

Distributionally Robust Optimal Allocation with Costly Verification

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We consider the mechanism design problem of a principal allocating a single good to one of several agents without monetary transfers. Each agent desires the good and uses it to create value for the principal. We designate this value as the agent's private type. Even though the principal does not know the agents' types, she can verify them at a cost. The allocation of the good thus depends on the agents' self-declared types and the results of any verification performed, and the principal's payoff matches her value of the allocation minus the costs of verification. It is known that if the agents' types are independent, then a favored-agent mechanism maximizes her expected payoff. However, this result relies on the unrealistic assumptions that the agents' types follow known independent probability distributions. In contrast, we assume here that the agents' types are governed by an ambiguous joint probability distribution belonging to a commonly known ambiguity set and that the principal maximizes her worst-case expected payoff. We study support-only ambiguity sets, which contain all distributions supported on a rectangle, Markov ambiguity sets, which contain all distributions in a support-only ambiguity set satisfying some first-order moment bounds, and Markov ambiguity sets with independent types, which contain all distributions in a Markov ambiguity set under which the agents' types are mutually independent. In all cases we construct explicit favored-agent mechanisms that are not only optimal but also Pareto-robustly optimal.

Key words: mechanism design; costly verification; distributionally robust optimization; ambiguity aversion

1. Introduction Consider a principal (“she”) who allocates a good to one of several agents without using monetary transfers. Each agent (“he”) derives strictly positive utility from owning the good and has a private type, which reflects the value he creates for the principal if receiving the good. The principal is unaware of the agents' types but can verify any of them at a cost. Any verification will perfectly reveal the corresponding agent's type to the principal. The good is allocated based on the agents' self-declared types as well as the results of any verification performed. The principal aims to design an allocation mechanism that maximizes her payoff, *i.e.*, the value of allocation minus any costs of verification.

This generic mechanism design problem arises in many different contexts. For example, the rector of a university may have funding for a new faculty position and needs to allocate it to one of the school's departments, the ministry of health may need to decide in which town to open up a new hospital, a venture capitalist may need to select a start-up business that should receive seed funding, the procurement manager of a manufacturing company may need to choose one of several suppliers, or a consulting company may need to identify a team that leads a new project. In all of these examples, the principal wishes to put the good into use where it best contributes to her organization or the society as a whole. Each agent desires the good and is likely to be well-informed about the value he will generate for the principal if he receives the good. In addition, monetary

transfers may be inappropriate in all of the described situations, but the principal can collect information through costly investigation or audit.

Mechanism design problems of the above type are usually referred to as ‘allocation with costly verification.’ Ben-Porath et al. [4] describe the first formal model for their analysis and introduce the class of favored-agent mechanisms, which are attractive because of their simplicity and interpretability. As in most of the literature on mechanism design, Ben-Porath et al. [4] model the agents’ types as independent random variables governed by a commonly known probability distribution, which allows them to prove that any mechanism that maximizes the principal’s expected payoff is a randomization over favored-agent mechanisms. Any favored-agent mechanism is characterized by a favored agent and a threshold value, and it assigns the good to the favored agent without verification whenever the reported types of all other agents—adjusted for the costs of verification—fall below the given threshold. Otherwise, it allocates the good to any agent for which the reported type minus the cost of verification is maximal and verifies his reported type. This mechanism is incentive compatible, that is, no agent has an incentive to misreport his true type; see Section 2 for more details.

The vast majority of the literature on allocation with costly verification (see, *e.g.*, [15, 16] and the references therein) sustains the modeling assumptions of Ben-Porath et al. [4], thus assuming that the agents’ types are independent random variables and that their distribution is common knowledge. In reality, however, it is often difficult to justify the precise knowledge of such a distribution. This prompts us to study allocation problems with costly verification under the more realistic assumption that the principal has only partial information about the distribution of the agents’ types. Specifically, we assume that the distribution of the agents’ types is unknown but belongs to a commonly known ambiguity set (*i.e.*, a family of multiple—perhaps infinitely many—distributions). In addition, we assume that the principal is ambiguity averse in the sense that she wishes to maximize her worst-case expected payoff in view of all distributions in the ambiguity set. Under these assumptions, the mechanism design problem at hand can be cast as a zero-sum game between the principal, who chooses a mechanism to allocate the good, and some fictitious adversary, who chooses the distribution of the agents’ types from the ambiguity set in order to inflict maximum damage to the principal. Using techniques from distributionally robust optimization (see, *e.g.*, [9, 22]), we characterize optimal and Pareto robustly optimal mechanisms for well-known classes of ambiguity sets: (i) support-only ambiguity sets containing all distributions supported on a rectangle, (ii) Markov ambiguity sets containing all distributions in a support-only ambiguity set whose mean values fall within another (smaller) rectangle, and (iii) Markov ambiguity sets with independent types containing all distributions in a Markov ambiguity set under which the agents’ types are mutually independent. We emphasize that support-only as well as Markov ambiguity sets contain distributions under which the agents’ types are mutually dependent. Pareto robust optimality is an important solution concept in robust optimization [12]. In the distributionally robust context considered here, a mechanism is called Pareto robustly optimal if there is no other mechanism that generates a non-inferior expected payoff under every distribution in the ambiguity set and a strictly higher expected payoff under at least one distribution in the ambiguity set. Every Pareto robustly optimal solution is also robustly optimal, but the converse is not true. Mechanisms that fail to be Pareto robustly optimal would not be used by any rational agent.

The three main contributions of this paper can be summarized as follows.

(i) For support-only ambiguity sets, we first show that not every robustly optimal mechanism represents a randomization over favored-agent mechanisms. This result is unexpected in view of the classical theory on stochastic mechanism design [4]. We then construct an explicit favored-agent mechanism that is not only robustly optimal but also Pareto robustly optimal. This mechanism selects the favored agent from among those whose types have the highest possible lower bound, and it sets the threshold to this lower bound.

(ii) For Markov ambiguity sets, we also construct an explicit favored-agent mechanism that is both robustly optimal as well as Pareto robustly optimal. This mechanism selects the favored agent from among those whose *expected* types have the highest possible lower bound, and it sets the threshold to the highest possible *actual* (not *expected*) type of the favored agent.

(iii) For Markov ambiguity sets with independent types, we identify again a favored-agent mechanism that is robustly optimal as well as Pareto robustly optimal. Here, the favored agent is chosen exactly as under an ordinary Markov ambiguity set, but the threshold is set to the the lowest possible *expected* (not *actual*) type of the favored agent.

Our results show that favored-agent mechanisms continue to play an important role in allocation with costly verification even if the unrealistic assumption of a commonly known type distribution is abandoned. In addition, they suggest that robust optimality alone may not be a sufficiently distinctive criterion to single out practically useful mechanisms under distributional ambiguity. However, our results also show that among possibly infinitely many robustly optimal mechanisms one can always find a simple and interpretable Pareto robustly optimal favored-agent mechanism. Unlike in the classical theory based on the assumption of a known type distribution [4], the favored agent as well as the threshold of our Pareto robustly optimal mechanisms are *independent* of the verification costs.

Literature review. The first treatise of allocation with costly verification is due to Townsend [19], who studies a principal-agent model with monetary transfers involving a single agent. Ben-Porath et al. [4] extend this model to multiple agents but rule out the possibility of monetary transfers. Their seminal work has inspired considerable follow-up research in economics. For example, Mylovanov and Zapechelnyuk [16] study a variant of the problem where verification is costless but the principal can impose only limited penalties and only partially recover the good when agents misreport their types. Li [15] accounts both for costly verification and for limited penalties, thereby unifying the models in [4] and [16]. Chua et al. [8] further extend the model in [4] to multiple homogeneous goods, assuming that each agent can receive at most one good. Bayrak et al. [3] spearhead the study of allocation with costly verification under distributional ambiguity. However, for reasons of computational tractability, they focus on ambiguity sets that contain only two discrete distributions. In this paper, we investigate ambiguity sets that contain infinitely many (not necessarily discrete) type distributions characterized by support and moment constraints, and we derive robustly as well as Pareto robustly optimal mechanisms in closed form.

This paper also contributes to the growing literature on (distributionally) robust mechanism design. Note that any mechanism design problem is inherently affected by uncertainty due to the private information held by different agents. The vast majority of the extant mechanism design literature models uncertainty through random variables that are governed by a commonly known probability distribution. The robust mechanism design literature, on the other hand, explicitly accounts for (non-stochastic) distributional uncertainty and seeks mechanisms that maximize the worst-case payoff, minimize the worst-case regret or minimize the worst-case cost in view of all distributions consistent with the information available. Robust mechanism design problems have recently emerged in different contexts such as pricing (see, *e.g.*, [2, 5, 7, 14, 17, 21]), auction design (see, *e.g.*, [1, 11, 13, 18]) or contracting (see, *e.g.*, [20]). This literature is too vast to be discussed in detail. To our best knowledge, however, we are the first to derive closed-form optimal and Pareto robustly optimal mechanisms for the allocation problem with costly verification under distributional ambiguity. Our paper is most closely related to the independent concurrent work by Chen et al. [6], who also study allocation problems with costly verification under distributional uncertainty. They assume that the agents have only access to a signal that correlates with their (unknown) types and that the principal has only access to the signal distribution, where the signal distribution is selected by a fictitious information designer. They identify the worst- and best-case signal distributions for the principal and the best-case signal distributions for the agents. They

also study a distributionally robust mechanism design problem over a (what we call a) Markov ambiguity set, where the agents' types have known means. However, Chen et al. [6] do not address the multiplicity of robustly optimal mechanisms, and consequently they do not identify Pareto robustly optimal mechanisms.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 introduces our model and establishes several preliminary results. Sections 3, 4 and 5 solve the proposed mechanism design problem for support-only ambiguity sets, Markov ambiguity sets, and Markov ambiguity sets with independent types, respectively. All proofs are relegated to the appendix.

Notation. For any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathbb{R}^I$, we denote by t_i the i^{th} component and by \mathbf{t}_{-i} the subvector of \mathbf{t} without t_i . The indicator function of a logical expression E is defined as $\mathbf{1}_E = 1$ if E is true and as $\mathbf{1}_E = 0$ otherwise. For any Borel sets $\mathcal{S} \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$ and $\mathcal{D} \subseteq \mathbb{R}^m$, we use $\mathcal{P}_0(\mathcal{S})$ and $\mathcal{L}(\mathcal{S}, \mathcal{D})$ to denote the family of all probability distributions on \mathcal{S} and the set of all bounded Borel-measurable functions from \mathcal{S} to \mathcal{D} , respectively. Random variables are designated by symbols with tildes (*e.g.*, $\tilde{\mathbf{t}}$), and their realizations are denoted by the same symbols without tildes (*e.g.*, \mathbf{t}).

2. Problem Statement and Preliminaries A principal aims to allocate a single good to one of $I \geq 2$ agents. Each agent $i \in \mathcal{I} = \{1, 2, \dots, I\}$ derives a strictly positive deterministic benefit from receiving the good and uses it to generate a value $t_i \in \mathcal{T}_i = [\underline{t}_i, \bar{t}_i]$ for the principal, where $0 \leq \underline{t}_i < \bar{t}_i < \infty$. We henceforth refer to t_i as agent i 's type, and we assume that t_i is privately known to agent i but unknown to the principal and the other agents. Thus, the principal perceives the vector $\tilde{\mathbf{t}} = (\tilde{t}_1, \tilde{t}_2, \dots, \tilde{t}_I)$ of all agents' types as a random vector governed by some probability distribution \mathbb{P}_0 on the type space $\mathcal{T} = \prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \mathcal{T}_i$. However, the principal can inspect agent i 's type at cost $c_i > 0$, and the inspection perfectly reveals t_i . In contrast to much of the existing literature on mechanism design, we assume here that neither the principal nor the agents know \mathbb{P}_0 . Instead, they are only aware that \mathbb{P}_0 belongs to some commonly known ambiguity set $\mathcal{P} \subseteq \mathcal{P}_0(\mathcal{T})$. On this basis, the principal aims to design a mechanism for allocating the good. A mechanism is an extensive-form game between the principal and the agents, where the principal commits in advance to her strategy (for a formal definition of extensive form games, see, *e.g.*, [10]). Such a mechanism may involve multiple stages of cheap talk statements by the agents, while the principal's actions include the decisions on whether to inspect certain agents and how to allocate the good. Monetary transfers are not allowed, *i.e.*, the agents and the principal cannot exchange money at any time.

Given any mechanism represented as an extensive form game, we denote by \mathcal{H}_i the family of all information sets of agent i and by $\mathcal{A}(h_i)$ the actions available to agent i at the nodes in information set $h_i \in \mathcal{H}_i$. All agents select their actions strategically in view of their individual preferences and the available information. In particular, agent i 's actions depend on his type t_i . Thus, we model any (mixed) strategy of agent i as a function $s_i \in \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{T}_i, \prod_{h_i \in \mathcal{H}_i} \mathcal{P}_0(\mathcal{A}(h_i)))$ that maps each of his possible types to a complete contingency plan $\mathbf{a}_i \in \prod_{h_i \in \mathcal{H}_i} \mathcal{P}_0(\mathcal{A}(h_i))$, which represents a probability distribution over the actions available to agent i for all information sets $h_i \in \mathcal{H}_i$. In the following we denote by $\text{prob}_i(a_i; \mathbf{t}, \mathbf{a}_{-i})$ the probability that agent $i \in \mathcal{I}$ receives the good under the principal's mechanism if the agents have types \mathbf{t} and play the contingency plans $\mathbf{a} = (a_1, a_2, \dots, a_I)$. We also restrict attention to mechanisms that admit an ex-post Nash equilibrium.

DEFINITION 1 (EX-POST NASH EQUILIBRIUM). An I -tuple $\mathbf{s} = (s_1, s_2, \dots, s_I)$ of mixed strategies $s_i \in \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{T}_i, \prod_{h_i \in \mathcal{H}_i} \mathcal{P}_0(\mathcal{A}(h_i)))$, $i \in \mathcal{I}$, is called an *ex-post Nash equilibrium* if

$$\text{prob}_i(s_i(t_i); \mathbf{t}, \mathbf{s}_{-i}(\mathbf{t}_{-i})) \geq \text{prob}_i(a_i; \mathbf{t}, \mathbf{s}_{-i}(\mathbf{t}_{-i})) \quad \forall i \in \mathcal{I}, \forall \mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}, \forall a_i \in \prod_{h_i \in \mathcal{H}_i} \mathcal{P}_0(\mathcal{A}(h_i)).$$

Recall that all agents assign a strictly positive deterministic value to the good, and therefore the expected utility of agent i conditional on $\tilde{\mathbf{t}} = \mathbf{t}$ is proportional to $\text{prob}_i(a_i; \mathbf{t}, \mathbf{a}_{-i})$. Under an ex-post Nash equilibrium, each agent i maximizes this probability simultaneously for all type scenarios $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$. Hence, it is clear that insisting on the existence of an ex-post Nash equilibrium restricts the

family of mechanisms to be considered. Note that Ben-Porath et. al. [4] study the larger class of mechanisms that admit a Bayesian Nash equilibrium. However, these mechanisms generically depend on the type distribution \mathbb{P}_0 and can therefore not be implemented by a principle who lacks knowledge of \mathbb{P}_0 . It is therefore natural to restrict attention to mechanisms that admit ex-post Nash equilibria, which remain well-defined in the face of distributional ambiguity. We further assume from now on that the principal is ambiguity averse in the sense that she wishes to maximize her worst-case expected payoff in view of all distributions in the ambiguity set \mathcal{P} .

The class of all mechanisms that admit an ex-post Nash equilibrium is vast. An important subclass is the family of all truthful direct mechanisms. A direct mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) consists of two I -tuples $\mathbf{p} = (p_1, p_2, \dots, p_I)$ and $\mathbf{q} = (q_1, q_2, \dots, q_I)$ of allocation functions $p_i, q_i \in \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{T}, [0, 1])$, $i \in \mathcal{I}$. Any direct mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is implemented as follows. First, the principal announces \mathbf{p} and \mathbf{q} , and then she collects a bid $t'_i \in \mathcal{T}_i$ from each agent $i \in \mathcal{I}$. Next, the principal implements randomized allocation and inspection decisions. Specifically, $p_i(\mathbf{t}')$ represents the total probability that agent i receives the good, while $q_i(\mathbf{t}')$ represents the probability that agent i receives the good *and* is inspected. If the inspection reveals that agent i has misrepresented his type, the principal penalizes the agent by repossessing the good. Any direct mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) must satisfy the feasibility conditions

$$q_i(\mathbf{t}') \leq p_i(\mathbf{t}') \quad \forall i \in \mathcal{I} \quad \text{and} \quad \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t}') \leq 1 \quad \forall \mathbf{t}' \in \mathcal{T}. \quad (\text{FC})$$

The first inequality in (FC) holds because only agents who receive the good may undergo an inspection. The second inequality in (FC) ensures that the principal allocates the good at most once.

A direct mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is called truthful if it is optimal for each agent i to report his true type $t'_i = t_i$. Thus, (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is truthful if and only if it satisfies the incentive compatibility constraints

$$p_i(\mathbf{t}) \geq p_i(t'_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) - q_i(t'_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) \quad \forall i \in \mathcal{I}, \forall t'_i \in \mathcal{T}_i, \forall \mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}, \quad (\text{IC})$$

which ensure that if all other agents report their true types \mathbf{t}_{-i} , then the probability $p_i(\mathbf{t})$ of agent i receiving the good if he reports his true type t_i exceeds the probability $p_i(t'_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) - q_i(t'_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i})$ of agent i receiving the good if he misreports his type as $t'_i \neq t_i$. By leveraging a variant of the Revelation Principle detailed in [4], one can show that for any mechanism that admits an ex-post Nash equilibrium there exists an equivalent truthful direct mechanism that duplicates or improves the principal's worst-case expected payoff; see the online appendix of [4] for details. Without loss of generality, the principal may thus focus on truthful direct mechanisms, which greatly simplifies the problem of finding an optimal mechanism. Consequently, the principal's mechanism design problem can be formalized as the following distributionally robust optimization problem.

$$\begin{aligned} z^* = \sup_{\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}} \quad & \inf_{\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}} \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) \tilde{t}_i - q_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \right] \\ \text{s.t.} \quad & p_i, q_i \in \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{T}, [0, 1]) \quad \forall i \in \mathcal{I} \\ & (\text{IC}), (\text{FC}) \end{aligned} \quad (\text{MDP})$$

From now on, we will use the shorthand \mathcal{X} to denote the set of all (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) feasible in (MDP). Note that the feasible set \mathcal{X} does not depend on the ambiguity set \mathcal{P} .

In the remainder we will demonstrate that (MDP) often admits multiple optimal solutions. While different optimal mechanisms generate the same expected profit in the worst case, they may offer dramatically different expected profits under generic non-worst-case distributions. This observation prompts us to seek mechanisms that are not only worst-case optimal but perform also well under *all* type distributions in the ambiguity set \mathcal{P} . More precisely, we hope to identify a

worst-case optimal mechanism for which there exists no other feasible mechanism that generates a non-inferior expected payoff under *every* distribution in \mathcal{P} and a higher expected payoff under *at least one* distribution in \mathcal{P} . A mechanism with this property is called *Pareto robustly optimal*. This terminology is borrowed from the theory of Pareto efficiency in classical robust optimization [12].

DEFINITION 2 (PARETO ROBUST OPTIMALITY). We say that a mechanism $(\mathbf{p}', \mathbf{q}')$ that is feasible in (MDP) *weakly Pareto robustly dominates* another feasible mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) if

$$\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p'_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) \tilde{t}_i - q'_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \right] \geq \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) \tilde{t}_i - q_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \right] \quad \forall \mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}. \quad (1)$$

If the inequality (1) holds for all $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$ and is strict for at least one $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$, we say that $(\mathbf{p}', \mathbf{q}')$ Pareto robustly dominates (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) . A mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) that is optimal in (MDP) is called Pareto robustly optimal if there exists no other feasible mechanism $(\mathbf{p}', \mathbf{q}')$ that Pareto robustly dominates (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) .

Note that any mechanism that weakly Pareto robustly dominates an optimal mechanism is also optimal in (MDP). Moreover, a Pareto robustly optimal mechanism typically exists. However, there may not exist any mechanism that Pareto robustly dominates all other feasible mechanisms.

We now define the notion of a favored-agent mechanism, which was first introduced in [4].

DEFINITION 3 (FAVORED-AGENT MECHANISM). A mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is a *favored-agent mechanism* if there is a favored agent $i^* \in \mathcal{I}$ and a threshold value $\nu^* \in \mathbb{R}$ such that the following hold.

- (i) If $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i < \nu^*$, then $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$, $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ and $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ for all $i \neq i^*$.
- (ii) If $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i > \nu^*$, then $p_{i'}(\mathbf{t}) = q_{i'}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ for some $i' \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (t_i - c_i)$ and $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ for all $i \neq i'$.

If $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i = \nu^*$, then we are free to define $(\mathbf{p}(\mathbf{t}), \mathbf{q}(\mathbf{t}))$ either as in (i) or as in (ii).

Intuitively, if t_i is smaller than the adjusted cost of inspection $c_i + \nu^*$ for every agent $i \neq i^*$, then we are in case (i), and the favored-agent mechanism allocates the good to the favored agent i^* without inspection. If there exists an agent $i \neq i^*$ whose type t_i exceeds the adjusted cost of inspection $c_i + \nu^*$, then we are in case (ii), and the favored-agent mechanism allocates the good to an agent i' with highest net payoff $t_{i'} - c_{i'}$, and this agent is inspected. Note that in case (ii) the good can also be allocated to the favored agent.

A favored-agent mechanism is uniquely determined by a favored agent i^* , a threshold value ν^* and two tie-breaking rules. The first tie-breaking rule determines the winning agent in case (ii) when $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (t_i - c_i)$ is not a singleton. From now on we will always use the lexicographic tie-breaking rule in this case, which sets $i' = \min \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (t_i - c_i)$. The second tie-breaking rule determines whether $(\mathbf{p}(\mathbf{t}), \mathbf{q}(\mathbf{t}))$ should be constructed as in case (i) or as in case (ii) when $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i = \nu^*$. From now on we say that a favored-agent mechanism is of type (i) if $(\mathbf{p}(\mathbf{t}), \mathbf{q}(\mathbf{t}))$ is always defined as in (i) and that it is of type (ii) if $(\mathbf{p}(\mathbf{t}), \mathbf{q}(\mathbf{t}))$ is always defined as in (ii) in case of a tie. Note that both tie-breaking rules are irrelevant in the Bayesian setting considered in [4], but they are relevant for us because the ambiguity sets \mathcal{P} to be studied below contain discrete distributions, under which ties have a strictly positive probability.

