Speaker 1: The Disability and Philanthropy Forum presents Mia Ives-Rublee, director of the Disability Justice Initiative at the Center for American Progress.

Mia Ives-Rublee: Poverty is really a policy choice, and the biggest thing that we have learned, particularly during this pandemic, is that we can choose to take care of our communities. We can choose to create policies that are more accessible to wider communities, particularly multi-marginalized communities, and that we as a society have chosen the steps that we have taken in getting where we have gotten to. So you saw during the beginning of the pandemic, people taking it rather seriously. We saw several legislative bills that came out, some universal payments that came out that really significantly decreased poverty in this country.

We saw things like the child tax credit, which significantly reduced child poverty. We saw Medicaid expansion. We saw funds going into communities to boost food pantries. We saw a wide variety of mutual aid programs, et cetera. We saw a stoppage of evictions. All of this help to contribute to ensuring that we weren't valuing people based on their ability to work, but just based on the fact that they were people and human beings and that they were breathing, right?

Then we have seen a sudden reversal of a lot of those programs, particularly recently. We've seen a lot of folks who pretend to be public health experts, demand people go back to work, demand that people get off of these social programs, demand X, Y and Z. We've seen poverty rates going back up again. We've seen hits due to inflation rates, et cetera. All of these are policy choices that we have made.

So I think what this pandemic and what many other emergencies have shown is that we can make certain policy choices to help alleviate the most in need and we choose not to. So I think that's something that we need to keep in mind when people continuously say, "We don't have money for X. We don't have money for Y." We do. We just choose not to use it.

Speaker 1: To continue your learning journey, visit disabilityphilanthropy.org.