Imperative' Amid Internal Party Pressure

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Prime Minister Keir Starmer has described reforming the UK's welfare system as a "moral imperative," following days of political tension and mounting dissent within the Labour Party over proposed changes to disability benefits. His comments come after the government made a key concession to protect current claimants from some of the more controversial aspects of the plan.

Speaking at the Welsh Labour conference in Llandudno, Starmer framed the issue as both a matter of values and practical necessity. He acknowledged that the current welfare system is not working as it should, describing it as “broken” and “failing people every day.” According to Starmer, reform is not simply about reducing costs; it’s about creating a system that better supports those who need help, while also enabling those who can work to do so.

The government’s proposal aims to save around £5 billion a year, largely through changes to Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and the health-related component of Universal Credit. But backlash from Labour MPs and disability rights advocates prompted a rethink. Under the revised plan, existing PIP recipients will not face the tighter eligibility criteria, and changes to Universal Credit will apply only to new claimants.

The shift followed warnings from within Starmer’s ranks. Some MPs argued the proposed reforms risked punishing vulnerable people and undermining the party’s commitment to social justice. Veteran MP Diane Abbott was among those who voiced concern, suggesting the plan did not reflect traditional Labour values.

Starmer, however, insisted that the changes are about rebuilding a welfare system that has lost public trust. He stressed the need to approach the issue in a way that is compassionate, fair, and sustainable. “This isn’t just about numbers,” he said. “It’s about people’s lives.”

As the bill heads toward a key parliamentary vote, Starmer faces the challenge of holding his party together while pushing forward with a policy he believes is essential. The debate over how best to support

those in need, without creating barriers to independence, remains central to Labour's direction under his leadership.