All favored-agent mechanisms are feasible in (MDP), see Remark 1 in [4]. In particular, they are incentive compatible, that is, the agents have no incentive to misreport their types. To see this, recall that under a favored-agent mechanism the winning agent receives the good with probability one, and the losing agents receive the good with probability zero. Thus, if an agent wins by truthful bidding, he cannot increase his chances of receiving the good by lying about his type. If an agent loses by truthful bidding, on the other hand, he has certainly no incentive to lower his bid t_i because the chances of receiving the good are non-decreasing in t_i . Increasing his bid t_i may earn him the good provided that $t_i - c_i$ attains the maximum of $t_{i'} - c_{i'}$ over $i' \in \mathcal{I}$. However, in this case the agent's type is inspected with probability one. Hence, the lie will be detected and the good will be repossessed. This shows that no agent benefits from lying under a favored-agent mechanism.

If $\mathcal{P} = \{\mathbb{P}_0\}$ is a singleton, the agents' types are independent under \mathbb{P}_0 , and \mathbb{P}_0 has an everywhere positive density on \mathcal{T} , then problem (MDP) is solved by a favored-agent mechanism [4, Theorem 1]. The favored-agent mechanism with favored agent i and threshold ν_i generates an expected payoff of

$$\begin{aligned} & \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}_0} [\tilde{t}_i \mathbb{1}_{\tilde{y}_i \leq \nu_i} + \max \{ \tilde{t}_i - c_i, \tilde{y}_i \} \mathbb{1}_{\tilde{y}_i \geq \nu_i}] \\ &= \int_{-\infty}^{\nu_i} \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}_0} [\tilde{t}_i] \rho_i(y_i) dy_i + \int_{\nu_i}^{\infty} \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}_0} [\max \{ \tilde{t}_i - c_i, y_i \}] \rho_i(y_i) dy_i, \end{aligned}$$

where the random variable $\tilde{y}_i = \max_{j \neq i} \tilde{t}_j - c_j$ with probability density function $\rho_i(y_i)$ is independent of \tilde{t}_i under \mathbb{P}_0 . The threshold value ν_i^* that maximizes this expression thus solves the first-order optimality condition

$$\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}_0} [\tilde{t}_i] = \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}_0} [\max \{ \tilde{t}_i - c_i, \nu_i \}]. \quad (2)$$

Note that ν_i^* is unique because the right hand side of (2) strictly increases in ν_i on the domain of interest; see [4, Theorem 2] for additional details. One can further prove that within the finite class of favored-agent mechanisms with optimal thresholds, the ones with the highest threshold are optimal. More specifically, any favored-agent mechanism with favored agent $i^* \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \nu_i^*$ and threshold $\nu^* = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \nu_i^*$ is optimal within the class of favored-agent mechanisms [4, Theorem 3]. Hence, any such mechanism must be optimal in (MDP). Finally, one can also show that for mutually distinct cost coefficients c_i , $i \in \mathcal{I}$, the optimal favored-agent mechanism is unique.

In the remainder of the paper we will address instances of the mechanism design problem (MDP) where \mathcal{P} is *not* a singleton, and we will prove that favored-agent mechanisms remain optimal. Under distributional ambiguity, however, the construction of i^* and ν^* described above is no longer well-defined because it depends on a particular choice of the probability distribution of $\tilde{\mathbf{t}}$. We will show that if \mathcal{P} is not a singleton, then there may be infinitely many optimal favored-agent mechanisms with different thresholds ν^* . In this situation, it is expedient to look for Pareto robustly optimal favored-agent mechanisms.

3. Support-Only Ambiguity Sets We now investigate the mechanism design problem (MDP) under the assumption that $\mathcal{P} = \mathcal{P}_0(\mathcal{T})$ is the support-only ambiguity set that contains all distributions supported on the type space \mathcal{T} . As \mathcal{P} contains all Dirac point distributions concentrating unit mass at any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$, the worst-case expected payoff over all distributions $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$ simplifies to the worst-case payoff over all type profiles $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$, and thus it is easy to verify that problem (MDP) simplifies to

$$\begin{aligned} z^* &= \sup_{\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}} \inf_{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}} \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t}) t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t}) c_i) \\ &\text{s.t. } p_i, q_i \in \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{T}, [0, 1]) \quad \forall i \in \mathcal{I} \\ &\quad (\text{IC}), (\text{FC}). \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

Similarly, it is easy to verify that an optimal mechanism $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ for problem (3) is Pareto robustly optimal if there exists no other feasible mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) with

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t}) t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t}) c_i) \geq \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i^*(\mathbf{t}) t_i - q_i^*(\mathbf{t}) c_i) \quad \forall \mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T},$$

where the inequality is strict for at least one type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$. If the principal knew the agents' types ex ante, she could simply allocate the good to the agent with the highest type and would not have to spend money on inspecting anyone. One can therefore show that the optimal value z^* of problem (3) is upper bounded by $\inf_{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}} \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$. The following proposition reveals that this upper bound is attained by an admissible mechanism.

PROPOSITION 1. *Problem (3) is solvable, and its optimal value is given by $z^* = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$.*

The next theorem shows that there are infinitely many optimal favored-agent mechanisms that attain the optimal value $z^* = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$ of problem (3).

THEOREM 1. *Any favored-agent mechanism with favored agent $i^* \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$ and threshold value $\nu^* \geq \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$ is optimal in problem (3).*

REMARK 1. Theorem 1 is sharp in the sense that there are problem instances for which any favored-agent mechanism with favored agent $i^* \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$ and threshold value $\nu^* < \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$ is strictly suboptimal in (3). To see this, consider an instance with $I = 2$ agents, where $\mathcal{T}_1 = [2, 8]$, $\mathcal{T}_2 = [0, 10]$ and $c_1 = c_2 = 1$. By Proposition 1, the supremum of (3) is given by $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i = 2$. Consider now any favored agent mechanism with favored agent $1 \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$ and threshold value $\nu < \underline{t}_1 = 2$. This mechanism is strictly suboptimal. To see this, assume first that $\nu < 1$. If $\mathbf{t} = (2, 2)$, then the mechanism allocates the good to agent 1 or agent 2 with verification and earns $t_1 - c_1 = t_2 - c_2 = 1$. Thus, the worst-case payoff over all $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$ cannot exceed 1, which is strictly smaller than the optimal worst-case payoff. Assume next that $\nu \in [1, 2)$. If $\mathbf{t} = (2, 2 + \nu/2) \in \mathcal{T}$, then the mechanism allocates the good to agent 2 with verification and earns $1 + \nu/2$. Thus, the worst-case payoff over all $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$ cannot exceed $1 + \nu/2$, which is strictly smaller than the optimal worst-case payoff. In summary, the mechanism is strictly suboptimal for all $\nu < 2$.

As the mechanism design problem (3) constitutes a convex program, any convex combination of optimal favored-agent mechanisms gives rise to yet another optimal mechanism. However, problem (3) also admits optimal mechanisms that can neither be interpreted as favored-agent mechanisms nor as convex combinations of favored-agent mechanisms. To see this, consider any favored-agent mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) with favored agent $i^* \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$ and threshold value $\nu^* \in \mathbb{R}$ satisfying $\nu^* \geq \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$ and $\nu^* > \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \bar{t}_i - c_i$. By Theorem 1, this mechanism is optimal in problem (3). The second condition on ν^* implies that this mechanism allocates the good to the favored agent without inspection for every $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$ (case (i) always prevails). Next, construct $\hat{\mathbf{t}} \in \mathcal{T}$ through $\hat{t}_i = \underline{t}_i$ for all $i \neq i^*$ and $\hat{t}_{i^*} = \bar{t}_{i^*}$, and note that $\hat{\mathbf{t}} \neq \underline{\mathbf{t}}$ because $\underline{t}_{i^*} < \bar{t}_{i^*}$. Finally, introduce another mechanism $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}')$, where \mathbf{q}' is defined through $q'_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$ and $i \neq i^*$ and

$$q'_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = \begin{cases} \min\{1, (\bar{t}_{i^*} - \underline{t}_{i^*})/c_{i^*}\} & \text{if } \mathbf{t} = \hat{\mathbf{t}}, \\ q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) & \text{if } \mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \setminus \{\hat{\mathbf{t}}\}. \end{cases}$$

One readily verifies that $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}')$ is feasible in (3). Indeed, as $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}')$ differs from (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) only in scenario $\hat{\mathbf{t}}$, and as (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is feasible, it suffices to check the feasibility of $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}')$ in scenario $\hat{\mathbf{t}}$. Indeed, the modified allocation rule \mathbf{q}' is valued in $[0, 1]^I$, and $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}')$ satisfies (FC) because $0 \leq q'_{i^*}(\hat{\mathbf{t}}) \leq 1 = p_{i^*}(\hat{\mathbf{t}})$, where the equality holds because the favored-agent mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent i^* with certainty. Similarly, the modified mechanism $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}')$ satisfies (IC) because

$$p_{i^*}(t_{i^*}, \hat{\mathbf{t}}_{-i^*}) = 1 \geq p_{i^*}(\hat{\mathbf{t}}) - q'_{i^*}(\hat{\mathbf{t}}) \quad \forall t_{i^*} \in \mathcal{T}_{i^*}.$$

In summary, we have thus shown that the mechanism $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}')$ is feasible in (3). To show that it is also optimal, recall that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is optimal with worst-case payoff $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$ and that $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}')$ differs from (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) only in scenario $\hat{\mathbf{t}}$. The principal's payoff in scenario $\hat{\mathbf{t}}$ amounts to

$$p_{i^*}(\hat{\mathbf{t}})\hat{t}_{i^*} - q'_{i^*}(\hat{\mathbf{t}})c_{i^*} = \hat{t}_{i^*} - q'_{i^*}(\hat{\mathbf{t}})c_{i^*} \geq \hat{t}_{i^*} - \frac{\hat{t}_{i^*} - \underline{t}_{i^*}}{c_{i^*}}c_{i^*} = \underline{t}_{i^*} = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i,$$

where the inequality follows from the definition of $q'_{i^*}(\hat{\mathbf{t}})$. Thus, the worst-case payoff of $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}')$ amounts to $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$, and $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}')$ is indeed optimal in (3). However, $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}')$ is *not* a favored-agent mechanism for otherwise $q'_{i^*}(\hat{\mathbf{t}})$ would have to vanish; see Definition 3. In addition, note that $p_{i^*}(\hat{\mathbf{t}}) - q'_{i^*}(\hat{\mathbf{t}}) < 1$ whereas $p_{i^*}(t_{i^*}, \hat{\mathbf{t}}_{-i^*}) - q'_{i^*}(t_{i^*}, \hat{\mathbf{t}}_{-i^*}) = 1$ for all $t_{i^*} \neq \hat{t}_{i^*}$. This implies via Lemma 1 below that $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}')$ is also *not* a convex combination of favored-agent mechanisms.

LEMMA 1. *If a mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is a convex combination of favored-agent mechanisms, then the function $p_i(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) - q_i(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i})$ is constant in $t_i \in \mathcal{T}_i$ for any fixed $i \in \mathcal{I}$ and $\mathbf{t}_{-i} \in \mathcal{T}_{-i}$.*

In summary, we have shown that the robust mechanism design problem (3) admits infinitely many optimal solutions. Some of these solutions represent favored-agent mechanisms, while others represent convex combinations of favored-agent mechanisms, and yet some others are different types of mechanisms. Moreover, note that the optimal mechanism characterized above by altering the inspection probabilities of an optimal favored-agent mechanism is Pareto robustly dominated by the same optimal favored-agent mechanism. Thus, robust optimality alone is not a sufficient differentiator to distinguish between desirable and undesirable mechanisms. This insight prompts us to seek Pareto robustly optimal mechanisms for problem (3). Next theorem shows that a favored-agent mechanism, proven to be optimal in Theorem 1, is also Pareto robustly optimal.

THEOREM 2. *Any favored-agent mechanism of type (i) with favored agent $i^* \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$ and threshold value $\nu^* = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$ is Pareto robustly optimal in problem (3).*

We sketch the proof idea in the special case when there are only two agents. To convey the key ideas without tedious case distinctions, we assume that $\underline{t}_1 > \underline{t}_2$ so that $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i = \{1\}$ is a singleton, and we assume that $\bar{t}_2 > c_2 + \underline{t}_1$ and $\bar{t}_1 > c_2 + \underline{t}_1$. We will use the following partition of the type space \mathcal{T} .

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{T}_I &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_2 - c_2 \leq \underline{t}_1 \text{ and } t_2 < \underline{t}_1\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{II} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_2 - c_2 \leq \underline{t}_1 \text{ and } t_2 \geq \underline{t}_1\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{III} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_2 - c_2 > \underline{t}_1 \text{ and } t_2 - c_2 > \underline{t}_1\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{IV} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_2 - c_2 > \underline{t}_1 \text{ and } t_2 - c_2 \leq \underline{t}_1\} \end{aligned}$$

The sets \mathcal{T}_I , \mathcal{T}_{II} , \mathcal{T}_{III} and \mathcal{T}_{IV} are visualized in Figure 1. Note that all of them are nonempty thanks to our standing assumptions about \underline{t}_1 , \underline{t}_2 and c_2 . We emphasize, however, that all simplifying assumptions as well as the restriction to two agents are relaxed in the formal proof of Theorem 2.

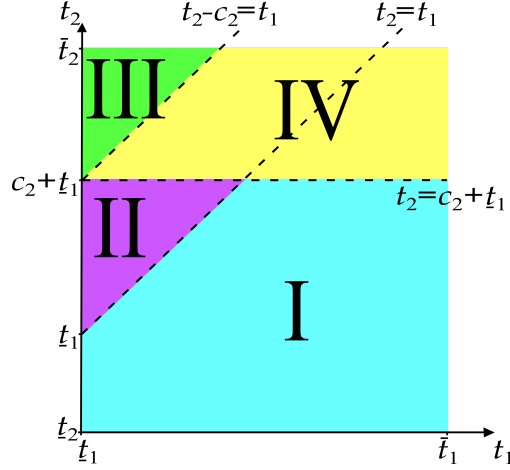
In the following we denote by $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ the favored-agent mechanism of type (i) with favored agent 1 and threshold value $\nu^* = \underline{t}_1$, and we will prove that this mechanism is Pareto robustly optimal in problem (3). To this end, assume for the sake of contradiction that there exists another mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) feasible in (3) that Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$. Thus, we have

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) \geq \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i^*(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i^*(\mathbf{t})c_i) \quad \forall \mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}, \quad (4)$$

where the inequality is strict for at least one $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$. The right hand side of (4) represents the principal's payoff in scenario \mathbf{t} under $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$. By the definition of a type (i) favored-agent mechanism, this payoff amounts to \underline{t}_1 when $t_2 - c_2 \leq \underline{t}_1$ (i.e., when $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$) and to $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i$ when $t_2 - c_2 > \underline{t}_1$ (i.e., when $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III} \cup \mathcal{T}_{IV}$). We will show that if (4) holds, then (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) must generate the same payoff as $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ under every type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$. In other words, (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot generate a strictly higher payoff than $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ under any type profile, which contradicts our assumption that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$.

We now investigate the subsets \mathcal{T}_I , \mathcal{T}_{II} , \mathcal{T}_{III} and \mathcal{T}_{IV} of the type space one by one. Consider first a type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_I$. For inequality (4) to hold in this scenario, the principal must earn at least \underline{t}_1 under the mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) . As $t_2 < \underline{t}_1$, $c_i > 0$ and (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) satisfies the (FC) constraints $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq 1$ and $q_i(\mathbf{t}) \geq 0$, this is only possible if $p_1(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_1(\mathbf{t}) = 0$. Thus, the allocation probabilities of the mechanisms (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ coincide on \mathcal{T}_I .

Consider now any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II}$. For inequality (4) to hold in scenario \mathbf{t} , the principal must earn at least \underline{t}_1 under the mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) . Incentive compatibility ensures that $p_1(\mathbf{t}) \geq p_1(\bar{t}_1, t_2) - q_1(\bar{t}_1, t_2) = 1$, where the equality holds because $(\bar{t}_1, t_2) \in \mathcal{T}_I$ thanks to the assumption $\bar{t}_1 > c_2 + \underline{t}_1$ and because we know from before that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent 1 without inspection in \mathcal{T}_I .

FIGURE 1. Partition of the type space \mathcal{T} .

Thus, the mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can only earn t_1 in scenario \mathbf{t} if $p_1(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_1(\mathbf{t}) = 0$. In summary, the allocation probabilities of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ must again coincide on \mathcal{T}_{II} .

Next, consider any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}$. Incentive compatibility ensures that $p_2(\mathbf{t}) - q_2(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_2(t_1, t_2) = 0$, where the equality holds because $(t_1, t_2) \in \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$ and because we know from before that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent 1 without inspection throughout $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$. As the allocation probabilities are non-negative and satisfy the (FC) condition $p_2(\mathbf{t}) \geq q_2(\mathbf{t})$, we may conclude that $p_2(\mathbf{t}) = q_2(\mathbf{t})$. Thus, the type of agent 2 is inspected if he wins the good in scenario \mathbf{t} . As $t_2 - c_2 > t_1 > t_1 - c_1$ for all $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}$, the inequality (4) implies that the principal must earn at least $t_2 - c_2$ under the mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) in scenario \mathbf{t} . This is only possible if $p_2(\mathbf{t}) = q_2(\mathbf{t}) = 1$. In summary, the allocation probabilities of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ must therefore also coincide in \mathcal{T}_{III} .

Finally, consider any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}$. Incentive compatibility ensures that $0 = p_1(\underline{t}_1, t_2) \geq p_1(\mathbf{t}) - q_1(\mathbf{t})$, where the equality holds because $(\underline{t}_1, t_2) \in \mathcal{T}_{III}$ and because we know from before that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent 2 in \mathcal{T}_{III} . Incentive compatibility also ensures that $0 = p_2(t_1, \underline{t}_2) \geq p_2(\mathbf{t}) - q_2(\mathbf{t})$, where the equality holds because $(t_1, \underline{t}_2) \in \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$ and because we know from before that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent 1 in $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$. We may thus conclude that $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I} = \{1, 2\}$. For the inequality (4) to hold in scenario \mathbf{t} , the principal must earn at least $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i$ under the mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) . As $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}$, this is only possible if (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to an agent $i' \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i$ and inspects this agent. Thus, the principal's payoff under (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) matches her payoff under $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ in region \mathcal{T}_{IV} .

The above reasoning shows that the principal's earnings coincide under (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ throughout the entire type space \mathcal{T} . Therefore, (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot Pareto robustly dominate $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$, which in turn proves that $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ is Pareto robustly optimal in problem (3).

4. Markov Ambiguity Sets Although simple and adequate for situations where there is no distributional information, support-only ambiguity sets may be perceived conservative in practice. Motivated by this fact, we next investigate the mechanism design problem (MDP) under the assumption that the ambiguity set is a Markov ambiguity set of the form

$$\mathcal{P} = \{\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}_0(\mathcal{T}) : \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\tilde{t}_i] \in [\underline{\mu}_i, \bar{\mu}_i] \forall i \in \mathcal{I}\}, \quad (5)$$

where $\underline{\mu}_i$ and $\bar{\mu}_i$ denote lower and upper bounds on the expected type $\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\tilde{t}_i]$ of agent $i \in \mathcal{I}$, respectively. We assume without much loss of generality that $\underline{t}_i < \underline{\mu}_i < \bar{\mu}_i < \bar{t}_i$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}$. Under Markov ambiguity sets, the principal has information about the agent's mean types in addition to the support information.

Recall that if the principal knew the agents' types ex ante, she could simply allocate the good to the agent with the highest type without inspection. Therefore, the optimal value z^* of problem (MDP) is upper bounded by the value $\inf_{\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}} \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \tilde{t}_i]$. In the next proposition, we formally establish this upper bound and show that if \mathcal{P} is a Markov ambiguity set of the form (5), this upper bound amounts to $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ and is moreover attained by an admissible mechanism. Thus, this upper bound coincides with z^* .

PROPOSITION 2. *If \mathcal{P} is a Markov ambiguity set of the form (5), then problem (MDP) is solvable and $z^* = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$.*

Proposition 2 shows that the principal can secure a worst-case expected payoff of $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ under Markov ambiguity sets. Hence, in comparison to support-only information, the additional information about the mean types of the agents increases the principal's optimal worst-case expected payoff from $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$ to $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$. In the next theorem, we characterize a class of favored-agent mechanisms that attain the optimal value $z^* = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ of problem (MDP) under Markov ambiguity sets.

THEOREM 3. *If \mathcal{P} is a Markov ambiguity set of the form (5), then any favored-agent mechanism with favored agent $i^* \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ and threshold value $\nu^* \geq \bar{t}_{i^*}$ is optimal in (MDP).*

REMARK 2. Theorem 3 is sharp in the sense that there are problem instances for which any favored-agent mechanism with favored agent $i^* \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ and threshold value $\nu^* < \bar{t}_{i^*}$ is strictly suboptimal. To see this, consider an example with $I = 2$ agents, where $\mathcal{T}_1 = [1, 6]$, $\mathcal{T}_2 = [0, 10]$ and $c_1 = c_2 = 2$. When the Markov set constrains the expected types to lie in $[4, 5]$ and $[3, 7]$ for agents 1 and 2, respectively, the optimal value of problem (MDP) is given by $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = 4$ in view of Proposition 2. Consider now any favored agent mechanism with favored agent $1 \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ and threshold value $\nu < \bar{t}_1 = 6$. In the following we prove that this mechanism is suboptimal. To this end, assume first that $\nu < 1$. If $\mathbf{t} = \underline{\boldsymbol{\mu}} = (4, 3)$, then the mechanism allocates the good to agent 1 with verification and earns $t_1 - c_1 = 2$. As the discrete distribution that assigns probability mass of one to scenario $\boldsymbol{\mu}$ is in (5), the worst-case expected payoff over all $\mathbb{P} \in (5)$ cannot exceed 2, which is strictly smaller than the optimal worst-case expected payoff. Assume next that $\nu \in [1, 6)$, and let $\varepsilon = 6 - \nu$ that is strictly positive by definition. Consider the discrete distribution \mathbb{P} that assigns a probability mass of $1/2$ to scenario $(6, 8 - \varepsilon/4)$ and of $1/2$ to scenario $(2, 0)$. One can verify that \mathbb{P} belongs to the Markov ambiguity set (5). The mechanism allocates the good to agent 2 with verification in scenario $(6, 8 - \varepsilon/4)$ as $t_2 - c_2 = (8 - \varepsilon/4) - 2 > \nu$ and as $t_2 - c_2 > 4 = t_1 - c_1$ and to agent 1 without verification in scenario $(2, 0)$. The expected payoff of the aforementioned mechanism with respect to \mathbb{P} thus amounts to $(1/2)(6 - \varepsilon/4) + (1/2)2 = 4 - \varepsilon/8$. Thus, the worst-case expected payoff over all $\mathbb{P} \in (5)$ cannot exceed $4 - \varepsilon/8$, which is strictly smaller than the optimal worst-case expected payoff. In summary, the mechanism is strictly suboptimal for all $\nu < 6$.

