



CWDA

Advancing Human Services
for the Welfare of All Californians

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May 13, 2023

To: The Honorable Caroline Menjivar
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3

Honorable Members
Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3

The Honorable Dr. Joaquin Arambula
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1

Honorable Members
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1

From: Cathy Senderling-McDonald, CWDA Executive Director

**RE: COUNTY HUMAN SERVICE WORKFORCE: FUND
INNOVATIVE RECRUITMENT EFFORTS – MAY
REVISION**

The County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) continues to respectfully request \$35 million General Fund (GF) to increase recruitment of human service workers to meet the growing demands to provide safety-net services and economic supports to California's children, youth, families, older adults and persons with disabilities. As California faces a potential economic slowdown and increased demand for safety net services, having an adequate human services workforce is even more critical.

County human service agencies are struggling like many other service sectors to recruit and retain staff to deliver critical public safety net services. Despite robust employee benefits and competitive salaries, counties are finding they cannot compete against other industries that often offer higher pay, or similar pay with far less demands. Competition for staff is also fierce both within the county (across departments, programs, and services) and across county lines. As a result, most counties are facing historically high vacancy rates and rapid turnover of staffing, leaving remaining staff with higher caseloads that lead to worker burnout and additional turnover. This crisis is affecting all major human service program areas: Medi-Cal eligibility, CalFresh, CalWORKs, In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS), child welfare and adult protective services programs.

Rapid turnover of county staff threatens counties' ability to meet federal and state mandates

and implement new federal and state initiatives to eliminate poverty and protect children and adults from abuse and neglect. It undermines the quality of services provided to consumers of county programs, diminishes progress for improving county practices, and potentially can result in fiscal sanctions in some programs. For example, California will soon embark on Round 4 of the federal Child Welfare Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) where we may be subject to fiscal penalties for not meeting child welfare performance and outcome standards.

CWDA is greatly appreciative of the investments approved for the 2022-23 Fiscal Year to invest in county workforce needs more broadly. These include significant investments into the health care workforce and grant funding to schools of social work to increase the statewide pool of Masters-Level Social Workers (MSWs). While these are necessary first steps, it will be several years before we see the results of these investments. Furthermore, these measures only account for part of the county-level staffing shortages.

Counties recognize the importance and value of building diversity in our human services workforce both to better reflect the populations we serve and because of the skills and expertise a diverse workforce brings to their work with consumers of safety net services. Counties also recognize that the demands and needs of the current workforce have changed recently, and that we must utilize innovative strategies to recruit human services workers. For example, a few counties have been able to establish working relationships with their local community colleges to recruit and train staff to become human service professionals. Efforts such as the California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) initiative are also working to transform service delivery by employing paraprofessionals such as peer partners and community workers to improve access to health care services and improve social determinants of health.

This request for \$35 million GF would build on such efforts to help address the statewide staffing crisis in human service programs while building diversity in the workforce. It includes the following two components:

Career Pathways for Human Service Staff: First, CWDA proposes to establish a “Building Diversity in Human Service Workforce Program” as a competitive grant program administered by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). This component would be funded at \$30 million GF. Counties awarded a grant could utilize the funds for one of the following activities:

- 1) ***High School to College Track:*** Funding for job shadowing and part-time employment to high schoolers to work in the county and offer stipend support to students as an incentive to participate. Participants could work full-time upon high school graduation or part-time as they are entering college.

- 2) ***College to Career Track:*** Similar to the High School to College track, funding to implement paid internships and/or part-time employment opportunities for young adults attending community college or a four-year college (with priority to build diversity). Funding could also support outreach, enhanced supervision and direct stipends for recruit college students to encourage a pathway into human service careers.
- 3) ***Community to Career Track:*** Funding to recruit persons with lived experience (those who have participated in human services programs, for example) to work in county human service agencies as “peer” supports or other areas of need within the county. Funding can be used for outreach, recruitment, specialized support and incentive stipends to participants.

This would be a two-year program, with priority given to counties that demonstrate a commitment to building diversity in their programs by recruiting and supporting persons from underserved and/or disproportionately affected communities.

Expand Existing Social Work Stipends to Community Colleges: This second component would require the CDSS to work with counties and the California Social Work Education Center (CaSWEC) to establish a Title IV-E stipend program in our small, rural counties for community college students who have an interest in public child welfare work.¹ This builds on an existing successful program for bachelor’s and masters’ level social workers. The proposed \$5 million GF investment would leverage another \$15 million in Federal Title IV-E funding match.

CWDA additionally requests statutory changes (trailer bill language) to implement this proposal and to adopt statutory provisions related to the recruitment, selection and advancement of county staff as proposed in AB 366 by Assembly Member Petrie-Norris.

These are critical investments that can be deployed quickly and result in additional trained and diverse staff to meet the current demand for county safety net programs to fight poverty and improve well-being for children, youth, families and older adults.

For these reasons, we urge your support for this request.

¹ Some community colleges may offer tuition-free education through the California College Promise Grant Program. However, not all community colleges provide this, it does not include books, fees, room and board. Also, income limits apply. See this [link](#) for additional information.

Cc: Chris Woods, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore
Mareva Brown, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore
Jason Sisney, Office of the Speaker of the Assembly
Kelsy Castillo, Office of the Speaker of the Assembly
Elizabeth Schmitt, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 3
Nicole Vazquez, Assembly Committee on Budget Subcommittee No. 1
Kirk Feely, Senate Republican Fiscal Office
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Jessica Bartholow, Office of Senator Skinner
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Angela Pontes, Office of the Governor
Marko Mijic, Health and Human Services Agency
Kim Johnson, California Department of Social Services
Adam Dorsey, HHS, Department of Finance
Justin Garrett, California State Association of Counties
County Caucus