



CWDA
Advancing Human Services
for the Welfare of *All* Californians

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For immediate release: June 10, 2016
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Repeal of Maximum Family Grant Rule is Momentous for Families in Poverty

Historic Rule Change Benefits 130,000 Children

SACRAMENTO—The County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) is thrilled at the news that repeal of the Maximum Family Grant (MFG) rule in the CalWORKs program is included in the 2016-17 budget agreement announced by Governor Jerry Brown, Senate President Pro Tem Kevin de León and Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon.

Coupled with the tireless efforts of Sen. Holly Mitchell to stand up for struggling children and families and expose the most classist, racist and sexist law in human services policy, the strong and public support of key leaders such as Speaker Rendon, Pro Tem de León and, ultimately, Governor Brown, was the tipping point for years of efforts to repeal this law. For more than two decades, the MFG rule has done nothing but push children deeper into poverty and oppress women by denying basic aid to a child born into a family receiving CalWORKs assistance unless the pregnancy is the result of rape, incest or a failure in contraception.

“It’s an emotional day as we consider that an estimated 130,000 children will soon receive assistance. The repeal of MFG marks a momentous leap forward in our efforts to fight child poverty in California. For families living on the edge, this is going to make a huge difference,” said Frank Mecca, CWDA Executive Director.

Research has confirmed and continues to show what toxic stress and poverty does to a child, including disrupting brain development, causing life-long mental and physical health problems and perpetuating the cycle of generational poverty.

“Repealing MFG affirms what the CalWORKs program is supposed to be about – lifting children out of poverty, giving them a chance at a decent life and providing parents a better chance to move from welfare to work,” said Kathy Harwell, CWDA Vice President

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and Stanislaus County Community Services Agency Director.

CWDA appreciates other investments for human services programs and programs focused on housing and homelessness, including a 1.4 percent grant increase for all CalWORKs families, support for public health nurses assisting county social workers to monitor psychotropic medication use for foster children, one-time funds to create a statewide training academy for Adult Protective Services staff, and additional funding for the Housing Support Program currently assisting homeless CalWORKs families in 44 counties.

County human services agencies and their community partners are safely and permanently housing children and families with tremendous success under the CalWORKs Housing Support Program. In the first year of the program, more than 2,000 families with 4,600 children were placed into permanent housing across 20 counties. Now in its second year, more than 4,500 families that include 9,000 children in 44 counties are expected to be safely housed.

“The CalWORKs Housing Support Program is a proven, effective intervention for homeless children and families, and it’s been a powerful poverty-fighting tool for our state,” said Trent Rhorer, CWDA President and San Francisco Human Services Agency Executive Director. “When children can safely sleep in their own beds and parents can get ready for jobs in a home rather than living out of their cars or shelters, that leads to good outcomes and investment for everyone. County human services agencies and our community partners hope we can continue building upon the work we’ve done to successfully end homelessness for thousands of families.”

An area that stands out as a disappointment for counties in this budget package: CWDA had asked for \$19.7 million to fund services and supports for victims of child sex trafficking, but the budget includes \$5 million for this critical work. CWDA will continue to work with legislative leadership and the Administration to secure adequate funding for services to these victims. A 2014 law enacted by the Legislature and signed by Governor Brown made it clear children who are victims of sex trafficking should be served through the child welfare system to the greatest extent possible, rather than being locked in jail or juvenile hall. These children need specialized treatment for months and even years after they are recovered in order to address the trauma associated with their exploitation as well as the years of abuse they often endured prior to trafficking.

“California has made great strides in recognizing child sex trafficking victims should be treated with special care and dignity,” Mecca said. “We have the foundations of a program

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to attack this horrific problem. Counties will continue diligently working locally and with the Administration and Legislature to build out that foundation.”

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