In the remainder of this section, we seek Pareto robustly optimal mechanisms for problem (MDP) under Markov ambiguity sets. To this end, we first present a set of preliminary results. Even though some of the following results rely on the assumption that the set $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ is a singleton, *i.e.*, there is a single candidate for the optimal favored agent, the Pareto robust optimality result of this section will not depend on this assumption.

LEMMA 2. *If \mathcal{P} is a Markov ambiguity set of the form (5) and $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{i^*\}$ is a singleton, then, for any type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$, there exist a scenario $\hat{\mathbf{t}} \in \mathcal{T}$, where $\max_{i \neq i^*} \hat{t}_i < \hat{t}_{i^*}$, and a discrete distribution $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$ that satisfy the following properties: (i) $\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\tilde{t}_i] = \underline{\mu}_i, \forall i \in \mathcal{I}$, (ii) $\mathbb{P}(\mathbf{t} \in \{\mathbf{t}, \hat{\mathbf{t}}\}) = 1$, (iii) $\mathbb{P}(\tilde{\mathbf{t}} = \mathbf{t}) > 0$.*

The next proposition formalizes a necessary and sufficient optimality condition using Lemma 2.

PROPOSITION 3. *If \mathcal{P} is a Markov ambiguity set of the form (5) and $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{i^*\}$ is a singleton, then a mechanism $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) \in \mathcal{X}$ is optimal in (MDP) if and only if*

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) \geq t_{i^*} \quad \forall \mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}. \quad (6)$$

Proposition 3 reveals that the type t_{i^*} of agent i^* is an important reference point for optimality if $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{i^*\}$ is a singleton. A mechanism is optimal in (MDP) if and only if it earns a payoff of at least t_{i^*} under any type profile \mathbf{t} . Our next result shows that this optimality condition and incentive compatibility constraints uniquely determine the allocation probabilities of any optimal mechanism throughout a subset of all scenarios. In particular, an optimal mechanism in (MDP) should allocate the good to agent i^* without inspection if no other agent reports a value $t_i - c_i$ that exceeds the highest possible type \bar{t}_{i^*} of agent i^* .

PROPOSITION 4. *If \mathcal{P} is a Markov ambiguity set of the form (5) and $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{i^*\}$ is a singleton, then any optimal mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) in (MDP) satisfies the following property. For any type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$ such that $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i < \bar{t}_{i^*}$, $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$.*

We outline the proof idea in the special case when there are only two agents and when $\underline{\mu}_2 < \underline{\mu}_1$ so that $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{1\}$ is a singleton. We also assume that $\bar{t}_2 > c_2 + \bar{t}_1$ to prevent tedious case distinctions. Our arguments make use of the following partition of the type space \mathcal{T} .

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{T}_I &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_2 < t_1\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{II} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_2 \geq t_1 \text{ and } t_2 < \bar{t}_1\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{III} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_2 \geq t_1, t_2 \geq \bar{t}_1 \text{ and } t_2 - c_2 < t_1\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{IV} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_2 \geq t_1, t_2 \geq \bar{t}_1, t_2 - c_2 \geq t_1 \text{ and } t_2 - c_2 < \bar{t}_1\} \\ \mathcal{T}_V &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_2 \geq t_1, t_2 \geq \bar{t}_1, t_2 - c_2 \geq t_1 \text{ and } t_2 - c_2 \geq \bar{t}_1\} \end{aligned} \quad (7)$$

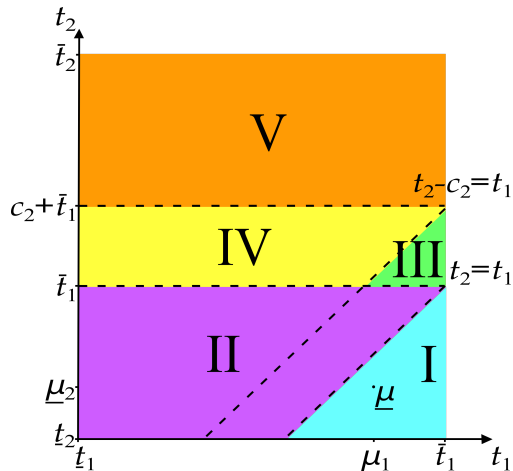
Note that some of the conditions in set definitions above are redundant and given for ease of readability. Sets $\mathcal{T}_I - \mathcal{T}_V$ are illustrated in Figure 2. One can show that all of these sets are nonempty thanks to our standing assumptions about $\underline{\mu}_1, \underline{\mu}_2, \bar{t}_1, \bar{t}_2$ and c_2 . We emphasize, however, that all simplifying assumptions as well as the restriction to two agents are relaxed in the formal proof of Proposition 4.

In the following we use the optimality condition (6) that is given in Proposition 3, that is, any optimal mechanism must earn at least t_1 in any scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$. We will prove that, when agent 2 fails to report a type t_2 that is at least $c_2 + \bar{t}_1$, inequality (6) can be satisfied only if the good is allocated to agent 1 without inspection. Note that we have $t_2 < c_2 + \bar{t}_1$ under any scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \setminus \mathcal{T}_V$.

We now assume that a mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is optimal and investigate the subsets $\mathcal{T}_I, \mathcal{T}_{II}, \mathcal{T}_{III}$ and \mathcal{T}_{IV} of the type space one by one. Consider first a type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_I$. As $t_2 < t_1$, $c_1 > 0$ and (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) satisfies the (FC) constraints $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq 1$ and $q_1(\mathbf{t}) \geq 0$, the mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can earn a payoff that is at least t_1 only if $p_1(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_1(\mathbf{t}) = 0$.

Consider now any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II}$. Incentive compatibility ensures that $p_1(\mathbf{t}) \geq p_1(\bar{t}_1, t_2) - q_1(\bar{t}_1, t_2) = 1$, where the equality holds because $(\bar{t}_1, t_2) \in \mathcal{T}_I$ and because we know from before that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent 1 without inspection in \mathcal{T}_I . Thus, the mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can earn a payoff that is at least t_1 in scenario \mathbf{t} only if $q_1(\mathbf{t}) = 0$. In summary, we must again have $p_1(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_1(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ so that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can satisfy (6).

Next, consider any scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}$. Incentive compatibility ensures that $p_2(\mathbf{t}) - q_2(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_2(t_1, \bar{t}_2) = 0$, where the equality holds because $(t_1, \bar{t}_2) \in \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$ and because we know from before that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent 1 without inspection throughout $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$. As the allocation probabilities are non-negative and satisfy the (FC) condition $p_2(\mathbf{t}) \geq q_2(\mathbf{t})$, we may conclude that $p_2(\mathbf{t}) = q_2(\mathbf{t})$. Thus, the report of agent 2 is inspected if he wins the good in scenario \mathbf{t} . As


 FIGURE 2. Partition of the type space \mathcal{T} .

$t_2 - c_2 < t_1$ for all $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}$, the mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can earn a payoff that is at least t_1 only if $p_1(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_1(\mathbf{t}) = 0$.

Finally, consider any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}$. Incentive compatibility ensures that $p_1(\mathbf{t}) \geq p_1(\bar{t}_1, t_2) - q_1(\bar{t}_1, t_2) = 1$, where the equality holds because $(\bar{t}_1, t_2) \in \mathcal{T}_{III}$ and because we know from before that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent 1 without inspection in \mathcal{T}_{III} . Thus, the mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can earn a payoff that is at least t_1 in scenario \mathbf{t} only if $q_1(\mathbf{t}) = 0$. Hence, we must again have $p_1(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_1(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ so that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can satisfy (6).

The reasoning above shows that, under the assumption $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{1\}$, any optimal mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) should give the good to agent 1 without inspection in any scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$ that satisfies $t_2 - c_2 < \bar{t}_1$.

The allocation probabilities given in Proposition 4 are satisfied by the favored-agent mechanism that assigns i^* as the favored agent and \bar{t}_{i^*} as the threshold. Furthermore, both type (i) and type (ii) version of this favored-agent mechanism satisfy the optimality condition in Proposition 3 so that they are both optimal when $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{i^*\}$. In our next result, we show that any other mechanism can only *weakly* Pareto robustly dominate the type (ii) variant of this favored-agent mechanism when $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{i^*\}$ is a singleton.

PROPOSITION 5. *Assume that \mathcal{P} is a Markov ambiguity set of the form (5) and $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{i^*\}$ is a singleton. Denote by $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ the allocation probabilities of the type (ii) favored-agent mechanism with the favored agent i^* and threshold $\nu^* = \bar{t}_{i^*}$. If a mechanism $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) \in \mathcal{X}$ weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$, then it satisfies*

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) = \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i^*(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i^*(\mathbf{t})c_i) \quad \forall \mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}.$$

Proposition 5 states that if a mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$, then mechanisms (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ earn the same payoff in all scenarios $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$. This implies that no other mechanism can (strongly) Pareto robustly dominate $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$.

We sketch the proof idea for the two agents case detailed before. Recall that for this special case, we assume that $\underline{\mu}_2 < \underline{\mu}_1$ so that $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{1\}$ is a singleton and that $\bar{t}_2 > c_2 + \bar{t}_1$. We will again use the partition $\mathcal{T}_I - \mathcal{T}_V$ given in (7) and illustrated in Figure 2. In the following we first show that any mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) that weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ should be optimal. Hence, by Proposition 4, mechanisms (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ generate the same payoff throughout $\mathcal{T} \setminus \mathcal{T}_V$. Then, we will prove that the two mechanisms earn the same payoff also in \mathcal{T}_V .

To this end, fix a mechanism $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) \in \mathcal{X}$ and assume that mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$, *i.e.*,

$$\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) \tilde{t}_i - q_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \right] \geq \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i^*(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) \tilde{t}_i - q_i^*(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \right] \quad \forall \mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}.$$

By Theorem 3, $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ is optimal in (MDP). As the expected payoff of mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is at least as high as that of mechanism $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ for any $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$, mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is also optimal. As $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{1\}$ is a singleton and as (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is optimal, we know by Proposition 4 that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent 1 without inspection if $t_2 - c_2 < \bar{t}_1$, *i.e.*, if $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \setminus \mathcal{T}_V$. Thus, the allocation probabilities of the mechanisms (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ coincide on $\mathcal{T} \setminus \mathcal{T}_V$.

Next, consider any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V$. Incentive compatibility ensures that $0 = p_2(t_1, t_2) \geq p_2(\mathbf{t}) - q_2(\mathbf{t})$, where the equality holds because $(t_1, t_2) \in \mathcal{T} \setminus \mathcal{T}_V$ and because we know that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent 1 without inspection in $\mathcal{T} \setminus \mathcal{T}_V$. We may thus conclude that $p_2(\mathbf{t}) = q_2(\mathbf{t})$. Then, in scenario \mathbf{t} , the principal's payoff under (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) satisfies

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t}) t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t}) c_i) \leq p_2(\mathbf{t})(t_2 - c_2) + p_1(\mathbf{t}) t_1 \leq t_2 - c_2 = \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i^*(\mathbf{t}) t_i - q_i^*(\mathbf{t}) c_i), \quad (8)$$

where the second inequality follows from the definition of \mathcal{T}_V that implies that $t_2 - c_2 \geq t_1$. The payoff of mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) therefore cannot exceed the one of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ throughout \mathcal{T}_V .

We will finally show that mechanisms (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ earn the same payoff on \mathcal{T}_V , *i.e.*, inequalities (8) hold as equalities. To this end, assume for the sake of contradiction that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) earns a strictly lower payoff in scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V$, *i.e.*,

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t}) t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t}) c_i) < t_2 - c_2 = \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i^*(\mathbf{t}) t_i - q_i^*(\mathbf{t}) c_i).$$

By Lemma 2, there exists $\hat{\mathbf{t}} \in \mathcal{T}$, where $\max_{i \neq i^*} \hat{t}_i < \hat{t}_{i^*}$, and $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$ that satisfy: (i) $\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\tilde{t}_i] = \underline{\mu}_i \quad \forall i \in \mathcal{I}$, (ii) $\mathbb{P}(\tilde{\mathbf{t}} \in \{\mathbf{t}, \hat{\mathbf{t}}\}) = 1$, (iii) $\mathbb{P}(\tilde{\mathbf{t}} = \mathbf{t}) > 0$. We already know from previous arguments that the payoff of mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is lower than or equal to the payoff of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ in scenario $\hat{\mathbf{t}}$. In view of (ii) and (iii), the expected payoff earned by (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is thus strictly lower than the one of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ under \mathbb{P} . As $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$, this results in a contradiction with our initial assumption that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$. Thus, mechanisms (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ earn the same payoff also on \mathcal{T}_V .

Proposition 5 shows that no other mechanism can Pareto robustly dominate the type (ii) favored-agent mechanism with the favored agent i^* and threshold $\nu^* = \bar{t}_{i^*}$ and this mechanism is thus Pareto robustly optimal given that $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{i^*\}$ is a singleton. Next theorem proves that this Pareto robust optimality result continues to hold even when $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ is not a singleton.

THEOREM 4. *If \mathcal{P} is equal to a Markov ambiguity set of the form (5), then any favored-agent mechanism of type (ii) with favored agent $i^* \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ and threshold value $\nu^* = \bar{t}_{i^*}$ is Pareto robustly optimal in (MDP).*

In the proof of Theorem 4, given a favored-agent mechanism $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ of type (ii) with favored agent $i^* \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ and threshold value $\nu^* = \bar{t}_{i^*}$, we construct an auxiliary ambiguity set $\mathcal{P}_\epsilon \subseteq \mathcal{P}$ by increasing $\underline{\mu}_{i^*}$ to $\underline{\mu}_{i^*} + \epsilon$, where $\epsilon > 0$ is sufficiently small. By construction, agent i^* is the unique agent with the highest lower bound on the expected type under \mathcal{P}_ϵ . As $\mathcal{P}_\epsilon \subseteq \mathcal{P}$, any mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) that weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ under \mathcal{P} should also weakly Pareto robustly dominate $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ under \mathcal{P}_ϵ . We then invoke Proposition 5 for \mathcal{P}_ϵ to conclude that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ generate the same payoff in every scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$.

5. Markov Ambiguity Sets with Independent Types Markov ambiguity sets studied in Section 4 contain distributions under which the agents' types are dependent. Throughout this section, we focus on a subset of the Markov ambiguity sets studied in Section 4 and assume that the agents' types are known to be mutually independent. In particular, we consider the Markov ambiguity set with independent types defined as

$$\mathcal{P} = \left\{ \mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}_0(\mathcal{T}) : \begin{array}{l} \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\tilde{t}_i] \in [\underline{\mu}_i, \bar{\mu}_i] \quad \forall i \in \mathcal{I}, \\ \tilde{t}_1, \dots, \tilde{t}_I \text{ are mutually independent under } \mathbb{P} \end{array} \right\}. \quad (9)$$

As the Markov ambiguity set with independent types in (9) is a subset of the Markov ambiguity set in (5), the principal's optimal worst-case expected payoff cannot be lower than $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ in view of Proposition 2. The next proposition shows that the principal cannot improve her optimal worst-case expected payoff using the additional information of independence.

PROPOSITION 6. *If \mathcal{P} is a Markov ambiguity set of the form (9), then problem (MDP) is solvable and $z^* = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$.*

The proof of Proposition 6 follows immediately from that of Proposition 2 because the agents' types are independent under the Dirac distribution that concentrates unit mass at $\underline{\mu}$.

Next theorem shows that there are again infinitely many optimal favored-agent mechanisms. The set of optimal favored-agent mechanisms characterized in Theorem 5 resembles to the one characterized in Theorem 3. Particularly, the selection criteria of a favored agent remains the same whereas the principal can select a lower threshold with the additional information of independence. Recall that by Remark 2 any choice of threshold \bar{t}_i^* smaller than the highest possible type \bar{t}_i^* of the favored agent is suboptimal if the agents' types are not necessarily independent, *i.e.*, if the ambiguity set is given by (5).

THEOREM 5. *If \mathcal{P} is a Markov ambiguity set of the form (9), then any favored-agent mechanism with favored agent $i^* \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ and threshold value $\nu^* \geq \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ is optimal in (MDP).*

REMARK 3. Theorem 5 is sharp in the sense that there are problem instances for which any favored-agent mechanism with favored agent $i^* \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ and threshold value $\nu^* < \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ is strictly suboptimal. To see this, recall the example from Remark 2 with two agents. The type sets are $\mathcal{T}_1 = [1, 6]$, $\mathcal{T}_2 = [0, 10]$, the verification costs are $c_1 = c_2 = 2$, and the Markov set constrains the expected types to lie in $[4, 5]$ and $[3, 7]$ for agents 1 and 2, respectively. Under independent types assumption, the optimal value of problem (MDP) is given by $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ in view of Proposition 6. Consider now any favored agent mechanism with favored agent 1 $\in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ and threshold value $\nu < \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = 4$. In the following, we prove that this mechanism is suboptimal. To this end, assume first that $\nu < 1$. If $\mathbf{t} = \underline{\mu} = (4, 3)$, then the mechanism allocates the good to agent 1 with verification and earns a payoff of $t_1 - c_1 = 2$. As the discrete distribution that assigns probability mass of one to scenario $\underline{\mu}$ is in (9), the worst-case expected payoff over all $\mathbb{P} \in (9)$ cannot exceed 2, which is strictly less than the optimal worst-case expected payoff. Assume next that $\nu \in [1, 4)$, and let $\varepsilon = 4 - \nu$ that is strictly positive by definition. Consider the discrete distribution \mathbb{P} that assigns a probability mass of 1/2 to scenario $(4, 6 - \varepsilon/4)$ and of 1/2 to scenario $(4, 2)$. One can verify that \mathbb{P} belongs to the Markov ambiguity set (9). The mechanism allocates the good to agent 2 with verification in scenario $(4, 6 - \varepsilon/4)$ as $t_2 - c_2 = (6 - \varepsilon/4) - 2 > \nu$ and as $t_2 - c_2 > 2 = t_1 - c_1$ and to agent 1 without verification in scenario $(4, 2)$. The expected payoff of the aforementioned mechanism with respect to \mathbb{P} thus amounts to $(1/2)(4 - \varepsilon/4) + (1/2)4 = 4 - \varepsilon/8$. Thus, the worst-case expected payoff over all $\mathbb{P} \in (9)$ cannot exceed $4 - \varepsilon/8$, which is strictly smaller than the optimal worst-case expected payoff. In summary, the mechanism is strictly suboptimal for all $\nu < 4$.

Similarly to previous sections, we next seek Pareto robustly optimal mechanisms for problem (MDP) under Markov ambiguity sets with independent types. To this end, we first present a few preliminary results some of which require the assumption that the set $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ is a singleton, *i.e.*, there is a single candidate for the favored agent. However, the Pareto robust optimality result of this section will not depend on this assumption.

LEMMA 3. *If \mathcal{P} is a Markov ambiguity set of the form (9) and $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{i^*\}$ is a singleton, then, for any type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$ and any $\mu_{i^*} \in [\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \bar{\mu}_{i^*}]$, there exist a scenario $\hat{\mathbf{t}} \in \mathcal{T}$, where $\max_{i \neq i^*} \hat{t}_i < \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$, and a discrete distribution $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$ that satisfy the following properties: (i) $\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\hat{t}_{i^*}] = \mu_{i^*}$, (ii) $\mathbb{P}(t_i \in \{t_i, \hat{t}_i\}) = 1$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}$, (iii) $\mathbb{P}(\hat{\mathbf{t}} = \mathbf{t}) > 0$.*

Next technical lemma establishes a payoff equivalence result and will be used to prove the main Pareto robust optimality result of this section.

LEMMA 4. *Assume that \mathcal{P} is equal to a Markov ambiguity set of the form (9), and $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{i^*\}$ is a singleton. Consider any subset $\mathcal{T}' = \prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \mathcal{T}'_i$ of \mathcal{T} such that (i) $\mathcal{T}'_i \supseteq \{t_i \in \mathcal{T}_i \mid t_i < \underline{\mu}_{i^*}\}$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^*\}$ and (ii) either $\mathcal{T}'_{i^*} \subseteq [\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \bar{\mu}_{i^*}]$ or $\mathcal{T}'_{i^*} = \mathcal{T}_{i^*}$. For any $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}), (\mathbf{p}', \mathbf{q}') \in \mathcal{X}$, if (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}', \mathbf{q}')$ and*

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) \leq \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p'_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q'_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) \quad \forall \mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}', \quad (10)$$

then (10) holds with equality.

We next extend the payoff equivalence result of Lemma 4 to the entire set \mathcal{T} of type profiles for a specific favored-agent mechanism and show that any other mechanism can only weakly Pareto robustly dominate the type (i) variant of this favored-agent mechanism when $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{i^*\}$ is a singleton.

PROPOSITION 7. *Assume that \mathcal{P} is equal to a Markov ambiguity set of the form (9), and $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{i^*\}$ is a singleton. Denote by $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ the allocation probabilities of the type (i) favored-agent mechanism with the favored agent i^* and threshold $\nu^* = \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$. If a mechanism $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) \in \mathcal{X}$ weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$, then it satisfies*

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) = \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i^*(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i^*(\mathbf{t})c_i) \quad \forall \mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}.$$

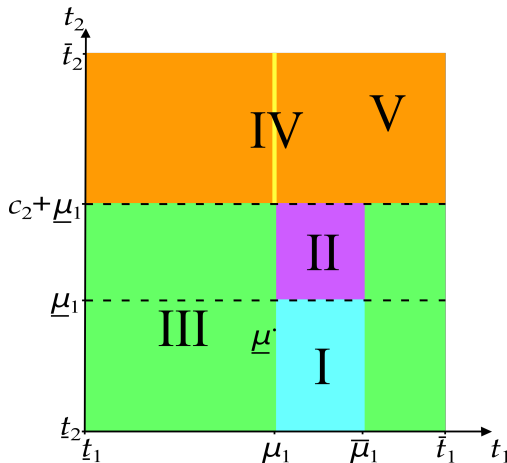
Proposition 7 states that if a mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$, then mechanisms (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ earn the same payoff in all scenarios $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$. This implies that no other mechanism can (strongly) Pareto robustly dominate $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$.

