



**CWDA**

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# Senate Plan Prioritizes Housing and Keeping Families Together

## CalWORKs Housing Support and Bringing Families Home Programs are Key Investments to End Homeless and Poverty

SACRAMENTO— Frank Mecca, executive director of the County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA), released the following statement in response to the bipartisan “No Place like Home” State Budget initiative led by Pro Tem Kevin de Leon and supported by a coalition of Senators:

“Prioritizing families who are homeless or on the brink of homelessness is crucial to fighting poverty in our communities. California’s housing affordability crisis is a scourge threatening the ability of our state’s economy to continue its recovery and threatening the ability of struggling families to find safe places to live that don’t place them on the edge of financial ruin.

We commend the Senate for its bold proposal on the first day of session to face head-on the need for permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless persons with mental illness. The investment announcement today is broad in scope and sorely needed. We are also excited for investments in the CalWORKs Housing Support Program and Bringing Families Home – two programs focused on ensuring children and their families have a safe place to sleep each night.

County human service directors have seen an explosion of homelessness among families and witnesses its pernicious ongoing effects. Research is clear: poverty and homelessness are toxic to children, consigning too many children to a life of poorer health, lower educational attainment, lower earnings, and a far greater likelihood of living in poverty as adults.

By assisting families and children with housing and other basic supports now, children are more likely to do well in school, be healthy and avoid the cycle of poverty as adults.

Investment in the CalWORKs Housing Support Program builds on the success of a program

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initiated by Governor Brown, Speaker Toni Atkins and Pro Tem Kevin de Leon in 2014-15 that successfully housed more than 3,000 families in 20 counties. Now in its second year and expanded to 44 counties, the program is expected to touch more than 4,000 families this year. But we know even at the current level of investment, thousands more children and families are in need of stable homes and will not be served absent new investments like the one proposed.

The Bringing Families Home program will serve a critical need in the child welfare system. For many families who have had children placed in foster care, the unavailability of affordable housing is the final barrier preventing them from safely reuniting with their children. Even when parents have diligently and successfully worked to address safety issues and are ready to safely reunite, courts are hesitant to order reunification if the parents don't have a safe place to live. As a result, some children remain in foster care - at the taxpayers' expense. This proposal sensibly invests in the housing supports that will allow some children to live safely with their parents, rather than the more costly foster care system.

We look forward to working with the Legislature and Governor on these programs and other important ways we can fight homelessness and poverty in California.”

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