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**LONGTIME CWDA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FRANK J. MECCA   
TO RETIRE AT YEAR’S END**

Sacramento, CA – Executive Director Frank J. Mecca announced today that he will retire at the end of this year following a nearly thirty-year career with the County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA). In the role of Executive Director since 1991, Mecca built CWDA into a powerhouse policy and budget advocacy organization for California’s county human services agencies and the people they serve.

“Leading the incredible team at CWDA and fighting alongside fierce human services advocates to empower Californians to live with dignity, safety, and opportunity has been the privilege of a lifetime. I will forever be grateful to the current and past CWDA boards, committed leaders in the legislature, and partners in the executive branch who inspired and supported me over these many years,” Mecca reflected. “I’m immensely proud of the work we’ve done to make a real difference in the lives of millions of Californians. There is much yet left to do: income and wealth inequality, institutional racism, and childhood trauma continue to bear down hard on vulnerable families. I know deep in my bones that CWDA will continue to fight for those who need us most and will make great strides to build a safer and more just world for all Californians.”

As a key architect of California’s landmark anti-poverty strategies, Mecca leaves a lasting mark on California’s human services landscape. Mecca was instrumental in the development of California’s CalWORKs program in 1998 and led subsequent program reforms that improved work incentives, raised family grants and added housing support to ensure no child in the program lives in deep poverty and to enable CalWORKs families to maintain stable housing. Mecca championed the California Earned Income Tax Credit that puts more than $1 billion into the pockets of low-income working families annually and pushed for the program’s recent inclusion of undocumented families. California’s support for foster children has dramatically improved over Mecca’s tenure at CWDA, where he played a pivotal role in raising the quality of foster caregivers and increasing support for youth transitioning out of the system, most notably through advocating for legislation that extended foster care support from age 18 through 21.

An expert in poverty, child welfare and other complex California budget and policy issues, Mecca has been called upon to advise state leaders on crucial state initiatives through posts on Governor Gavin Newsom’s Council of Regional Homelessness Advisors and the State Child Welfare Council. Mecca is currently vice chair of the board of the California Budget and Policy Center and past president of the National Association of County Human Services Administrators.

Administration and legislative leaders were among those who celebrated Mecca’s significant role in shaping, expanding and improving the services that alleviate hunger and poverty and help vulnerable Californians stay safe and attain self-sufficiency:

“California’s safety net for children, families and seniors is much stronger today in no small part due to Frank Mecca's relentless work to make our human services programs more responsive, inclusive and dignifying,” said Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary of California’s Health and Human Services Agency. “Frank's leadership and expertise have been invaluable in crafting and implementing significant state policy initiatives, directly improving the lives of vulnerable Californians.  On behalf of Governor Newsom and the State of California, I thank Frank for his contributions to our state and our people and wish him the best in his retirement.”

“Serving people living in poverty throughout California has positively evolved over the last thirty years. Those in need of food assistance, children who are abused or neglected and adults that need state protection have been elevated and served because of the hard work of many, but none have played a more critical role than Frank Mecca of the County Welfare Directors Association,” said State Senator Holly J. Mitchell, Chair, Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review. “I am grateful to Frank for his contributions to Californians. His legacy of justice, economic opportunities, housing support and client empowerment will endure in our human services programming for years to come. I wish Frank nothing but the best and cannot wait to live vicariously through his photos on social media while he travels around the world. As I take creative license with a song lyric, ‘you started at the LAO now you’re here...’ Best of luck in your retirement!”

“California’s families, children and seniors are less likely to be hungry, in poverty or in harm’s way today because of Frank Mecca’s tireless advocacy to improve services for our state’s most vulnerable.  Thank you, Frank, for your nearly thirty years of dedication to delivering dignity through our county human services programs,” said Assemblymember Dr. Joaquin Arambula, Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1 on Health and Human Services.

"I join the entire CWDA Board of Directors, staff and human services community across California in wishing Frank Mecca a joyous retirement after three remarkable decades as CWDA Executive Director. Frank’s positive impact on the lives of vulnerable Californians can hardly be overstated, given his role in crafting our major systems including CalWORKs and Adult Protective Services, spearheading implementation of the Affordable Care Act and pushing for expansion of foster care services for youth through age 21,” said Ann Edwards, CWDA President and Director of Human Assistance for Sacramento County. “While Frank will be greatly missed, we know that the talented staff, expertise and reputation he has built for CWDA will serve the organization long into the future."

The CWDA Executive Board is expected to name Mecca’s successor this week.

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