We first sketch the proof idea focusing on a special case with two agents, where $\underline{\mu}_2 < \underline{\mu}_1$ so that $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{1\}$ is a singleton. We also assume that $\bar{t}_2 > c_2 + \underline{\mu}_1$ to prevent tedious case distinctions. Consider the following partition of the type space \mathcal{T} .

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{T}_I &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_1 \in (\underline{\mu}_1, \bar{\mu}_1] \text{ and } t_2 \leq \underline{\mu}_1\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{II} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_1 \in (\underline{\mu}_1, \bar{\mu}_1], t_2 > \underline{\mu}_1 \text{ and } t_2 - c_2 \leq \underline{\mu}_1\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{II'} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_1 \in (\underline{\mu}_1, \bar{\mu}_1], t_2 > \underline{\mu}_1 \text{ and } t_2 - c_2 > \underline{\mu}_1\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{III} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_1 \notin (\underline{\mu}_1, \bar{\mu}_1] \text{ and } t_2 - c_2 \leq \underline{\mu}_1\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{III'} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_1 \notin (\underline{\mu}_1, \bar{\mu}_1] \text{ and } t_2 - c_2 > \underline{\mu}_1\} \end{aligned}$$

Note that the condition $t_2 > \underline{\mu}_1$ in $\mathcal{T}_{II'}$ is redundant and given for ease of readability. We next show that we can replace the sets $\mathcal{T}_{II'}$ and $\mathcal{T}_{III'}$ with

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{T}_{IV} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_1 = \underline{\mu}_1 \text{ and } t_2 - c_2 > \underline{\mu}_1\} \\ \mathcal{T}_V &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_1 \neq \underline{\mu}_1 \text{ and } t_2 - c_2 > \underline{\mu}_1\} \end{aligned}$$


 FIGURE 3. Partition of the type space \mathcal{T} .

and obtain a different partition of \mathcal{T} . To this end, first note that the intersection of \mathcal{T}_{IV} and \mathcal{T}_V is empty. Moreover, their union is given by $\{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_2 - c_2 > \underline{\mu}_1\}$ that is the same as the union of $\mathcal{T}_{II'}$ and $\mathcal{T}_{III'}$. Thus, $\mathcal{T}_I, \mathcal{T}_{II}, \mathcal{T}_{III}, \mathcal{T}_{IV}, \mathcal{T}_V$ is a partition of the type space \mathcal{T} . We focus on this partition to simplify the arguments below. Sets $\mathcal{T}_I, \mathcal{T}_{II}, \mathcal{T}_{III}, \mathcal{T}_{IV}$ and \mathcal{T}_V are illustrated in Figure 3. Thanks to our standing assumptions, one can verify that all of these sets are nonempty. We emphasize that all simplifying assumptions will be relaxed in the formal proof of Proposition 7.

In the following, we show that any mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) that weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ generates the same payoff as $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ in all scenarios $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$. We will prove this claim separately for each partition set and make use of Lemma 4. To this end, fix a mechanism $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) \in \mathcal{X}$ and assume that mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$.

We first consider \mathcal{T}_I and note that it can be written as $\mathcal{T}_I = \mathcal{T}_{I1} \times \mathcal{T}_{I2} = (\underline{\mu}_1, \bar{\mu}_1] \times [t_2, \underline{\mu}_1]$. The principal's payoff under (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) in any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_I$ is given by $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) \leq \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i \leq t_1$, where the first inequality holds because $q_i(\mathbf{t})$ and c_i are non-negative, and the second inequality follows from (FC) and that $t_1 > t_2$ by definition of \mathcal{T}_I . As $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ generates a payoff of t_1 in any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_I$ by definition, the payoff of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ is larger than or equal to the payoff of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) in every $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_I$. We assumed that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$, and we showed that the payoff of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ cannot be lower than that of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) in every $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_I$. As $\mathcal{T}_I = \mathcal{T}_{I1} \times \mathcal{T}_{I2} = (\underline{\mu}_1, \bar{\mu}_1] \times [t_2, \underline{\mu}_1]$ satisfies the assumptions (i) and (ii) in Lemma 4, we can thus conclude that the payoffs of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ coincide throughout \mathcal{T}_I by Lemma 4. Moreover, note that, for any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_I$, we have $t_2 < t_1$, $q_i(\mathbf{t}) \geq 0$, $c_i > 0$ and $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq 1$. This implies that the payoff $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i)$ of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can be t_1 only if $p_1(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_1(\mathbf{t}) = 0$.

Consider now any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II}$. Incentive compatibility ensures that $p_2(\mathbf{t}) - q_2(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_2(t_1, t_2) = 0$, where the equality holds because $(t_1, t_2) \in \mathcal{T}_I$ and because we know from before that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent 1 without inspection throughout \mathcal{T}_I . As the allocation probabilities are non-negative and satisfy the (FC) condition $p_2(\mathbf{t}) \geq q_2(\mathbf{t})$, we thus have $p_2(\mathbf{t}) = q_2(\mathbf{t})$. This implies that the principal's payoff in \mathbf{t} satisfies $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) \leq p_1(\mathbf{t})t_1 + p_2(\mathbf{t})(t_2 - c_2) \leq t_1$, where the first inequality holds because $q_1(\mathbf{t})$ and c_1 are non-negative and $p_2(\mathbf{t}) = q_2(\mathbf{t})$, and the second inequality follows from (FC) and $t_2 - c_2 \leq \underline{\mu}_1 < t_1$. As $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ generates a payoff of t_1 in any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II}$ by definition, the payoff of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ cannot be lower than that of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) throughout \mathcal{T}_{II} . We next show that we can use Lemma 4 to conclude that the payoffs of two mechanisms should coincide throughout \mathcal{T}_{II} under our initial assumption, that is, (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$. To this end, note that $\mathcal{T}' = \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$ can be written as $\mathcal{T}' = \mathcal{T}'_1 \times \mathcal{T}'_2 = (\underline{\mu}_1, \bar{\mu}_1] \times [t_2, c_2 + \underline{\mu}_1]$, and \mathcal{T}' satisfies the assumptions (i) and (ii) in Lemma 4. We showed that the payoff of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ is at least as high as the payoff of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) in $\mathcal{T}' = \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$. Thus, by Lemma 4, the payoff generated

by (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ must coincide throughout $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}' = \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$. Moreover, note that, for any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II}$, we have $t_2 - c_2 \leq \underline{\mu}_1 < t_1$, $q_i(\mathbf{t}) \geq 0$, $c_i > 0$ and $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq 1$. This implies that the payoff $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i)$ of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can be t_1 only if $p_1(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_1(\mathbf{t}) = 0$.

Next, consider any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}$. Incentive compatibility ensures that $p_1(\mathbf{t}) \geq p_1(\bar{\mu}_1, t_2) - q_1(\bar{\mu}_1, t_2) = 1$, where the equality holds because $(\bar{\mu}_1, t_2) \in \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$ and because we know from before that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent 1 without inspection throughout $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$. Thus, the principal's payoff satisfies $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) \leq p_1(\mathbf{t})t_1 - q_1(\mathbf{t})c_1 \leq t_1$, where the first inequality follows from $p_1(\mathbf{t}) = 1$, (FC) and non-negativity of \mathbf{q} , and the second inequality holds because $q_1(\mathbf{t})$ and c_1 are non-negative. As $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ earns a payoff of t_1 in any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}$ by definition, the payoff of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ thus cannot be lower than that of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) throughout \mathcal{T}_{III} . Similarly to before, we next use Lemma 4 to show that the payoffs of the two mechanism should coincide throughout \mathcal{T}_{III} . To this end, note that $\mathcal{T}'' = \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III}$ can be written as $\mathcal{T}'' = \mathcal{T}_I' \times \mathcal{T}_2'' = \mathcal{T}_1 \times [t_2, c_2 + \underline{\mu}_1]$, and \mathcal{T}'' satisfies the assumptions (i) and (ii) in Lemma 4. We showed that the payoff of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ is at least as high as the payoff of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) in $\mathcal{T}'' = \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III}$. By Lemma 4, the payoffs of the two mechanisms must therefore coincide throughout $\mathcal{T}'' = \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III}$. Moreover, for any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}$, as $p_1(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ by incentive compatibility, $p_1(\mathbf{t}) \geq q_1(\mathbf{t}) \geq 0$, $c_1 > 0$ and $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq 1$, mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can generate a payoff of t_1 only if $p_1(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_1(\mathbf{t}) = 0$.

It remains to show that $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ and (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) generate the same payoff in \mathcal{T}_{IV} and \mathcal{T}_V . To this end, we first show that agent 2, if allocated the good, should be inspected in any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV} \cup \mathcal{T}_V$. For any such \mathbf{t} , the incentive compatibility ensures that $p_2(\mathbf{t}) - q_2(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_2(t_1, t_2) = 0$, where the equality holds because $(t_1, t_2) \in \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III}$ and because (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent 1 without inspection throughout $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III}$. As the allocation probabilities are non-negative and satisfy the (FC) condition $p_2(\mathbf{t}) \geq q_2(\mathbf{t})$, we have $p_2(\mathbf{t}) = q_2(\mathbf{t})$.

Consider now any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}$. As $p_2(\mathbf{t}) = q_2(\mathbf{t})$, we have $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) \leq p_1(\mathbf{t})t_1 + p_2(\mathbf{t})(t_2 - c_2) \leq t_2 - c_2$, where the first inequality holds because $q_1(\mathbf{t})$ and c_1 are non-negative and $p_2(\mathbf{t}) = q_2(\mathbf{t})$, and the second inequality follows from (FC) and $t_1 = \underline{\mu}_1 < t_2 - c_2$. As the payoff of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ is given by $t_2 - c_2$ in any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}$ by definition, the payoff of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot exceed that of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ throughout \mathcal{T}_{IV} . Consider the set $\mathcal{T}''' = \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III} \mid t_1 = \underline{\mu}_1\} \cup \mathcal{T}_{IV}$, which can be expressed as $\mathcal{T}''' = \{\underline{\mu}_1\} \times \mathcal{T}_2$, and note that $\mathcal{T}''' \subseteq \mathcal{T}_{III} \cup \mathcal{T}_{IV}$. Set \mathcal{T}''' satisfies the assumptions (i) and (ii) in Lemma 4, and the payoff of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ is at least as high as the one of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) in \mathcal{T}''' . This implies, by Lemma 4, that the payoffs of the two mechanisms coincide throughout \mathcal{T}''' and therefore \mathcal{T}_{IV} . For any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}$, as $t_1 = \underline{\mu}_1 < t_2 - c_2$ and $p_2(\mathbf{t}) = q_2(\mathbf{t})$, (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can generate a payoff of $t_2 - c_2$ only if $p_2(\mathbf{t}) = q_2(\mathbf{t}) = 1$.

Finally, consider any scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V$. Incentive compatibility ensures that $p_1(\mathbf{t}) - q_1(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_1(\underline{\mu}_1, t_2) = 0$, where the equality holds because $(\underline{\mu}_1, t_2) \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}$ and because (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent 2 and inspects his report in \mathcal{T}_{IV} . As the allocation probabilities are non-negative and satisfy the (FC) condition $p_1(\mathbf{t}) \geq q_1(\mathbf{t})$, we may conclude that $p_1(\mathbf{t}) = q_1(\mathbf{t})$. Since we also have $p_2(\mathbf{t}) = q_2(\mathbf{t})$, we obtain $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) \leq \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t})(t_i - c_i) \leq \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i$, where the last inequality follows from the (FC) constraint $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq 1$. As $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ generates a payoff of $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i$ in any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V$ by definition, the payoff of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot exceed the payoff of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ throughout \mathcal{T}_V . Thus, (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot generate a higher payoff than that of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ in $\mathcal{T} = \prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \mathcal{T}_i$, which trivially satisfies the assumptions (i) and (ii) in Lemma 4. This implies, by Lemma 4, that the payoffs of the two mechanism must coincide throughout \mathcal{T} .

Next theorem proves that the Pareto robust optimality result of Proposition 7 continues to hold even when $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ is not a singleton.

THEOREM 6. *If \mathcal{P} is equal to a Markov ambiguity set of the form (9), then any favored-agent mechanism of type (i) with favored agent $i^* \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ and threshold value $\nu^* = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ is Pareto robustly optimal in (MDP).*

The proof of Theorem 6 is omitted because the arguments widely parallel those used in the proof of Theorem 4. Next remark indicates that there are problem instances for which Pareto robustly optimal mechanism characterized in Theorem 4 under Markov ambiguity sets (5) is not Pareto robustly optimal under Markov ambiguity sets (9) with independent types.

REMARK 4. There are problem instances for which any favored-agent mechanism with favored agent $i^* \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ and threshold value $\nu^* = \bar{t}_{i^*}$ is not Pareto robustly optimal under Markov ambiguity sets (9) with independent types. To see this, consider an example with $I = 2$ agents, where $\underline{\mu}_1 > \underline{\mu}_2$ and $\bar{t}_2 - c_2 \geq \bar{t}_1 > \bar{\mu}_1$. Consider the favored-agent mechanism of type (i) with favored agent $1 \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ and threshold value \bar{t}_1 (One can make similar arguments for the type (ii) variant.) In the following we prove that this mechanism is Pareto robustly dominated by another feasible mechanism. To this end, consider an arbitrary \mathbb{P} in (9) that satisfies $\mathbb{P}(\bar{t}_2 - c_2 \leq \bar{t}_1) > 0$, $\mathbb{P}(\bar{t}_2 - c_2 > \bar{t}_1) > 0$, and $\mathbb{P}(\bar{t}_2 - c_2 \in (\bar{\mu}_1, \bar{t}_1]) > 0$ (These assumptions ensure that the conditional expectations below are well-defined and can easily be relaxed by removing the respective terms in the equations.) The expected payoff of the mechanism with respect to \mathbb{P} is given by

$$\mathbb{P}(\bar{t}_2 - c_2 \leq \bar{t}_1) \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\tilde{t}_1 | \bar{t}_2 - c_2 \leq \bar{t}_1] + \mathbb{P}(\bar{t}_2 - c_2 > \bar{t}_1) \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\max_{i \in \{1,2\}} \tilde{t}_i - c_i | \bar{t}_2 - c_2 > \bar{t}_1].$$

As the agents' types are independently distributed, this payoff can be equivalently written as follows.

$$\begin{aligned} & \mathbb{P}(\bar{t}_2 - c_2 \leq \bar{\mu}_1) \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\tilde{t}_1] + \mathbb{P}(\bar{t}_2 - c_2 \in (\bar{\mu}_1, \bar{t}_1]) \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\tilde{t}_1] \\ & + \mathbb{P}(\bar{t}_2 - c_2 > \bar{t}_1) \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\max_{i \in \{1,2\}} \tilde{t}_i - c_i | \bar{t}_2 - c_2 > \bar{t}_1] \end{aligned} \quad (11)$$

By switching to the favored-agent mechanism of type (i) with favored agent 1 and threshold value $\bar{\mu}_1$, the principal receives an expected payoff of

$$\begin{aligned} & \mathbb{P}(\bar{t}_2 - c_2 \leq \bar{\mu}_1) \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\tilde{t}_1] + \mathbb{P}(\bar{t}_2 - c_2 \in (\bar{\mu}_1, \bar{t}_1]) \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\max_{i \in \{1,2\}} \tilde{t}_i - c_i | \bar{t}_2 - c_2 \in (\bar{\mu}_1, \bar{t}_1)] \\ & + \mathbb{P}(\bar{t}_2 - c_2 > \bar{t}_1) \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\max_{i \in \{1,2\}} \tilde{t}_i - c_i | \bar{t}_2 - c_2 > \bar{t}_1]. \end{aligned} \quad (12)$$

If $\mathbb{P}(\bar{t}_2 - c_2 \in (\bar{\mu}_1, \bar{t}_1]) > 0$, the expected payoff (12) of the principal under the latter favored-agent mechanism is higher than her expected payoff (11) under the first favored-agent mechanism because $\max_{i \in \{1,2\}} \tilde{t}_i - c_i \geq \bar{t}_2 - c_2 > \bar{\mu}_1 \geq \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\tilde{t}_1]$ if $\bar{t}_2 - c_2 \in (\bar{\mu}_1, \bar{t}_1]$. If $\mathbb{P}(\bar{t}_2 - c_2 \in (\bar{\mu}_1, \bar{t}_1]) = 0$, on the other hand, then the expected payoffs of the two mechanisms coincide. This implies that the latter favored-agent mechanism Pareto robustly dominates the first favored-agent mechanism if there exists a \mathbb{P} in (9) such that $\mathbb{P}(\bar{t}_2 - c_2 \in (\bar{\mu}_1, \bar{t}_1]) > 0$. Such \mathbb{P} exists under the assumption that $\bar{t}_2 - c_2 \geq \bar{t}_1 > \bar{\mu}_1$. The discrete distribution that assigns a probability mass of $\alpha = (\underline{\mu}_2 - \bar{t}_2) / (\bar{t}_1 + c_2 - \bar{t}_2)$ to scenario $(\underline{\mu}_1, \bar{t}_1 + c_2)$ and of $1 - \alpha$ to scenario $(\underline{\mu}_1, \bar{t}_2)$ in fact belongs to the ambiguity set (9).

Appendix. Proofs

Proof of Proposition 1. Relaxing the incentive compatibility constraints and the first inequality in (FC) yields

$$\begin{aligned} z^* & \leq \sup_{\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}} \inf_{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}} \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t}) t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t}) c_i) \\ & \text{s.t. } p_i, q_i \in \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{T}, [0, 1]) \quad \forall i \in \mathcal{I} \\ & \quad \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq 1 \quad \forall \mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \\ & = \sup_{\mathbf{p}} \inf_{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}} \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) t_i \\ & \text{s.t. } p_i \in \mathcal{L}(\mathcal{T}, [0, 1]) \quad \forall i \in \mathcal{I}, \quad \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq 1 \quad \forall \mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}, \end{aligned}$$

where the equality holds because in the relaxed problem it is optimal to set $q_i(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}$ and $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$. As the resulting maximization problem over \mathbf{p} is separable with respect to $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$, it is optimal

to allocate the good in each scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$ —with probability one—to an agent with maximal type. Therefore, z^* is bounded above by $\inf_{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}} \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$. However, this bound is attained by a mechanism that allocates the good to an agent $i' \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$ irrespective of $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$ and never inspects anyone's type. Since this mechanism is feasible, the claim follows. \square

Proof of Theorem 1. Select an arbitrary favored-agent mechanism with $i^* \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$ and $\nu^* \geq \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$. Recall first that this mechanism is feasible in (3). Next, we will show that this mechanism attains a worst-case payoff that is at least as large as $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$, which implies via Proposition 1 that it is in fact optimal in (3). To this end, fix an arbitrary type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$. If $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i < \nu^*$, then condition (i) in Definition 3 implies that the principal's payoff amounts to $t_{i^*} \geq \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$, where the inequality follows from the selection of i^* . If $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i > \nu^*$, then condition (ii) in Definition 3 implies that the principal's payoff amounts to $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i > \nu^* \geq \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$, where the second inequality follows from the selection of ν^* . If $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i = \nu^*$, then the allocation functions are defined either as in condition (i) or as in condition (ii) of Definition 3. Thus, the principal's payoff amounts either to t_{i^*} or to $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i \geq \nu^*$, respectively, and is therefore again non-inferior to $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$. In summary, we have shown that the principal's payoff is non-inferior to $z^* = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$ in all three cases. As scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$ was chosen arbitrarily, this reasoning implies that the principal's worst-case payoff is also non-inferior to z^* . The favored-agent mechanism at hand is therefore optimal in (3) by virtue of Proposition 1. \square

Proof of Lemma 1. Assume first that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is a favored-agent mechanism with favored agent $i^* \in \mathcal{I}$ and threshold value $\nu^* \in \mathbb{R}$. Next, fix any agent $i \in \mathcal{I}$ and any type profile $\mathbf{t}_{-i} \in \mathcal{T}_{-i}$. If $i \neq i^*$, then we have either $p_i(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) = q_i(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) = 1$ or $p_i(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) = q_i(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) = 0$ for all $t_i \in \mathcal{T}_i$. This implies that $p_i(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) - q_i(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) = 0$ is constant in $t_i \in \mathcal{T}_i$. If $i = i^*$, then the fixed type profile \mathbf{t}_{-i^*} uniquely determines whether the allocations are constructed as in case (i) or as in case (ii) of Definition 3. In case (i) we have $p_{i^*}(t_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(t_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) = 0$ for all $t_{i^*} \in \mathcal{T}_{i^*}$, and thus $p_{i^*}(t_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) - q_{i^*}(t_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) = 1$ is constant in $t_{i^*} \in \mathcal{T}_{i^*}$. In case (ii) we have either $p_{i^*}(t_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(t_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) = 1$ or $p_{i^*}(t_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) = 0$ and $q_{i^*}(t_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) = 0$, and thus $p_{i^*}(t_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) - q_{i^*}(t_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) = 0$ is again constant in $t_{i^*} \in \mathcal{T}_{i^*}$. This establishes the claim for any favored-agent mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) . Assume now that $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) = \sum_{k \in \mathcal{K}} \pi_k (\mathbf{p}^k, \mathbf{q}^k)$ is a convex combination of favored-agent mechanisms $(\mathbf{p}^k, \mathbf{q}^k)$, $k \in \mathcal{K} = \{1, \dots, K\}$. Next, fix any $i \in \mathcal{I}$ and $\mathbf{t}_{-i} \in \mathcal{T}_{-i}$. From the first part of the proof we know that $p_i^k(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) - q_i^k(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i})$ is constant in $t_i \in \mathcal{T}_i$ for each $k \in \mathcal{K}$, and therefore $p_i(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) - q_i(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i})$ is also constant in $t_i \in \mathcal{T}_i$. Similar arguments apply when (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) represents a convex combination of infinitely many favored-agent mechanisms. \square

Proof of Theorem 2. Throughout the proof we use the following partition of the type space \mathcal{T} .

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{T}_I &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i \leq \underline{t}_{i^*} \text{ and } \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i < t_{i^*}\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{II} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i \leq \underline{t}_{i^*} \text{ and } \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i \geq t_{i^*}\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{III} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i > \underline{t}_{i^*} \text{ and } t_i - c_i \notin (\underline{t}_{i^*}, t_{i^*}] \forall i \neq i^*\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{IV} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i > \underline{t}_{i^*} \text{ and } \exists i \neq i^* \text{ such that } t_i - c_i \in (\underline{t}_{i^*}, t_{i^*}]\} \end{aligned}$$

Note that the set \mathcal{T}_I is nonempty and contains at least $(\bar{t}_{i^*}, \underline{t}_{-i^*})$ since $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i = \underline{t}_{i^*} < \bar{t}_{i^*}$. However, the sets $\mathcal{T}_{II}, \mathcal{T}_{III}$ and \mathcal{T}_{IV} can be empty if \bar{t}_{i^*} or c_i , $i \neq i^*$, are sufficiently large.

In the following, we denote by $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ the favored-agent mechanism of type (i) with favored agent $i^* \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$ and threshold value $\nu^* = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{t}_i$. By construction, we thus have $\nu^* = \underline{t}_{i^*}$. Assume now for the sake of contradiction that there exists another mechanism $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) \in \mathcal{X}$ that Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$. Thus, the inequality (4) holds for all $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$ and is strict for at least one $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$. Note that the right-hand side of (4) represents the principal's payoff in scenario \mathbf{t} under $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$. By the definition of a type (i) favored-agent mechanism, this payoff amounts to t_{i^*} when $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i \leq \underline{t}_{i^*}$ (i.e., when $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$) and to $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i$ when $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i > \underline{t}_{i^*}$

(i.e., when $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III} \cup \mathcal{T}_{IV}$). We will show that if (4) holds, then (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) must generate the same payoff as $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ under every type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$. In other words, (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot generate a strictly higher payoff than $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ under any type profile, which contradicts our assumption that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$. The remainder of the proof is divided into four steps, each of which investigates one of the subsets $\mathcal{T}_I, \mathcal{T}_{II}, \mathcal{T}_{III}$ and \mathcal{T}_{IV} .

Step 1 (\mathcal{T}_I). Consider any type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_I$. For inequality (4) to hold in this scenario, the principal must earn at least t_{i^*} under mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) . We next show that this is only possible if $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$. To this end, assume for the sake of contradiction that either $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) < 1$ or $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) > 0$. If $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) < 1$, then the principal's payoff under (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) satisfies

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) \leq \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i < t_{i^*} = \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i^*(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i^*(\mathbf{t})c_i),$$

where the strict inequality holds because $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_I$, which implies that $t_i < t_{i^*}$ for all $i \neq i^*$. Thus, inequality (4) is violated in scenario \mathbf{t} . If $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) > 0$, on the other hand, we have

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) = p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t})t_{i^*} - q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t})c_{i^*} < t_{i^*} = \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i^*(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i^*(\mathbf{t})c_i),$$

where the strict inequality holds because $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t})$ and c_{i^*} are positive. Thus, inequality (4) is again violated in scenario \mathbf{t} . For inequality (4) to hold, we must therefore have $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$. Thus, the allocation probabilities of the mechanisms (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ coincide on \mathcal{T}_I .

Step 2 (\mathcal{T}_{II}). For inequality (4) to hold in any scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II}$, the principal must earn at least t_{i^*} under mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) . As in Step 1, we can show that this is only possible if $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$. To this end, we partition \mathcal{T}_{II} into the following subsets.

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{T}_{II_1} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II} \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i < \bar{t}_{i^*}\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{II_2} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II} \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i \geq \bar{t}_{i^*} \text{ and } t_{i^*} = \bar{t}_{i^*}\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{II_3} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II} \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i \geq \bar{t}_{i^*} \text{ and } t_{i^*} < \bar{t}_{i^*}\} \end{aligned}$$

Note that if $\max_{i \neq i^*} \bar{t}_i < \bar{t}_{i^*}$, then \mathcal{T}_{II} as well as its subsets $\mathcal{T}_{II_1}, \mathcal{T}_{II_2}$ and \mathcal{T}_{II_3} are all empty. If $\max_{i \neq i^*} \bar{t}_i \geq \bar{t}_{i^*}$, on the other hand, then \mathcal{T}_{II} and its subset \mathcal{T}_{II_1} are nonempty. Indeed, \mathcal{T}_{II_1} contains the type profile \mathbf{t} defined through $t_i = \min\{\bar{t}_{i^*}, \bar{t}_i\}$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}$. To see this, note that $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$ by the construction of i^* . In addition, we have $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II_1}$ thanks to the assumption $\max_{i \neq i^*} \bar{t}_i \geq \bar{t}_{i^*}$, which implies that $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i = \bar{t}_{i^*}$. We now investigate the sets $\mathcal{T}_{II_1}, \mathcal{T}_{II_2}$ and \mathcal{T}_{II_3} one by one.

Fix first any type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II_1}$. Incentive compatibility ensures that $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) \geq p_{i^*}(\bar{t}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) - q_{i^*}(\bar{t}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) = 1$, where the equality holds because $(\bar{t}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) \in \mathcal{T}_I$ and because we know from Step 1 that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent i^* without inspection in \mathcal{T}_I . Consequently, the mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can only earn t_{i^*} in scenario \mathbf{t} if $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$. As $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II_1}$ was chosen arbitrarily, the allocation probabilities (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ must therefore coincide throughout \mathcal{T}_{II_1} .

Next, we study the subset \mathcal{T}_{II_2} . To this end, define the set-valued function $\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) = \{i \in \mathcal{I} \mid t_i \geq \bar{t}_{i^*}\}$ for $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II_2}$. Note that $|\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})| \geq 2$ for all $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II_2}$ thanks to the definition of \mathcal{T}_{II_2} , which implies that $i^* \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$ and $\arg \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i \subseteq \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$. We now prove by induction that the allocation probabilities (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ must coincide on $\mathcal{T}_{II_2}^n = \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II_2} \mid |\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})| = n\}$ for all $n \geq 2$.

As for the base step, set $n = 2$ and fix any type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II_2}^2$. Thus, there exists exactly one agent $i^\circ \neq i^*$ with type $t_{i^\circ} \geq \bar{t}_{i^*}$. Incentive compatibility dictates that $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) - q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_{i^\circ}(t_{i^\circ}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^\circ}) - q_{i^\circ}(t_{i^\circ}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^\circ}) = 0$, where the equality holds because $(t_{i^\circ}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^\circ}) \in \mathcal{T}_I$ and because we know from Step 1 that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent i^* without inspection in \mathcal{T}_I . We thus have $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) = q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t})$. Inequality (4) further requires the mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) to earn at least \bar{t}_{i^*} in scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II_2}^2$. All of this is only possible if $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ because $t_{i^\circ} - c_{i^\circ} \leq \bar{t}_{i^*} < \bar{t}_{i^*}$ and $t_i < \bar{t}_{i^*}$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^\circ, i^*\}$.

As for the induction step, assume that $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ for all $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II_2}^n$ and for some $n \geq 2$, and fix an arbitrary type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II_2}^{n+1}$. Thus, there exist exactly n agents $i \neq i^*$ with types $t_i \geq \bar{t}_{i^*}$. For any such agent i , incentive compatibility dictates that $p_i(\mathbf{t}) - q_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_i(\underline{t}_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) = 0$, where the equality follows from the induction hypothesis and the observation that $(\underline{t}_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) \in \mathcal{T}_{II_2}^n$. We thus have $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) \setminus \{i^*\}$. Inequality (4) further requires the mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) to earn at least \bar{t}_{i^*} in scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II_2}^{n+1}$. In analogy to the base step, all of this is only possible if $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ because $t_i - c_i \leq \bar{t}_{i^*} < \bar{t}_{i^*}$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) \setminus \{i^*\}$ and $t_i < \bar{t}_{i^*}$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$. This observation completes the induction step. In summary, the allocation probabilities (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ must therefore coincide throughout $\cup_{n \geq 2} \mathcal{T}_{II_2}^n = \mathcal{T}_{II_2}$.

Finally, fix any type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II_3}$. Incentive compatibility ensures that $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) \geq p_{i^*}(\bar{t}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) - q_{i^*}(\bar{t}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) = 1$, where the equality holds because $(\bar{t}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) \in \mathcal{T}_{II_2}$ and because we know from the above induction argument that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent i^* without inspection in \mathcal{T}_{II_2} . Hence, the mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can only earn t_{i^*} in scenario \mathbf{t} if $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$. As $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II_3}$ was chosen arbitrarily, the allocation probabilities (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ must therefore coincide throughout \mathcal{T}_{II_3} .

Step 3 (\mathcal{T}_{III}). In this part of the proof we will demonstrate that

$$\sum_{i \in \arg \max_{i' \in \mathcal{I}} t_{i'} - c_{i'}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) = 1 \quad \text{and} \quad p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t}) \quad \forall i \in \arg \max_{i' \in \mathcal{I}} t_{i'} - c_{i'}, \quad (13)$$

for every fixed $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}$. To prove (13), define the set-valued function $\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) = \{i \in \mathcal{I} \mid t_i > t_{i^*}\}$ for $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}$. Note that $|\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})| \geq 1$ for all $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}$ thanks to the definition of \mathcal{T}_{III} , which ensures that there exists at least one agent $i \in \mathcal{I}$ with $t_i - c_i > t_{i^*}$. We will now use induction to prove that (13) holds for all type profiles in $\mathcal{T}_{III}^n = \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III} \mid |\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})| = n\}$ for all $n \geq 1$.

As for the base step, set $n = 1$ and fix any type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}^1$. Thus, there exists exactly one agent $i^\circ \neq i^*$ with $t_{i^\circ} > t_{i^*}$. Incentive compatibility ensures that $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) - q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_{i^\circ}(t_{i^\circ}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^\circ}) = 0$, where the equality holds because $(t_{i^\circ}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^\circ}) \in \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$. We thus have $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) = q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t})$. If $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) < 1$, then

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) \leq p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t})(t_{i^\circ} - c_{i^\circ}) + \sum_{i \neq i^\circ} p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i < \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i,$$

where the first inequality holds because $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) = q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t})$ and $c_i > 0$ for all $i \neq i^\circ$. The second inequality follows from the assumption that $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) < 1$ as well as the definition of \mathcal{T}_{III} and the construction of i° , which imply that $t_{i^\circ} - c_{i^\circ} = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i > t_{i^*}$ and $t_{i^*} \geq t_i$ for all $i \neq i^\circ$. This shows that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) earns strictly less than $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ in scenario \mathbf{t} , which contradicts inequality (4). Hence, our assumption must have been wrong, and $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t})$ must equal 1. We have thus established (13) in scenario \mathbf{t} .

As for the induction step, assume that (13) holds throughout \mathcal{T}_{III}^n for some $n \geq 1$, and fix any type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}^{n+1}$. Thus, there exist exactly $n + 1$ agents $i \neq i^*$ with types $t_i > t_{i^*}$. For any agent $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$ incentive compatibility dictates that $p_i(\mathbf{t}) - q_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_i(\underline{t}_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) = 0$, where the equality holds because $(\underline{t}_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) \in \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III}^n$. Indeed, if $(\underline{t}_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) \in \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$, then the equality follows from the results of Steps 1 and 2, and if $(\underline{t}_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) \in \mathcal{T}_{III}^n$, then the equality follows from the induction hypothesis. We thus have $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$ and, by the definition of \mathcal{T}_{III} , in particular for all $i \in \arg \max_{j \in \mathcal{I}} t_j - c_j$. In addition, if the summation of $p_i(\mathbf{t})$ over all $i \in \arg \max_{i' \in \mathcal{I}} t_{i'} - c_{i'}$ is strictly smaller than 1, then

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) \leq \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})} p_i(\mathbf{t})(t_i - c_i) + \sum_{i \notin \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})} p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i < \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i$$

where the first inequality holds because $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$ and $c_i > 0$ for all $i \notin \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$. The strict inequality holds because $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq 1$ and $\max_{j \in \mathcal{I}} t_j - c_j > t_{i^*} \geq t_i$ for all $i \notin \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$ by the definition of \mathcal{T}_{III} and because we assumed that the summation of $p_i(\mathbf{t})$ over $i \in \arg \max_{i' \in \mathcal{I}} t_{i'} - c_{i'}$ is

strictly smaller than 1. This reasoning shows that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) earns strictly less than $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ in scenario \mathbf{t} , which contradicts inequality (4). Hence, our assumption must be false and the summation of $p_i(\mathbf{t})$ over $i \in \arg \max_{i' \in \mathcal{I}} t_{i'} - c_{i'}$ equals 1. We have thus established (13) in scenario \mathbf{t} . As $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}^{n+1}$ was chosen arbitrarily, we may conclude that (13) holds throughout \mathcal{T}_{III}^{n+1} . This observation completes the induction step. In summary, the revenues generated by the mechanisms (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ must therefore coincide throughout $\cup_{n \geq 1} \mathcal{T}_{III}^n = \mathcal{T}_{III}$.

Step 4 (\mathcal{T}_{IV}). In analogy to Step 3, we will show that (13) holds for every fixed $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}$. This immediately implies that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) generates the same payoff as $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ throughout \mathcal{T}_{IV} . To prove (13), define the set-valued function $\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) = \{i \in \mathcal{I} \mid t_i > \underline{t}_{i^*}\}$ for $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}$. Note that $|\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})| \geq 2$ for all $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}$ thanks to the definition of \mathcal{T}_{IV} , which implies that $i^* \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$ and $\arg \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i \subseteq \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$. To see that $i^* \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$, note that if $i^* \notin \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$ for some $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}$, then $t_{i^*} = \underline{t}_{i^*}$, and there can be no $i \neq i^*$ with $t_i - c_i \in (\underline{t}_{i^*}, \underline{t}_{i^*}] = \emptyset$, which contradicts the assumption that $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}$. We will now use induction to prove that (13) holds for all type profiles in $\mathcal{T}_{IV}^n = \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV} \mid |\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})| = n\}$ for all $n \geq 2$.

As for the base step, set $n = 2$ and fix an arbitrary type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}^2$. Thus, there exists exactly one agent $i^\circ \neq i^*$ with $t_{i^\circ} > \underline{t}_{i^*}$. Incentive compatibility for agent i^* ensures that $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) - q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_{i^*}(\underline{t}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) = 0$, where the equality follows from (13) and the observation that $(\underline{t}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) \in \mathcal{T}_{III}$. Thus, we have $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t})$. Incentive compatibility for agent i° further dictates that $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) - q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_{i^\circ}(\underline{t}_{i^\circ}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^\circ}) = 0$, where the equality holds because $(\underline{t}_{i^\circ}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^\circ}) \in \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$. Indeed, recall that the allocation probabilities of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ match and that the good is allocated to agent i^* on $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$. Thus, we have $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) = q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t})$. This reasoning shows that $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$. Assume now that the summation of $p_i(\mathbf{t})$ over all $i \in \arg \max_{i' \in \mathcal{I}} t_{i'} - c_{i'}$ is strictly smaller than 1. Then, we have

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) \leq \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})} p_i(\mathbf{t})(t_i - c_i) + \sum_{i \notin \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})} p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i < \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i,$$

where the first inequality holds because $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$ and $c_i > 0$ for all $i \notin \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$. The strict inequality holds because $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq 1$, $\max_{j \in \mathcal{I}} t_j - c_j > \underline{t}_{i^*} \geq t_i$ for all $i \notin \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$ by the definition of \mathcal{T}_{IV} and because we assumed that the summation of $p_i(\mathbf{t})$ over $i \in \arg \max_{i' \in \mathcal{I}} t_{i'} - c_{i'}$ is strictly smaller than 1. Hence, (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) earns strictly less than $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ in scenario \mathbf{t} , which contradicts inequality (4). This implies that our assumption was false and that the summation of $p_i(\mathbf{t})$ over all $i \in \arg \max_{i' \in \mathcal{I}} t_{i'} - c_{i'}$ must be equal to 1. We have thus established (13) in scenario \mathbf{t} . As $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}^2$ was chosen arbitrarily, (13) holds throughout \mathcal{T}_{IV}^2 .

As for the induction step, assume that (13) holds throughout \mathcal{T}_{IV}^n for some $n \geq 2$, and fix an arbitrary type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}^{n+1}$. Thus, there exist exactly n agents $i \neq i^*$ with types $t_i > \underline{t}_{i^*}$. Using the exact same reasoning as in the base step, we can prove that $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t})$. In addition, for any agent $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) \setminus \{i^*\}$ incentive compatibility dictates that $p_i(\mathbf{t}) - q_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_i(\underline{t}_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) = 0$, where the equality holds because $(\underline{t}_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) \in \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III} \cup \mathcal{T}_{IV}^n$. Indeed, if $(\underline{t}_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) \in \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III}$, then the equality follows from the results of Steps 1, 2 and 3, and if $(\underline{t}_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}^n$, then the equality follows from the induction hypothesis. In summary, we have thus shown that $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$. The first statement in (13) can be proved by repeating the corresponding arguments from the base step almost verbatim. Details are omitted for brevity. We have thus established (13) in an arbitrary scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}^{n+1}$. By induction, the revenues generated by the mechanisms (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ must therefore coincide throughout $\cup_{n \geq 2} \mathcal{T}_{IV}^n = \mathcal{T}_{IV}$. This observation completes the proof. \square

Proof of Proposition 2. Relaxing the incentive compatibility constraints and the first inequality in (FC) yields

$$\begin{aligned}
z^* &\leq \sup_{\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}} \inf_{\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}} \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) \tilde{t}_i - q_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \right] \\
&\text{s.t. } p_i : \mathcal{T} \rightarrow [0, 1] \text{ and } q_i : \mathcal{T} \rightarrow [0, 1] \quad \forall i \in \mathcal{I} \\
&\quad \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq 1 \quad \forall \mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \\
&= \sup_{\mathbf{p}} \inf_{\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}} \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) \tilde{t}_i \right] \\
&\text{s.t. } p_i : \mathcal{T} \rightarrow [0, 1] \quad \forall i \in \mathcal{I}, \quad \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq 1 \quad \forall \mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T},
\end{aligned}$$

where the equality holds because it is optimal to set $q_i(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}$ and $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$ in the relaxed problem. As $p_i \geq 0$ and $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq 1$ for all $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$, we moreover have

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) t_i \leq \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i \quad \forall \mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T},$$

which imply that z^* is bounded above by $\inf_{\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}} \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} [\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \tilde{t}_i]$. Now, select an arbitrary $i^* \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ and denote by $\delta_{\underline{\mu}}$ the Dirac point mass at $\underline{\mu}$. We have

$$\mathbb{E}_{\delta_{\underline{\mu}}} \left[\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \tilde{t}_i \right] \geq \inf_{\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}} \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \tilde{t}_i \right] \geq \inf_{\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}} \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} [\tilde{t}_{i^*}] = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i,$$

where the first inequality holds because $\delta_{\underline{\mu}} \in \mathcal{P}$, the second inequality holds because $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i \geq t_{i^*}$ for any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$, and the equality follows from the selection of i^* and the definition of the Markov ambiguity set \mathcal{P} . As $\delta_{\underline{\mu}}$ is the Dirac point mass at $\underline{\mu}$, we also have $\mathbb{E}_{\delta_{\underline{\mu}}} [\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \tilde{t}_i] = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ that implies $\inf_{\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}} \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} [\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \tilde{t}_i] = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$. Therefore, the optimal value z^* is bounded above by $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$. However, this bound is attained by a mechanism that allocates the good to an agent $i^* \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ irrespective of $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$ and never inspects anyone's type. Since this mechanism is feasible, the claim follows. \square

Proof of Theorem 3. Select an arbitrary favored-agent mechanism with $i^* \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ and $\nu^* \geq \tilde{t}_{i^*}$. Recall first that this mechanism is feasible in (MDP). Next, we will show that this mechanism attains a worst-case payoff that is at least as large as $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$, which implies via Proposition 2 that this mechanism is optimal in (MDP). To this end, fix an arbitrary type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$. If $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i < \nu^*$, then condition (i) in Definition 3 implies that the principal's payoff amounts to t_{i^*} . If $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i > \nu^*$, then condition (ii) in Definition 3 implies that the principal's payoff amounts to $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i > \nu^* \geq t_{i^*}$, where the second inequality follows from the selection of ν^* . If $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i = \nu^*$, then the allocation functions are defined either as in condition (i) or as in condition (ii) of Definition 3. Thus, the principal's payoff amounts either to t_{i^*} or to $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i \geq \nu^* \geq t_{i^*}$, respectively. In summary, we have shown that the principal's payoff is bigger than or equal to t_{i^*} in all three cases. As the type profile \mathbf{t} was chosen arbitrarily, this implies that the principal's expected payoff under any distribution $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$ is bounded below by $\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} [\tilde{t}_{i^*}]$. By the definition of the Markov ambiguity set \mathcal{P} , the expectation $\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} [\tilde{t}_{i^*}]$ cannot be lower than $z^* = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ for any $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$. Therefore, the principal's worst-case expected payoff under the favored-agent mechanism is bounded below by z^* . The favored-agent mechanism at hand is therefore optimal in (3) by virtue of Proposition 2. \square

Proof of Lemma 2. For any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$, we will show that there exists a scenario $\hat{\mathbf{t}} \in \mathcal{T}$ that satisfies $\max_{i \neq i^*} \hat{t}_i < \hat{t}_{i^*}$ and $\alpha \mathbf{t} + (1 - \alpha) \hat{\mathbf{t}} = \underline{\mu}$ for some $\alpha \in (0, 1]$. This implies that the discrete distribution $\mathbb{P} = \alpha \delta_{\mathbf{t}} + (1 - \alpha) \delta_{\hat{\mathbf{t}}}$ belongs to the Markov ambiguity set \mathcal{P} and moreover satisfies the properties (i)–(iii).

To this end, consider any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$. If $\mathbf{t} = \underline{\boldsymbol{\mu}}$, set $\hat{\mathbf{t}} = \mathbf{t} = \underline{\boldsymbol{\mu}}$. As $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{i^*\}$ is a singleton, scenario $\hat{\mathbf{t}}$ satisfies $\max_{i \neq i^*} \hat{t}_i < \hat{t}_{i^*}$. Moreover, note that $\alpha \mathbf{t} + (1 - \alpha) \hat{\mathbf{t}} = \underline{\boldsymbol{\mu}}$ for any $\alpha \in (0, 1]$. Similarly, for any $\alpha \in (0, 1]$, $\mathbb{P} = \alpha \delta_{\mathbf{t}} + (1 - \alpha) \delta_{\hat{\mathbf{t}}} = \delta_{\underline{\boldsymbol{\mu}}}$ is the Dirac point mass at $\underline{\boldsymbol{\mu}}$ and trivially satisfies the desired properties (i)–(iii).

If $\mathbf{t} \neq \underline{\boldsymbol{\mu}}$, define function $\hat{\mathbf{t}}(\alpha)$ through

$$\hat{\mathbf{t}}(\alpha) = \frac{1}{1 - \alpha} (\underline{\boldsymbol{\mu}} - \mathbf{t}) + \mathbf{t}.$$

Note that, for any $\alpha \in [0, 1)$, $\hat{\mathbf{t}}(\alpha)$ satisfies

$$\alpha \mathbf{t} + (1 - \alpha) \hat{\mathbf{t}}(\alpha) = \alpha \mathbf{t} + (1 - \alpha) \left(\frac{1}{1 - \alpha} (\underline{\boldsymbol{\mu}} - \mathbf{t}) + \mathbf{t} \right) = \underline{\boldsymbol{\mu}}.$$

Thus, for any $\alpha \in [0, 1)$, $\hat{\mathbf{t}} = \hat{\mathbf{t}}(\alpha)$ satisfies $\alpha \mathbf{t} + (1 - \alpha) \hat{\mathbf{t}} = \underline{\boldsymbol{\mu}}$. We will next show that there exists an $\alpha \in (0, 1)$ for which $\hat{\mathbf{t}} = \hat{\mathbf{t}}(\alpha)$ also satisfies $\max_{i \neq i^*} \hat{t}_i < \hat{t}_{i^*}$. To this end, first note that $\hat{\mathbf{t}}(\alpha)$ is a continuous function of $\alpha \in [0, 1)$ and $\hat{\mathbf{t}}(0) = \underline{\boldsymbol{\mu}}$. Thus, for any $\varepsilon > 0$, there exists $\alpha \in (0, 1)$ such that $\hat{\mathbf{t}}(\alpha) \in \prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} [\underline{\mu}_i - \varepsilon, \underline{\mu}_i + \varepsilon]$. We next show that any $\varepsilon > 0$ that belongs to the set

$$L = (0, \min_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i - \underline{t}_i) \cap (0, \min_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \bar{t}_i - \underline{\mu}_i) \cap (0, (\underline{\mu}_{i^*} - \max_{i \neq i^*} \underline{\mu}_i)/2)$$

ensures that $\prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} [\underline{\mu}_i - \varepsilon, \underline{\mu}_i + \varepsilon] \subseteq \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i < t_{i^*}\}$. Note that set L is non-empty because $\underline{t}_i < \underline{\mu}_i < \bar{\mu}_i < \bar{t}_i$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}$ and $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{i^*\}$ is a singleton. Consider any $\varepsilon \in L$. As $\varepsilon < \min_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i - \underline{t}_i$, any $\mathbf{t} \in \prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} [\underline{\mu}_i - \varepsilon, \underline{\mu}_i + \varepsilon]$ satisfies

$$t_i \geq \underline{\mu}_i - \varepsilon > \underline{\mu}_i - (\min_{j \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_j - \underline{t}_j) \geq \underline{\mu}_i - (\underline{\mu}_i - \underline{t}_i) = \underline{t}_i \quad \forall i \in \mathcal{I}.$$

Similarly, as $\varepsilon < \min_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \bar{t}_i - \underline{\mu}_i$, any $\mathbf{t} \in \prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} [\underline{\mu}_i - \varepsilon, \underline{\mu}_i + \varepsilon]$ satisfies

$$t_i \leq \underline{\mu}_i + \varepsilon < \underline{\mu}_i + (\min_{j \in \mathcal{I}} \bar{t}_j - \underline{\mu}_j) \leq \underline{\mu}_i + \bar{t}_i - \underline{\mu}_i = \bar{t}_i \quad \forall i \in \mathcal{I}.$$

Therefore, we have shown that $\prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} [\underline{\mu}_i - \varepsilon, \underline{\mu}_i + \varepsilon] \subseteq \mathcal{T}$. Finally, any $\mathbf{t} \in \prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} [\underline{\mu}_i - \varepsilon, \underline{\mu}_i + \varepsilon]$ satisfies

$$\begin{aligned} t_{i^*} &\geq \underline{\mu}_{i^*} - \varepsilon > \underline{\mu}_{i^*} - (\underline{\mu}_{i^*} - \max_{j \neq i^*} \underline{\mu}_j)/2 = (\underline{\mu}_{i^*} + \max_{j \neq i^*} \underline{\mu}_j)/2 \\ &= \max_{j \neq i^*} \underline{\mu}_j + (\underline{\mu}_{i^*} - \max_{j \neq i^*} \underline{\mu}_j)/2 > \max_{j \neq i^*} \underline{\mu}_j + \varepsilon \geq \underline{\mu}_i + \varepsilon \geq t_i \quad \forall i \neq i^*, \end{aligned}$$

where the second and third inequalities follow from $\varepsilon < (\underline{\mu}_{i^*} - \max_{i \neq i^*} \underline{\mu}_i)/2$. Thus, we have shown that $\prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} [\underline{\mu}_i - \varepsilon, \underline{\mu}_i + \varepsilon] \subseteq \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i < t_{i^*}\}$ for any $\varepsilon \in L$. As for any $\varepsilon \in L$ there exists $\alpha \in (0, 1)$ such that $\hat{\mathbf{t}}(\alpha) \in \prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} [\underline{\mu}_i - \varepsilon, \underline{\mu}_i + \varepsilon]$, the claim follows. \square

Proof of Proposition 3. Consider an arbitrary mechanism $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) \in \mathcal{X}$. If (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) satisfies (6), then the principal's expected payoff $\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} [\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\hat{\mathbf{t}}) t_i - q_i(\hat{\mathbf{t}}) c_i)]$ under any distribution $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$ is at least $\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} [\hat{t}_{i^*}] \geq \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$, where the inequality follows from the definition of the Markov ambiguity set \mathcal{P} . By virtue of Proposition 2, this mechanism is therefore optimal (MDP). We thus have shown that if (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) satisfies (6), then it is optimal in (MDP).

We next show that if (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is optimal in (MDP), then it must satisfy (6). To this end, assume for the sake of contradiction that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is optimal and $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t}) t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t}) c_i) < t_{i^*}$ for some $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$. Consider an arbitrary $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$ for which inequality (6) fails. By Lemma 2, we know that there exist a scenario $\hat{\mathbf{t}} \in \mathcal{T}$, where $\max_{i \neq i^*} \hat{t}_i < \hat{t}_{i^*}$, and a discrete distribution $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$ that satisfy the following properties: (i) $\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} [\hat{t}_i] = \underline{\mu}_i \quad \forall i \in \mathcal{I}$, (ii) $\mathbb{P}(\hat{\mathbf{t}} \in \{\mathbf{t}, \hat{\mathbf{t}}\}) = 1$, (iii) $\mathbb{P}(\hat{\mathbf{t}} = \mathbf{t}) > 0$. The principal's payoff $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\hat{\mathbf{t}}) \hat{t}_i - q_i(\hat{\mathbf{t}}) c_i)$ in scenario $\hat{\mathbf{t}}$ is bounded above by $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\hat{\mathbf{t}}) \hat{t}_i \leq \hat{t}_{i^*}$, where the inequality

holds because $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\hat{\mathbf{t}}) \leq 1$ and $\hat{t}_i \leq \hat{t}_{i^*}$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}$. The principal's expected payoff under \mathbb{P} therefore satisfies

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) \tilde{t}_i - q_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \right] &= \mathbb{P}(\tilde{\mathbf{t}} = \mathbf{t}) \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t}) t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t}) c_i) + \mathbb{P}(\tilde{\mathbf{t}} = \hat{\mathbf{t}}) \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\hat{\mathbf{t}}) \hat{t}_i - q_i(\hat{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \\ &< \mathbb{P}(\tilde{\mathbf{t}} = \mathbf{t}) t_{i^*} + \mathbb{P}(\tilde{\mathbf{t}} = \hat{\mathbf{t}}) \hat{t}_{i^*} = \underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \end{aligned}$$

where the first equality follows from property (ii), the inequality holds because of property (iii) and because we have assumed that $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t}) t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t}) c_i) < t_{i^*}$ and we have shown that $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\hat{\mathbf{t}}) \hat{t}_i - q_i(\hat{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \leq \hat{t}_{i^*}$, and the last equality follows from properties (i) and (ii). As the principal's expected payoff under \mathbb{P} is strictly smaller than $z^* = \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$, mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot be optimal. The claim thus follows. \square

Proof of Proposition 4. Throughout the proof we use the following partition of the type space \mathcal{T} .

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{T}_I &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i < t_{i^*}\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{II} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i \geq t_{i^*} \text{ and } \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i < \bar{t}_{i^*}\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{III} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i \geq t_{i^*}, \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i \geq \bar{t}_{i^*} \text{ and } \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i < t_{i^*}\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{IV} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i \geq t_{i^*}, \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i \geq \bar{t}_{i^*}, \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i \geq t_{i^*} \text{ and } \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i < \bar{t}_{i^*}\} \\ \mathcal{T}_V &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i \geq t_{i^*}, \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i \geq \bar{t}_{i^*}, \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i \geq t_{i^*} \text{ and } \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i \geq \bar{t}_{i^*}\} \end{aligned} \quad (14)$$

Note again that some of the conditions in the definitions above are redundant and introduced for ease of readability. Note also that the set \mathcal{T}_I is nonempty and contains at least $\underline{\boldsymbol{\mu}} = (\mu_1, \dots, \mu_I)$ because $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \mu_i = \{i^*\}$ is a singleton. However, the sets $\mathcal{T}_{II}, \mathcal{T}_{III}, \mathcal{T}_{IV}$ and \mathcal{T}_V can be empty if t_{i^*} or $c_i, i \neq i^*$, are sufficiently large.

In the following, we will use Proposition 3 that shows that any optimal mechanism should satisfy (6). In other words, any optimal mechanism should earn a payoff that is at least t_{i^*} in any scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$. To prove the claim, we will show that if a feasible mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) violates $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ for some $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$ such that $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i < \bar{t}_{i^*}$, then it cannot satisfy (6). Consequently, mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot be optimal. The remainder of the proof is divided into four steps, each of which investigates one of the subsets $\mathcal{T}_I, \mathcal{T}_{II}, \mathcal{T}_{III}$ and \mathcal{T}_{IV} . We have $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i \geq \bar{t}_{i^*}$ for any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V$, and for this reason we do not need to investigate this set.

Step 1 (\mathcal{T}_I). Assume for the sake of contradiction that a mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is optimal in (MDP) and satisfy $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) < 1$ or $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) > 0$ in some scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_I$. If $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) < 1$, then the principal's payoff can be written as

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t}) t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t}) c_i) \leq \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) t_i < t_{i^*},$$

where the strict inequality holds because $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq 1$ and $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_I$, which implies that $t_i < t_{i^*}$ for all $i \neq i^*$. Thus, inequality (6) is violated in scenario \mathbf{t} . If $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) > 0$, on the other hand, we have

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t}) t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t}) c_i) = p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) t_{i^*} - q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) c_{i^*} < t_{i^*},$$

where the strict inequality holds because $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t})$ and c_{i^*} are positive. Thus, inequality (6) is again violated in scenario \mathbf{t} . For inequality (6) to hold, we must therefore have $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ for any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_I$.

Step 2 (\mathcal{T}_{II}). Consider any type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II}$. Incentive compatibility ensures that $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) \geq p_{i^*}(\bar{t}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) - q_{i^*}(\bar{t}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) = 1$, where the equality holds because $(\bar{t}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) \in \mathcal{T}_I$ and because we

know from Step 1 that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent i^* without inspection in \mathcal{T}_I . Consequently, a feasible mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can earn at least t_{i^*} in scenario \mathbf{t} only if $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$. As $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II}$ was chosen arbitrarily, any optimal mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) should satisfy $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ throughout \mathcal{T}_{II} .

Step 3 (\mathcal{T}_{III}). Define the set-valued function $\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) = \{i \in \mathcal{I} \mid t_i \geq t_{i^*}\}$ for $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}$. Note that $|\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})| \geq 2$ for all $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}$ because $i^* \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$ and because the definition of \mathcal{T}_{III} ensures that $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i \geq t_{i^*}$. We now prove by induction that $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ for all type profiles in $\mathcal{T}_{III}^n = \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III} \mid |\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})| = n\}$ for all $n \geq 2$.

As for the base step, set $n = 2$ and fix any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}^2$. Thus, there exists exactly one agent $i^\circ \neq i^*$ with $t_{i^\circ} \geq t_{i^*}$. Incentive compatibility ensures that $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) - q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_{i^\circ}(t_{i^\circ}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^\circ}) = 0$, where the equality holds because $(t_{i^\circ}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^\circ}) \in \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$ and because we know from Step 1 and 2 that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent i^* without inspection in $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$. We thus have $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) = q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t})$. As $t_{i^\circ} - c_{i^\circ} < t_{i^*}$ and $t_j < t_{i^*}$ for all $j \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$, the mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can satisfy the inequality (6) for $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}^2$ only if $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$.

As for the induction step, assume that $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ for all $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}^n$ and for some $n \geq 2$, and fix an arbitrary type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}^{n+1}$. Thus, there exist exactly n agents $i \neq i^*$ with types $t_i \geq t_{i^*}$. For any such agent i , incentive compatibility dictates that $p_i(\mathbf{t}) - q_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_i(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) = 0$, where the equality holds because $(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) \in \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III}^n$. Indeed, if $(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) \in \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$, then the equality follows from the results of Steps 1 and 2, and if $(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) \in \mathcal{T}_{III}^n$, then the equality follows from the induction hypothesis. We thus have $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) \setminus \{i^*\}$. In analogy to the base step, a feasible mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can satisfy the inequality (6) for $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}^{n+1}$ only if $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ because $t_i - c_i < t_{i^*}$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) \setminus \{i^*\}$, and $t_j < t_{i^*}$ for $j \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$. This observation completes the induction step. In summary, the allocation probabilities of any optimal mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) should satisfy $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ throughout $\cup_{n \geq 2} \mathcal{T}_{III}^n = \mathcal{T}_{III}$.

Step 4 (\mathcal{T}_{IV}). Fix now any arbitrary type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}$. Incentive compatibility ensures that $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) \geq p_{i^*}(\bar{t}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) - q_{i^*}(\bar{t}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) = 1$, where the equality holds because $(\bar{t}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) \in \mathcal{T}_{III}$ and because we know from Step 3 that any optimal mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent i^* without inspection in \mathcal{T}_{III} . Consequently, a feasible mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can earn at least t_{i^*} in scenario \mathbf{t} only if $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$. As $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}$ was chosen arbitrarily, any optimal mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) should satisfy $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ throughout \mathcal{T}_{IV} . This observation completes the proof. \square

Proof of Proposition 5. We will again use the partition $\mathcal{T}_I - \mathcal{T}_V$ given in (14). Similarly to the sketch of the proof idea, we first show that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ generate the same payoff throughout $\mathcal{T} \setminus \mathcal{T}_V$. Then, we will prove that the two mechanisms generate the same payoff also in \mathcal{T}_V .

To this end, fix a mechanism $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) \in \mathcal{X}$ and assume that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$. Mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) thus earns at least as high expected payoff as $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ under every $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$, i.e., condition (1) holds. As $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ is optimal by Theorem 3, this implies that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is also optimal in (MDP). As $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{i^*\}$ is a singleton, we thus know from Proposition 4 that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to the favored agent i^* without inspection if $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i < \bar{t}_{i^*}$, i.e., if $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \setminus \mathcal{T}_V$. Thus, the allocation probabilities of the mechanisms (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ coincide on $\mathcal{T} \setminus \mathcal{T}_V$, and they earn the same payoff throughout $\mathcal{T} \setminus \mathcal{T}_V$.

In the following we show that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can weakly Pareto robustly dominate $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ only if

$$\sum_{i \in \arg \max_{i' \in \mathcal{I}} t_{i'} - c_{i'}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) = 1 \quad \text{and} \quad p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t}) \quad \forall i \in \arg \max_{i' \in \mathcal{I}} t_{i'} - c_{i'} \quad (15)$$

for all $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V$. Note that (15) immediately implies that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ generate the same payoff $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i$ throughout \mathcal{T}_V .

Define now the set-valued function $\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) = \{i \in \mathcal{I} \mid t_i \geq \bar{t}_{i^*}\}$ for $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V$. Note that $|\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})| \geq 1$ for all $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V$ thanks to the definition of \mathcal{T}_V , which ensures that there exists at least one agent $i \neq i^*$ with $t_i - c_i \geq \bar{t}_{i^*}$ and $\arg \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i \subseteq \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$. We now prove by induction that (15) holds for all type profiles in $\mathcal{T}_V^n = \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V \mid |\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})| = n\}$ for all $n \geq 1$.

As for the base step, set $n = 1$ and fix any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V^1$. Thus, there exists exactly one agent $i^\circ \neq i^*$ such that $t_{i^\circ} \geq \bar{t}_{i^*}$. Incentive compatibility ensures that $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) - q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_{i^\circ}(\underline{t}_{i^\circ}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^\circ}) = 0$, where the equality holds because $(\underline{t}_{i^\circ}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^\circ}) \in \mathcal{T} \setminus \mathcal{T}_V$ and because (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent i^* without inspection on $\mathcal{T} \setminus \mathcal{T}_V$. We thus have $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) = q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t})$. If $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) < 1$, then

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) \leq p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t})(t_{i^\circ} - c_{i^\circ}) + \sum_{i \neq i^\circ} p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i < \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i, \quad (16)$$

where the first inequality holds because $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) = q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t})$ and $c_i > 0$ for all $i \neq i^\circ$. The second inequality follows from the assumption that $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) < 1$ as well as the definition of \mathcal{T}_V^1 and the construction of i° , which imply that $t_{i^\circ} - c_{i^\circ} = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i \geq \bar{t}_{i^*}$ and $\bar{t}_{i^*} > t_i$ for all $i \neq i^\circ$. This shows that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) earns strictly less than $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ in scenario \mathbf{t} . We next show that this fact contradicts inequality (1). Due to Lemma 2, there exists $\tilde{\mathbf{t}} \in \mathcal{T}$, where $\max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i < \hat{t}_{i^*}$, and $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$ that satisfy: (i) $\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\tilde{t}_i] = \underline{\mu}_i \forall i \in \mathcal{I}$, (ii) $\mathbb{P}(\tilde{\mathbf{t}} \in \{\mathbf{t}, \hat{\mathbf{t}}\}) = 1$, (iii) $\mathbb{P}(\tilde{\mathbf{t}} = \mathbf{t}) > 0$. As $\tilde{\mathbf{t}} \in \mathcal{T} \setminus \mathcal{T}_V$ by definition, we have

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}})\tilde{t}_i - q_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}})c_i) \right] &= \alpha \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) + (1 - \alpha) \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\hat{\mathbf{t}})\hat{t}_i - q_i(\hat{\mathbf{t}})c_i) \\ &< \alpha(t_{i^\circ} - c_{i^\circ}) + (1 - \alpha)\hat{t}_{i^*} = \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i^*(\tilde{\mathbf{t}})\tilde{t}_i - q_i^*(\tilde{\mathbf{t}})c_i) \right], \end{aligned}$$

where $\alpha \in (0, 1]$ indicates the probability of $\tilde{\mathbf{t}} = \mathbf{t}$, and the inequality follows from (16) and the fact that the payoff at scenario $\hat{\mathbf{t}}$ is smaller than \hat{t}_{i^*} because $\max_{i \neq i^*} \hat{t}_i < \hat{t}_{i^*}$ and because (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) satisfies (FC) and $c_i > 0$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}$. The strict inequality above implies that $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ earns a strictly higher expected payoff than (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) under $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$. It thus contradicts inequality (1) and our assumption that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$. Hence, we have established (15) in scenario \mathbf{t} .

As for the induction step, assume that (15) holds throughout \mathcal{T}_V^n for some $n \geq 1$, and fix an arbitrary type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V^{n+1}$. Thus, there exist exactly $n + 1$ agents i with types $t_i \geq \bar{t}_{i^*}$. For any agent $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) \setminus \{i^*\}$ incentive compatibility dictates that $p_i(\mathbf{t}) - q_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_i(\underline{t}_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) = 0$, where the equality follows from Proposition 4 and the induction hypothesis because $(\underline{t}_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) \in \mathcal{T}_V^n \cup (\mathcal{T} \setminus \mathcal{T}_V)$. If $i^* \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$, then we can make a similar argument for i^* . In fact, incentive compatibility dictates that $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) - q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_{i^*}(\underline{t}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) = 0$, where the equality follows from the induction hypothesis because $(\underline{t}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) \in \mathcal{T}_V^n$. In summary, we have thus shown that $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$. The first condition in (15) can be proved by repeating the corresponding arguments from the base step almost verbatim. Details are omitted for brevity. We have thus established (15) in an arbitrary scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V^{n+1}$. By induction, the revenues generated by the mechanisms (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ must therefore coincide throughout $\cup_{n \geq 1} \mathcal{T}_V^n = \mathcal{T}_V$. This observation completes the proof. \square

Proof of Theorem 4. Let $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ denote the allocation probabilities of the favored-agent mechanism described in Theorem 4. We know that $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ is optimal from Theorem 3. To show that it is also Pareto robustly optimal, fix a mechanism $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) \in \mathcal{X}$ and suppose that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$, i.e., condition (1) holds. We will show that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot (strictly) Pareto robustly dominate $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$.

If $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{i^*\}$ is a singleton, we know from Proposition 5 that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot generate strictly higher expected payoff under any $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$, and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ is thus Pareto robustly optimal. Suppose now that $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ is not a singleton. Select any $\varepsilon \in (0, \bar{\mu}_{i^*} - \underline{\mu}_{i^*})$ that exists because $\underline{\mu}_{i^*} < \bar{\mu}_{i^*}$, and define

$$\mathcal{P}_\varepsilon = \{\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P} : \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\tilde{t}_{i^*}] \in [\underline{\mu}_{i^*} + \varepsilon, \bar{\mu}_{i^*}]\}.$$

Set \mathcal{P}_ε represents another Markov ambiguity set where the lowest mean value $\underline{\mu}_{i^*}$ of bidder i^* is shifted to $\underline{\mu}_{i^*} + \varepsilon$. Note that agent i^* becomes the unique agent with the maximum lowest mean value under \mathcal{P}_ε . As $\mathcal{P}_\varepsilon \subset \mathcal{P}$ by construction, we have

$$\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) \tilde{t}_i - q_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \right] \geq \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i^*(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) \tilde{t}_i - q_i^*(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \right] \quad \forall \mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}_\varepsilon.$$

Thus, (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) also weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ under the Markov ambiguity set \mathcal{P}_ε . By Proposition 5, we can now conclude that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ generate the same payoff for the principal in any scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$. This implies that the expected payoff of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot exceed the one of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ under any distribution \mathbb{P} supported on \mathcal{T} . Thus, none of the inequalities in (1) can be strict, and (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot Pareto robustly dominate $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$. The claim thus follows. \square

Proof of Theorem 5. Select any favored-agent mechanism with $i^* \in \arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$ and $\nu^* \geq \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$, denote by (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) its allocation probabilities. Recall first that this mechanism is feasible in (MDP). We will prove that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) attains a worst-case expected payoff that is at least as large as $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$, which implies via Proposition 6 that it is optimal in (MDP).

To this end, fix an arbitrary distribution $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$ and suppose for ease of exposition that $\mathbb{P}(\max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i < \nu^*)$, $\mathbb{P}(\max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i = \nu^*)$ and $\mathbb{P}(\max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i > \nu^*)$ are all strictly positive. We can write the principal's expected payoff from (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) under \mathbb{P} as

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) \tilde{t}_i - q_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \right] &= \mathbb{P} \left(\max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i < \nu^* \right) \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) \tilde{t}_i - q_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i < \nu^* \right] \\ &\quad + \mathbb{P} \left(\max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i = \nu^* \right) \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) \tilde{t}_i - q_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i = \nu^* \right] \\ &\quad + \mathbb{P} \left(\max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i > \nu^* \right) \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) \tilde{t}_i - q_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i > \nu^* \right]. \end{aligned} \quad (17)$$

If one or more of $\mathbb{P}(\max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i < \nu^*)$, $\mathbb{P}(\max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i = \nu^*)$ and $\mathbb{P}(\max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i > \nu^*)$ are zero, the right-hand side of equation (17) can be adjusted by removing the respective terms, and the proof proceeds similarly.

In the following we will show that all of the conditional expectations above and, therefore, the principal's expected payoff under \mathbb{P} are greater than or equal to $z^* = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$. If $\max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i < \nu^*$, condition (i) in Definition 3 implies that the principal's payoff amounts to \tilde{t}_{i^*} . This implies that

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) \tilde{t}_i - q_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i < \nu^* \right] &= \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\tilde{t}_{i^*} \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i < \nu^* \right] \\ &= \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} [\tilde{t}_{i^*}] = \mu_{i^*} = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i, \end{aligned}$$

where the second equality holds because the agents' types are independent. If $\max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i > \nu^*$, then condition (ii) in Definition 3 implies that the principal's payoff amounts to $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \tilde{t}_i - c_i$. We thus have

$$\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) \tilde{t}_i - q_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i > \nu^* \right] = \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \tilde{t}_i - c_i \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i > \nu^* \right] > \nu^* \geq \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i.$$

If $\max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i = \nu^*$, then the allocation functions are defined either as in condition (i) or as in condition (ii) of Definition 3. If the allocation functions are defined as in condition (i), we have

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) \tilde{t}_i - q_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i = \nu^* \right] &= \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\tilde{t}_{i^*} \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i = \nu^* \right] \\ &= \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} [\tilde{t}_{i^*}] = \mu_{i^*} = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i, \end{aligned}$$

where the second equality again holds because the agents' types are independent. If the allocation functions are defined as in condition (ii), on the other hand, then

$$\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) \tilde{t}_i - q_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i = \nu^* \right] = \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \tilde{t}_i - c_i \mid \max_{i \neq i^*} \tilde{t}_i - c_i = \nu^* \right] \geq \nu^* \geq \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i.$$

In summary, we have shown that all of the conditional expectations in (17) and, therefore, the principal's expected payoff under \mathbb{P} is non-inferior to $z^* = \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i$. As $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$ was chosen arbitrarily, this reasoning implies that the principal's worst-case expected payoff is also non-inferior to z^* . The favored-agent mechanism at hand is therefore optimal in (MDP) by virtue of Proposition 6.

□

Proof of Lemma 3. Consider arbitrary $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$ and $\mu_{i^*} \in [\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \bar{\mu}_{i^*}]$. We will construct a scenario $\hat{\mathbf{t}} \in \mathcal{T}$, where $\max_{i \neq i^*} \hat{t}_i < \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$, and a discrete distribution $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$ that satisfies (i)–(iii). To this end, we define \hat{t}_i through

$$\hat{t}_i = \begin{cases} t_i & \text{if } t_i = \underline{\mu}_i \\ \underline{t}_i & \text{if } t_i > \underline{\mu}_i \\ \underline{\mu}_i + \varepsilon & \text{if } t_i < \underline{\mu}_i \end{cases} \quad \forall i \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^*\} \quad \text{and} \quad \hat{t}_{i^*} = \begin{cases} t_{i^*} & \text{if } t_{i^*} = \mu_{i^*} \\ \underline{t}_{i^*} & \text{if } t_{i^*} > \mu_{i^*} \\ \mu_{i^*} + \varepsilon & \text{if } t_{i^*} < \mu_{i^*}, \end{cases}$$

where $\varepsilon \in (0, \min_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \bar{t}_i - \bar{\mu}_i) \cap (0, (\underline{\mu}_{i^*} - \max_{i \neq i^*} \underline{\mu}_i)/2)$ is a fixed positive number. Note that there exists such $\varepsilon > 0$ because $\underline{\mu}_i < \bar{\mu}_i < \bar{t}_i$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}$ and $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{i^*\}$ is a singleton. We next show that $\hat{t}_i \in \mathcal{T}_i$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}$ (i.e., $\hat{\mathbf{t}} \in \mathcal{T}$) and $\max_{i \neq i^*} \hat{t}_i < \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$. For any $i \in \mathcal{I}$, we have

$$\hat{t}_i \leq \bar{\mu}_i + \varepsilon \leq \bar{\mu}_i + \min_{j \in \mathcal{I}} (\bar{t}_j - \bar{\mu}_j) \leq \bar{\mu}_i + \bar{t}_i - \bar{\mu}_i = \bar{t}_i,$$

where the first inequality follows from the definition of \hat{t}_i , and the second inequality holds because $\varepsilon < \min_{j \in \mathcal{I}} \bar{t}_j - \bar{\mu}_j$. The definition of \hat{t}_i implies that we also have $\hat{t}_i \geq t_i$. We thus showed that $\hat{\mathbf{t}} \in \mathcal{T}$.

For all $i \neq i^*$, we moreover have

$$\hat{t}_i \leq \underline{\mu}_i + \varepsilon \leq \underline{\mu}_i + (\underline{\mu}_{i^*} - \max_{j \neq i^*} \underline{\mu}_j)/2 \leq \underline{\mu}_i + (\underline{\mu}_{i^*} - \underline{\mu}_i)/2 < \underline{\mu}_{i^*},$$

where the first inequality again follows from the definition of \hat{t}_i , the second inequality holds because $\varepsilon < (\underline{\mu}_{i^*} - \max_{i \neq i^*} \underline{\mu}_i)/2$, and the fourth inequality holds because $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{i^*\}$ is a singleton. We thus showed that $\max_{i \neq i^*} \hat{t}_i < \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$.

Next, we will construct a discrete distribution \mathbb{P} through the marginal distributions $\mathbb{P}_i = \alpha_i \delta_{t_i} + (1 - \alpha_i) \delta_{\hat{t}_i}$ of \hat{t}_i 's, where $\alpha_i \in (0, 1]$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}$. We will then show that \mathbb{P} belongs to the Markov ambiguity set \mathcal{P} and moreover satisfies the properties (i)–(iii). To this end, we define α_i through

$$\alpha_i = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } t_i = \hat{t}_i, \\ (\underline{\mu}_i - \hat{t}_i)/(t_i - \hat{t}_i) & \text{if } t_i \neq \hat{t}_i, \end{cases} \quad \forall i \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^*\}$$

and

$$\alpha_{i^*} = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } t_{i^*} = \hat{t}_{i^*}, \\ (\mu_{i^*} - \hat{t}_{i^*})/(t_{i^*} - \hat{t}_{i^*}) & \text{if } t_{i^*} \neq \hat{t}_{i^*}. \end{cases}$$

We first show that $\alpha_i \in (0, 1]$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}$. For any $i \in \mathcal{I}$, it is sufficient to show that the claim holds if $t_i \neq \hat{t}_i$. For any $i \neq i^*$, if $t_i \neq \hat{t}_i$ and $t_i > \underline{\mu}_i$, we have

$$\alpha_i = (\underline{\mu}_i - \hat{t}_i)/(t_i - \hat{t}_i) = (\underline{\mu}_i - \underline{t}_i)/(t_i - \underline{t}_i) \in (0, 1),$$

where the second equality follows from the definition of \hat{t}_i , and the inclusion holds because $t_i > \underline{\mu}_i > \underline{t}_i$. If $t_i \neq \hat{t}_i$ and $t_i < \underline{\mu}_i$, on the other hand, we have $\alpha_i = -\varepsilon/(t_i - \underline{\mu}_i - \varepsilon) \in (0, 1)$, where the equality again follows from the definition of \hat{t}_i , and the inclusion holds because $t_i < \underline{\mu}_i < \underline{\mu}_i + \varepsilon$. Note that if $t_i = \underline{\mu}_i$, then $\hat{t}_i = t_i$ by definition, and $\alpha_i = 1$. One can similarly show that $\alpha_{i^*} \in (0, 1]$ by replacing $\underline{\mu}_{i^*}$ with μ_{i^*} in the above arguments. Thus, $\alpha_i \in (0, 1]$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}$. We now define \mathbb{P} through the marginal distributions $\mathbb{P}_i = \alpha_i \delta_{\hat{t}_i} + (1 - \alpha_i) \delta_{\underline{t}_i}$, $i \in \mathcal{I}$, as follows.

$$\mathbb{P}(\tilde{\mathbf{t}} = \mathbf{t}) = \prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \mathbb{P}_i(\tilde{t}_i = t_i) \quad \forall \mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}$$

By construction, \tilde{t}_i 's are mutually independent under \mathbb{P} . Hence, the expected type of each $i \in \mathcal{I}$ amounts to $\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\tilde{t}_i] = \alpha_i t_i + (1 - \alpha_i) \hat{t}_i$.

We next show that $\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\tilde{t}_i] \in [\underline{\mu}_i, \bar{\mu}_i]$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}$, which implies that $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$. For any $i \neq i^*$, if $t_i = \hat{t}_i$, then we have $t_i = \hat{t}_i = \underline{\mu}_i$ by definition of \hat{t}_i . The expected type therefore amounts to $\underline{\mu}_i$. If $t_i \neq \hat{t}_i$, on the other hand, we have

$$\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\tilde{t}_i] = \alpha_i t_i + (1 - \alpha_i) \hat{t}_i = \alpha_i (t_i - \hat{t}_i) + \hat{t}_i = \frac{\underline{\mu}_i - \hat{t}_i}{t_i - \hat{t}_i} (t_i - \hat{t}_i) + \hat{t}_i = \underline{\mu}_i,$$

where the third equality follows from the definition of α_i . One can verify that $\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\tilde{t}_{i^*}] = \mu_{i^*}$ using similar arguments. We thus showed that $\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\tilde{t}_i] \in [\underline{\mu}_i, \bar{\mu}_i]$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}$ and, therefore, $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$.

It remains to show that \mathbb{P} satisfies (i)–(iii). As we have $\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\tilde{t}_{i^*}] = \mu_{i^*}$, property (i) holds. The definition of \mathbb{P} implies that (ii) and (iii) also hold. \square

Proof of Lemma 4. Consider any subset $\mathcal{T}' = \prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \mathcal{T}'_i$ of \mathcal{T} such that (i) and (ii) holds. Also, consider any $(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}), (\mathbf{p}', \mathbf{q}') \in \mathcal{X}$ such that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}', \mathbf{q}')$ and (10) holds. Suppose for the sake of contradiction that (10) is strict for some $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}'$.

We will characterize a discrete distribution $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$ under which the expected payoff of mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is strictly lower than that of $(\mathbf{p}', \mathbf{q}')$, which contradicts that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}', \mathbf{q}')$. By Lemma 3, for scenario \mathbf{t} and for any $\mu_{i^*} \in [\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \bar{\mu}_{i^*}]$, there exist a scenario $\hat{\mathbf{t}} \in \mathcal{T}$, where $\max_{i \neq i^*} \hat{t}_i < \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$, and a discrete distribution $\mathbb{P} \in \mathcal{P}$ that satisfy the following properties: (i) $\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}}[\tilde{t}_{i^*}] = \mu_{i^*}$, (ii) $\mathbb{P}(\tilde{t}_i \in \{t_i, \hat{t}_i\}) = 1$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}$, (iii) $\mathbb{P}(\tilde{\mathbf{t}} = \mathbf{t}) > 0$. We next show that there is always a $\mu_{i^*} \in [\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \bar{\mu}_{i^*}]$ such that distribution \mathbb{P} also satisfies $\mathbb{P}(\tilde{\mathbf{t}} \in \mathcal{T}') = 1$. Note that if \mathbb{P} satisfies $\mathbb{P}(\tilde{t}_i \in \mathcal{T}'_i) = 1$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}$, then it also satisfies $\mathbb{P}(\tilde{\mathbf{t}} \in \mathcal{T}') = 1$ as $\mathcal{T}' = \prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \mathcal{T}'_i$. First, suppose that $\mathcal{T}'_{i^*} \subseteq [\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \bar{\mu}_{i^*}]$. For $\mu_{i^*} = t_{i^*} \in [\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \bar{\mu}_{i^*}]$, properties (i)–(iii) on \mathbb{P} imply that if $\hat{t}_{i^*} \neq t_{i^*}$, then $\mathbb{P}(\tilde{t}_{i^*} = \hat{t}_{i^*}) = 0$. We thus have $\mathbb{P}(\tilde{t}_{i^*} = t_{i^*}) = 1$, which implies that $\mathbb{P}(\tilde{t}_{i^*} \in \mathcal{T}'_{i^*}) = 1$ as $t_{i^*} \in \mathcal{T}'_{i^*}$. For any $i \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^*\}$, as $\hat{t}_i < \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$, we have $\hat{t}_i \in \mathcal{T}'_i \supseteq \{t_i \in \mathcal{T}_i \mid t_i < \underline{\mu}_{i^*}\}$ irrespective of the value of μ_{i^*} . Condition (ii) on \mathbb{P} thus implies that $\mathbb{P}(\tilde{t}_i \in \mathcal{T}'_i) = 1$. Suppose now that $\mathcal{T}'_{i^*} = \mathcal{T}_{i^*}$. Condition (ii) on \mathbb{P} implies that $\mathbb{P}(\tilde{t}_{i^*} \in \mathcal{T}'_{i^*}) = 1$ as $t_{i^*}, \hat{t}_{i^*} \in \mathcal{T}_{i^*} = \mathcal{T}'_{i^*}$. We already showed that $\mathbb{P}(\tilde{t}_i \in \mathcal{T}'_i) = 1$ for every other $i \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^*\}$ irrespective of the value of μ_{i^*} . We can thus conclude that there always exists a $\mu_{i^*} \in [\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \bar{\mu}_{i^*}]$ such that distribution \mathbb{P} from Lemma 3 also satisfies $\mathbb{P}(\tilde{\mathbf{t}} \in \mathcal{T}') = 1$.

Now, keeping in mind that \mathbb{P} is a discrete distribution with properties $\mathbb{P}(\tilde{\mathbf{t}} \in \mathcal{T}') = 1$ and $\mathbb{P}(\tilde{\mathbf{t}} = \mathbf{t}) > 0$, we can bound the principal's expected payoff from (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) under \mathbb{P} as follows:

$$\mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) \tilde{t}_i - q_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \right] < \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}} \left[\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p'_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) \tilde{t}_i - q'_i(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) c_i) \right],$$

where the strict inequality follows from (10) and the assumption that (10) is strict for $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}'$. Therefore, we conclude that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot weakly Pareto robustly dominate $(\mathbf{p}', \mathbf{q}')$ unless the inequalities in (10) hold with equality. \square

Proof of Proposition 7. Consider the following partition of the set \mathcal{T} .

$$\begin{aligned}\mathcal{T}_I &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_{i^*} \in (\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \bar{\mu}_{i^*}] \text{ and } \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i \leq \underline{\mu}_{i^*}\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{II} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_{i^*} \in (\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \bar{\mu}_{i^*}] \text{ and } \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i > \underline{\mu}_{i^*} \text{ and } \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i \leq \underline{\mu}_{i^*}\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{II'} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_{i^*} \in (\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \bar{\mu}_{i^*}] \text{ and } \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i > \underline{\mu}_{i^*} \text{ and } \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i > \underline{\mu}_{i^*}\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{III} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_{i^*} \notin (\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \bar{\mu}_{i^*}] \text{ and } \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i \leq \underline{\mu}_{i^*}\} \\ \mathcal{T}_{III'} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_{i^*} \notin (\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \bar{\mu}_{i^*}] \text{ and } \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i > \underline{\mu}_{i^*}\}\end{aligned}$$

We can replace $\mathcal{T}_{II'}$ and $\mathcal{T}_{III'}$ with the following two sets to obtain a different partition of \mathcal{T} .

$$\begin{aligned}\mathcal{T}_{IV} &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_{i^*} = \underline{\mu}_{i^*} \text{ and } \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i > \underline{\mu}_{i^*}\} \\ \mathcal{T}_V &= \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T} \mid t_{i^*} \neq \underline{\mu}_{i^*} \text{ and } \max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i > \underline{\mu}_{i^*}\}\end{aligned}$$

This is because \mathcal{T}_{IV} and \mathcal{T}_V are disjoint sets that have the same union as the union of $\mathcal{T}_{II'}$ and $\mathcal{T}_{III'}$. Throughout the proof we consider the partition $\mathcal{T}_I, \mathcal{T}_{II}, \mathcal{T}_{III}, \mathcal{T}_{IV}, \mathcal{T}_V$. Note that \mathcal{T}_I and \mathcal{T}_{III} are nonempty as $\arg \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \underline{\mu}_i = \{i^*\}$ and $[\underline{\mu}_i, \bar{\mu}_i] \in (t_i, \bar{t}_i)$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}$, but sets $\mathcal{T}_{II}, \mathcal{T}_{IV}$ and \mathcal{T}_V can be empty if $\underline{\mu}_{i^*}$ or c_i for all $i \neq i^*$ are sufficiently large.

The remainder of the proof is divided into four steps, each of which proves the claim for one of the subsets $\mathcal{T}_I, \mathcal{T}_{II}, \mathcal{T}_{III}, \mathcal{T}_{IV}$ and \mathcal{T}_V .

Step 1 (\mathcal{T}_I). For any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_I$, the principal's payoff under (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) satisfies

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) \leq \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i \leq t_{i^*} = \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i^*(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i^*(\mathbf{t})c_i),$$

where the first inequality holds because $q_i(\mathbf{t})$ and c_i are non-negative, the second inequality follows from (FC) and that $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i \leq \underline{\mu}_{i^*} < t_{i^*}$, and the equality follows from the definition of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$. The payoff of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ is thus larger than or equal to the payoff of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) in every $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_I$. Moreover, note that \mathcal{T}_I can be written as $\prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \mathcal{T}_{Ii}$ where $\mathcal{T}_{Ii^*} = (\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \bar{\mu}_{i^*}]$ and $\mathcal{T}_{Ii} = [t_i, \underline{\mu}_{i^*}] \cap \mathcal{T}_i$ for all $i \neq i^*$. The set \mathcal{T}_I thus satisfies the assumptions (i) and (ii) in Lemma 4. By Lemma 4, we can thus conclude that the payoffs of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ coincide in \mathcal{T}_I . In addition, note that, for any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_I$, we have $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i < t_{i^*}$, $q_i(\mathbf{t}) \geq 0$, $c_i > 0$ and $\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq 1$. This implies that the payoff of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can match the payoff t_{i^*} of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ only if $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$.

Step 2 (\mathcal{T}_{II}). We will prove that if mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ then it must satisfy $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ for any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II}$, which implies that the payoff of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) matches that of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ throughout \mathcal{T}_{II} . To this end, define the set-valued function $\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) = \{i \in \mathcal{I} \mid t_i > \underline{\mu}_{i^*}\}$ for $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II}$. Note that $|\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})| \geq 2$ for all $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II}$ by the definition of \mathcal{T}_{II} , which ensures that $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i > \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$ and $t_{i^*} \in (\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \bar{\mu}_{i^*}]$. We now prove by induction that the claim holds in $\mathcal{T}_{II}^n = \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II} \mid |\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})| = n\}$ for all $n \geq 2$.

As for the base step, set $n = 2$ and fix any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II}^2$. Thus, there exists exactly one agent $i^\circ \neq i^*$ that satisfies $t_{i^\circ} > \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$. Incentive compatibility ensures that $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) - q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_{i^\circ}(t_{i^\circ}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^\circ}) = 0$, where the equality holds because $(t_{i^\circ}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^\circ}) \in \mathcal{T}_I$ and because we know from Step 1 that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent i^* without inspection in \mathcal{T}_I . We thus have $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) = q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t})$. Then, we have

$$\begin{aligned}\sum_{j \in \mathcal{I}} (p_j(\mathbf{t})t_j - q_j(\mathbf{t})c_j) &\leq \sum_{j \neq i^\circ} p_j(\mathbf{t})t_j + p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t})(t_{i^\circ} - c_{i^\circ}) \\ &\leq t_{i^*} = \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i^*(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i^*(\mathbf{t})c_i),\end{aligned}$$

where the first inequality holds because $q_j(\mathbf{t})$ and c_j are non-negative and $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) = q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t})$, the second inequality from (FC) and that $t_{i^\circ} - c_{i^\circ} \leq \underline{\mu}_{i^*} < t_{i^*}$ and $t_j \leq \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$ for all $j \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^\circ, i^*\}$, and the equality

follows from the definition of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$. As scenario \mathbf{t} is chosen arbitrarily, the payoff of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) thus cannot exceed that of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ throughout \mathcal{T}_{II}^2 . Recalling the conclusion from Step 1, we now know that this relation between the payoffs is true for the set $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}^2$.

For any $i^\circ \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^*\}$, define $\mathcal{T}_{II}^2(i^\circ)$ as the subset of \mathcal{T}_{II}^2 where i° is the only agent with type $t_{i^\circ} > \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$ and note that $\mathcal{T}_{II}^2 = \cup_{i^\circ \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^*\}} \mathcal{T}_{II}^2(i^\circ)$. Consider an arbitrary $i^\circ \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^*\}$ and the set $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}^2(i^\circ)$, which can be written as $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}^2(i^\circ) = \prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}^2(i^\circ))_i$, where $(\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}^2(i^\circ))_{i^*} = (\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \bar{\mu}_{i^*}]$, $(\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}^2(i^\circ))_{i^\circ} = [t_{i^\circ}, c_{i^\circ} + \underline{\mu}_{i^*}] \cap \mathcal{T}_{i^\circ}$ and $(\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}^2(i^\circ))_i = [t_i, \underline{\mu}_{i^*}] \cap \mathcal{T}_i$ for all $i \notin \{i^*, i^\circ\}$. The set $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}^2(i^\circ)$ satisfies the assumptions (i) and (ii) in Lemma 4. Mechanisms (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ thus generate the same payoff throughout $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}^2(i^\circ)$ by Lemma 4. By definition, the payoff of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ amounts to t_{i^*} in $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}^2(i^\circ)$. For any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II}^2(i^\circ)$, as $t_{i^\circ} - c_{i^\circ} < t_{i^*}$, $t_i < t_{i^*}$ for all $i \notin \{i^*, i^\circ\}$ and $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) = q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t})$, (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can generate a payoff of t_{i^*} only if $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$. As i° is chosen arbitrarily, we have $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ throughout \mathcal{T}_{II}^2 .

As for the induction step, assume that $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ for all $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II}^n$ and for some $n \geq 2$, and fix a scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II}^{n+1}$. Thus, there exists exactly $n+1$ agents i that satisfy $t_i > \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$. For any agent $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) \setminus \{i^*\}$, incentive compatibility dictates that $p_i(\mathbf{t}) - q_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_i(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) = 0$, where the equality follows from $(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) \in \mathcal{T}_{II}^n$ and the induction hypothesis. We thus have $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) \setminus \{i^*\}$. Then,

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) \leq \sum_{i \notin \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) \setminus \{i^*\}} p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i + \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) \setminus \{i^*\}} p_i(\mathbf{t})(t_i - c_i) \leq t_{i^*} = \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i^*(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i^*(\mathbf{t})c_i),$$

where the first inequality holds because $q_i(\mathbf{t})$ and c_i are non-negative and $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) \setminus \{i^*\}$, the second inequality follows from (FC) and that $t_i - c_i \leq \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) \setminus \{i^*\}$ and $t_i \leq \underline{\mu}_{i^*} < t_{i^*}$ for $i \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$, and the equality follows from the definition of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$. As scenario \mathbf{t} is chosen arbitrarily, the payoff from (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is thus less than or equal to that of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ throughout \mathcal{T}_{II}^{n+1} . By Step 1, this relationship between the payoffs holds true for the set $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}^{n+1}$.

For any subset $\mathcal{I}' \ni i^*$ of agents with $|\mathcal{I}'| = n+1$, define $\mathcal{T}_{II}^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}')$ as the subset of \mathcal{T}_{II} where $t_i \leq \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$ for all $i \notin \mathcal{I}'$. Note that $\mathcal{T}_{II}^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}') \subseteq \cup_{k=2}^{n+1} \mathcal{T}_{II}^k$, and the union of $\mathcal{T}_{II}^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}')$ over all $\mathcal{I}' \subseteq \mathcal{I}$ with $|\mathcal{I}'| = n+1$ and $i^* \in \mathcal{I}'$ gives us the set $\cup_{k=2}^{n+1} \mathcal{T}_{II}^k$. Consider now an arbitrary $\mathcal{I}' \ni i^*$ with $|\mathcal{I}'| = n+1$ and the set $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}')$, which can be written as $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}') = \prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}'))_i$, where $(\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}'))_{i^*} = (\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \bar{\mu}_{i^*}]$, $(\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}'))_i = [t_i, c_i + \underline{\mu}_{i^*}] \cap \mathcal{T}_i$ for $i \in \mathcal{I}' \setminus \{i^*\}$ and $(\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}'))_i = [t_i, \underline{\mu}_{i^*}] \cap \mathcal{T}_i$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \mathcal{I}'$. The set $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}')$ satisfies the assumptions (i) and (ii) in Lemma 4. The payoffs of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ thus coincide in $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}')$ by Lemma 4. By definition, the payoff of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ amounts to t_{i^*} throughout $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}')$. For any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{II}^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}')$, as $t_i - c_i < t_{i^*}$ and $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}' \setminus \{i^*\}$ and $t_i < t_{i^*}$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \mathcal{I}'$, mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can generate a payoff of t_{i^*} only if $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$. As \mathcal{I}' is chosen arbitrarily, we have $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ throughout \mathcal{T}_{II}^{n+1} . This thus completes the induction step.

In summary, the allocation probabilities of any mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) that weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ should satisfy $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$ throughout \mathcal{T}_{II} .

Step 3 (\mathcal{T}_{III}). Next, fix any type profile $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}$. Incentive compatibility ensures that $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) \geq p_{i^*}(\bar{\mu}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) - q_{i^*}(\bar{\mu}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) = 1$, where the equality holds because $(\bar{\mu}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) \in \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$ and because we know from Step 1 and 2 that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) allocates the good to agent i^* without inspection in $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II}$. We thus have $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) \leq p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t})t_{i^*} + q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t})c_{i^*} \leq t_{i^*} = \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i^*(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i^*(\mathbf{t})c_i),$$

where the first inequality follows from (FC) and non-negativity of $q_i(\mathbf{t})$, the second inequality holds because $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) \geq 0$ and $c_{i^*} > 0$, and the equality follows from the definition of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$. As scenario \mathbf{t} is chosen arbitrarily, (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot generate a payoff higher than $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ throughout \mathcal{T}_{III} . By

Steps 1 and 2, this relation between the payoffs holds for the set $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III}$. Note that the set $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III}$ can be written as $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III} = \prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III})_i$, where $(\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III})_{i^*} = \mathcal{T}_{i^*}$ and $(\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III})_i = [t_i, c_i + \underline{\mu}_{i^*}] \cap \mathcal{T}_i$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^*\}$. The set $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III}$ thus satisfies the assumptions (i) and (ii) in Lemma 4. The payoffs of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ thus coincide throughout $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III}$ by Lemma 4. As $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) \geq 0$, $c_{i^*} > 0$ and (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) satisfies the (FC), mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can generate a payoff of t_{i^*} in a scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{III}$ only if $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$ and $q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) = 0$.

Step 4 (\mathcal{T}_{IV}). In this step, we will show that any mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) that weakly Pareto robustly dominates $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ must satisfy

$$\sum_{i \in \arg \max_{i' \in \mathcal{I}} t_{i'} - c_{i'}} p_i(\mathbf{t}) = 1 \quad \text{and} \quad p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t}) \quad \forall i \in \arg \max_{i' \in \mathcal{I}} t_{i'} - c_{i'} \quad (18)$$

for all $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}$. This immediately implies that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) generates the same payoff as $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ throughout \mathcal{T}_{IV} . To this end, define the set-valued function $\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) = \{i \in \mathcal{I} \mid t_i > \underline{\mu}_{i^*}\}$ for $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}$. Note that $|\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})| \geq 1$ and $i^* \notin \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$ for all $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}$ thanks to the definition of \mathcal{T}_{IV} , which ensures that $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i > \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$ and $t_{i^*} = \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$. We will prove by induction that (18) holds in $\mathcal{T}_{IV}^n = \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV} \mid |\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})| = n\}$ for all $I - 1 \geq n \geq 1$.

As for the base step, set $n = 1$ and fix a scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}^1$. Thus, exactly one agent i° satisfies $t_{i^\circ} > \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$. Incentive compatibility ensures that $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) - q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_{i^\circ}(t_{i^\circ}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^\circ}) = 0$, where the equality follows from that $(t_{i^\circ}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^\circ}) \in \mathcal{T}_{III}$ and Step 3. We thus have $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) = q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t})$. Then,

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) \leq \sum_{i \neq i^\circ} p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i + p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t})(t_{i^\circ} - c_{i^\circ}) \leq t_{i^\circ} - c_{i^\circ} = \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i^*(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i^*(\mathbf{t})c_i),$$

where the first inequality holds because $q_i(\mathbf{t})$ and c_i are non-negative and $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) = q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t})$, the second inequality follows from (FC) and that $t_{i^\circ} - c_{i^\circ} > \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$ and $t_i \leq \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^\circ\}$, and the equality follows from the definition of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$. As scenario \mathbf{t} is chosen arbitrarily, (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) generates a payoff less than or equal to that of from $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ throughout \mathcal{T}_{IV}^1 .

For an arbitrary $i^\circ \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^*\}$, we now define the set $\mathcal{T}'(i^\circ) = \prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \mathcal{T}'_i$, where $\mathcal{T}'_{i^*} = \{\underline{\mu}_{i^*}\}$, $\mathcal{T}'_{i^\circ} = \mathcal{T}_{i^\circ}$ and $\mathcal{T}'_i = [t_i, \underline{\mu}_{i^*}]$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^*, i^\circ\}$. Note that $\mathcal{T}'(i^\circ) \subseteq \mathcal{T}_{III} \cup \mathcal{T}_{IV}^1$. By Step 3 and the findings of Step 4 thus far, the payoff of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot be higher than that of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ throughout $\mathcal{T}'(i^\circ)$. Denote by $\mathcal{T}_{IV}^1(i^\circ)$ the subset of \mathcal{T}_{IV}^1 where i° is the only agent whose type $t_{i^\circ} > \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$, and note that $\cup_{i^\circ \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^*\}} \mathcal{T}_{IV}^1(i^\circ) = \mathcal{T}_{IV}^1$. We have $\mathcal{T}_{IV}^1(i^\circ) \subseteq \mathcal{T}'(i^\circ)$, and $\mathcal{T}'(i^\circ)$ satisfies the assumptions (i) and (ii) in Lemma 4. The payoffs of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ thus coincide throughout $\mathcal{T}_{IV}^1(i^\circ)$ by Lemma 4. As we have $t_{i^\circ} - c_{i^\circ} > t_{i^*} = \underline{\mu}_{i^*} \geq t_i$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^\circ, i^*\}$ and $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) = q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t})$ for any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}^1(i^\circ)$, the payoff of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can match the payoff $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i = t_{i^\circ} - c_{i^\circ}$ of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ only if $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) = q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) = 1$. We thus established (18) in $\mathcal{T}_{IV}^1(i^\circ)$. As agent i° is chosen arbitrarily, the claim holds throughout \mathcal{T}_{IV}^1 .

As for the induction step, assume that (18) holds throughout \mathcal{T}_{IV}^n for some $n \geq 1$, and fix a scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}^{n+1}$. Thus, there exists exactly $n + 1$ agents $i \neq i^*$ that satisfy $t_i > \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$. For any agent $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$, incentive compatibility dictates that $p_i(\mathbf{t}) - q_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_i(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) = 0$, where the equality follows from $(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) \in \mathcal{T}_{III} \cup \mathcal{T}_{IV}^n$. Indeed, if $(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) \in \mathcal{T}_{III}$, then agent $i^* \notin \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$ receives the good so that $p_i(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) = 0$, and if $(t_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}^n$, the equality follows from the induction hypothesis. We thus have $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$ and, by the definition of \mathcal{T}_{IV} , in particular for all $i \in \arg \max_{j \in \mathcal{I}} t_j - c_j$. Then,

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) \leq \sum_{i \notin \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})} p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i + \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})} p_i(\mathbf{t})(t_i - c_i) \leq \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i = \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i^*(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i^*(\mathbf{t})c_i),$$

where the first inequality holds because $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$ and $q_i(\mathbf{t})$ and c_i are non-negative, the second inequality follows from (FC) and that $\max_{j \in \mathcal{I}} t_j - c_j > \underline{\mu}_{i^*} = t_{i^*} \geq t_i$ for all

$i \notin \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$, and the equality follows from the definition of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$. Thus, the payoff of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) is less than or equal to the payoff of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ in \mathcal{T}_{IV}^{n+1} .

For an arbitrary $\mathcal{I}' \subseteq \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^*\}$ with $|\mathcal{I}'| = n + 1$, we now define $\mathcal{T}'(\mathcal{I}') = \prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}'} \mathcal{T}'_i$, where $\mathcal{T}'_{i^*} = \{\underline{\mu}_{i^*}\}$, $\mathcal{T}'_i = \mathcal{T}_i$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}'$, and $\mathcal{T}'_i = [\underline{t}_i, \underline{\mu}_{i^*}]$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I} \setminus (\mathcal{I}' \cup \{i^*\})$. Note that $\mathcal{T}'(\mathcal{I}') \subseteq \mathcal{T}_{III} \cup \bigcup_{k=1}^{n+1} \mathcal{T}_{IV}^k$. By Step 3 and the findings of this step thus far, the payoff of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot be higher than that of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ throughout $\mathcal{T}'(\mathcal{I}')$. Denote by $\mathcal{T}_{IV}^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}')$ the subset of \mathcal{T}_{IV} where $t_i \leq \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$ for all $i \notin \mathcal{I}'$. Note that the union of $\mathcal{T}_{IV}^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}')$ over all $\mathcal{I}' \subseteq \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^*\}$ with $|\mathcal{I}'| = n + 1$ gives us the set $\bigcup_{k=1}^{n+1} \mathcal{T}_{IV}^k$, and $\mathcal{T}_{IV}^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}') \subseteq \mathcal{T}'(\mathcal{I}')$. As the set $\mathcal{T}'(\mathcal{I}')$ satisfies the assumptions (i) and (ii) in Lemma 4, (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ generate the same payoff throughout $\mathcal{T}_{IV}^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}')$. As we have $\max_{j \in \mathcal{I}} t_j - c_j > \underline{\mu}_{i^*} \geq t_i$ for all $i \notin \mathcal{I}'$ and $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}'$ for any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}')$, mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can match the payoff $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i$ of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ only if (18) holds in $\mathcal{T}_{IV}^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}')$. As \mathcal{I}' is chosen arbitrarily, (18) holds throughout \mathcal{T}_{IV}^{n+1} . This observation completes the induction step.

Step 5 (\mathcal{T}_V). In analogy to Step 4, we will show that (18) holds for every $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V$. This immediately implies that (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) generates the same payoff as $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ in \mathcal{T}_V and, consequently, throughout \mathcal{T} . To this end, define the set-valued function $\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) = \{i \in \mathcal{I} \mid t_i > \underline{\mu}_{i^*}\}$ for $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V$. Note that $|\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})| \geq 1$ for any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V$ thanks to the definition of \mathcal{T}_V , which implies that $\max_{i \neq i^*} t_i - c_i > \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$. We will prove by induction that (18) holds for all type profiles in $\mathcal{T}_V^n = \{\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V \mid |\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) \setminus \{i^*\}| = n\}$ for all $I - 1 \geq n \geq 1$. Note that in any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V^n$ there are n agents, each of which is different from i^* , whose types exceed $\underline{\mu}_{i^*}$. Agent i^* 's type may or may not take a value above $\underline{\mu}_{i^*}$.

As for the base step, set $n = 1$ and fix any scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V^1$. Thus, there is exactly one agent $i^\circ \neq i^*$ that satisfy $t_{i^\circ} > \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$. Incentive compatibility ensures that $p_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) - q_{i^\circ}(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_{i^\circ}(\underline{t}_{i^\circ}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^\circ}) = 0$, where the equality follows from that $(\underline{t}_{i^\circ}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^\circ}) \in \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III}$ and from Steps 1, 2 and 3. Similarly for agent i^* , we have $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) - q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_{i^*}(\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) = 0$, where the equality follows from that $(\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}$ and Step 4. We thus have $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$ and i^* , which may or may not be in $\mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$. Then, we have

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) &\leq \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) \cup \{i^*\}} p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i + \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) \setminus \{i^*\}} p_i(\mathbf{t})(t_i - c_i) + p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t})(t_{i^*} - c_{i^*}) \\ &\leq \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i = \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i^*(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i^*(\mathbf{t})c_i), \end{aligned}$$

where the first equality holds because $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) \cup \{i^*\}$ and $q_i(\mathbf{t})$ and c_i are non-negative, the second inequality from (FC) and that $\max_{j \in \mathcal{I}} t_j - c_j = \max_{j \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) \cup \{i^*\}} t_j - c_j > \underline{\mu}_{i^*} \geq t_i$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) \cup \{i^*\}$, and the equality follows from the definition of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$. Thus, (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot generate a payoff higher than that of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ throughout \mathcal{T}_V^1 . Recalling the findings in Steps 1–4, this relation between the payoffs holds true for $\mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III} \cup \mathcal{T}_{IV} \cup \mathcal{T}_V^1$.

For an arbitrary $i^\circ \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^*\}$, we define the set $\mathcal{T}'(i^\circ) = \prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}} \mathcal{T}'_i$, where $\mathcal{T}'_i = \mathcal{T}_i$ for all $i \in \{i^*, i^\circ\}$, and $\mathcal{T}'_i = [\underline{t}_i, \underline{\mu}_{i^*}]$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^*, i^\circ\}$. Note that $\mathcal{T}'(i^\circ) \subseteq \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III} \cup \mathcal{T}_{IV}^1 \cup \mathcal{T}_V^1$, an therefore the payoff of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot be higher than that of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ throughout $\mathcal{T}'(i^\circ)$. Denote by $\mathcal{T}_V^1(i^\circ)$ the subset of \mathcal{T}_V^1 where i° is the only agent among $\mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^*\}$ with type $t_{i^\circ} > \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$. Note that $\bigcup_{i^\circ \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \{i^*\}} \mathcal{T}_V^1(i^\circ) = \mathcal{T}_V^1$, and $\mathcal{T}_V^1(i^\circ) \subseteq \mathcal{T}'(i^\circ)$. As the payoff of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot be higher than that of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ throughout $\mathcal{T}'(i^\circ)$, and the set \mathcal{T}' satisfies the assumptions (i) and (ii) from Lemma 4, the payoffs of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ must coincide throughout $\mathcal{T}_V^1(i^\circ)$. As we know that $\max_{i \in \{i^\circ, i^*\}} t_i - c_i > \underline{\mu}_{i^*} \geq t_j$ for all $j \notin \{i^\circ, i^*\}$ and $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \{i^\circ, i^*\}$ in any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V^1(i^\circ)$, mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can match the payoff $\max_{i \in \{i^\circ, i^*\}} t_i - c_i$ of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ only if (18) holds. As agent i° was chosen arbitrarily, we conclude that (18) holds throughout \mathcal{T}_V^1 .

As for the induction step, assume that (18) holds throughout \mathcal{T}_V^n for some $n \geq 1$ and fix any scenario $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V^{n+1}$. For any agent $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t}) \setminus \{i^*\}$, incentive compatibility implies that $p_i(\mathbf{t}) - q_i(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_i(\underline{t}_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) = 0$, where the equality holds because $(\underline{t}_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) \in \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III} \cup \mathcal{T}_V^n$. Indeed, if $(\underline{t}_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) \in \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III}$, then $p_i(\underline{t}_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) = 0$ follows from Steps 1, 2 and 3, and if $(\underline{t}_i, \mathbf{t}_{-i}) \in \mathcal{T}_V^n$, then the

equality follows from the induction hypothesis. If $i^* \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$, then incentive compatibility implies $p_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) - q_{i^*}(\mathbf{t}) \leq p_{i^*}(\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) = 0$, where the equality follows from that $(\underline{\mu}_{i^*}, \mathbf{t}_{-i^*}) \in \mathcal{T}_{IV}$ and Step 4. We thus have $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$, and by the definition of \mathcal{T}_V , in particular for all $i \in \arg \max_{j \in \mathcal{I}} t_j - c_j$. Then, the principal's payoff in \mathbf{t} can be written as:

$$\sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i(\mathbf{t})c_i) \leq \sum_{i \notin \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})} p_i(\mathbf{t})t_i + \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})} p_i(\mathbf{t})(t_i - c_i) \leq \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i = \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}} (p_i^*(\mathbf{t})t_i - q_i^*(\mathbf{t})c_i),$$

where the first inequality follows because $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$ and $c_i > 0$ for all $i \notin \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$. The second inequality holds because the two sums represent a weighted average of $t_i - c_i$ for $i \in \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$ and t_i for $i \notin \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$. All these terms are smaller or equal to $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i$. In particular, the definition of \mathcal{T}_V ensures that $\max_{j \in \mathcal{I}} t_j - c_j > \underline{\mu}_{i^*} \geq t_i$ for all $i \notin \mathcal{I}(\mathbf{t})$. This reasoning shows that the payoff from (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot be higher than $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ in \mathcal{T}_V^{n+1} .

For an arbitrary $\mathcal{I}' \subseteq \mathcal{I}$ with $\mathcal{I}' \ni i^*$ and $|\mathcal{I}' \setminus \{i^*\}| = n + 1$, we define the set $\mathcal{T}'(\mathcal{I}') = \prod_{i \in \mathcal{I}'} \mathcal{T}'_i$, where $\mathcal{T}'_i = \mathcal{T}_i$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}'$ and $\mathcal{T}'_i = [\underline{t}_i, \underline{\mu}_{i^*}]$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I} \setminus \mathcal{I}'$. Note that $\mathcal{T}'(\mathcal{I}') \subseteq \mathcal{T}_I \cup \mathcal{T}_{II} \cup \mathcal{T}_{III} \cup \mathcal{T}_{IV}^{n+1} \cup \mathcal{T}_V^{n+1}$, and therefore the payoff of (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) cannot be higher than that of $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ throughout $\mathcal{T}'(\mathcal{I}')$. Denote by $\mathcal{T}_V^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}')$ the subset of \mathcal{T}_V where $t_i \leq \underline{\mu}_{i^*}$ for all $i \notin \mathcal{I}'$. Note that the union of $\mathcal{T}_V^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}')$ over all $\mathcal{I}' \subseteq \mathcal{I}$ with $\mathcal{I}' \ni i^*$ and $|\mathcal{I}' \setminus \{i^*\}| = n + 1$ gives us the set $\cup_{k=1}^{n+1} \mathcal{T}_V^k$, and $\mathcal{T}_V^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}') \subseteq \mathcal{T}'(\mathcal{I}')$. The set $\mathcal{T}'(\mathcal{I}')$ satisfies the assumptions (i) and (ii) in Lemma 4, which implies that the payoffs from (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ must coincide throughout $\mathcal{T}_V^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}')$. As we know that $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i > \underline{\mu}_{i^*} \geq t_j$ for all $j \notin \mathcal{I}'$ and $p_i(\mathbf{t}) = q_i(\mathbf{t})$ for all $i \in \mathcal{I}'$ for any $\mathbf{t} \in \mathcal{T}_V^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}')$, mechanism (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) can match the payoff $\max_{i \in \mathcal{I}} t_i - c_i$ only if (18) holds in $\mathcal{T}_V^{n+1}(\mathcal{I}')$. As \mathcal{I}' was chosen arbitrarily, (18) holds throughout \mathcal{T}_V^{n+1} . This observation completes the induction step.

The above reasoning shows that the principal's payoff from (\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{q}) and $(\mathbf{p}^*, \mathbf{q}^*)$ coincide throughout the entire type space \mathcal{T} . \square

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