



CWDA

May 22, 2009

To: The Honorable Members
Budget Conference Committee

From: Frank J. Mecca, Executive Director

Re: Proposed Elimination of the Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI) and the California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) – OPPOSE

The County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) opposes the elimination of the Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI) and California Food Assistance Program (CFAP). Termination of these programs would eliminate basic support and nutrition assistance and shift costs to the counties. The CAPI and CFAP programs were established in 1998 to provide cash and food assistance to low-income legal immigrants who would be eligible for federal benefits but for their recent entry into the United States.

Individuals are only eligible for CAPI assistance when they are no longer able to work because they have become blind, disabled, and/or elderly. Elimination of Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants withdraws basic assistance from seniors and disabled persons, many who have worked and paid taxes and now need this help to avoid going hungry or becoming homeless. Most clients live alone or with very low income family members. By definition they lack the ability to earn back this loss.

Most recipients require CAPI assistance for limited amount of time while they appeal eligibility for federal benefits. Once federal benefits are granted, CAPI assistance is repaid. In the interim, CAPI provides critical assistance to pay for housing and other basic necessities.

Elimination of the CAPI program will shift another responsibility to counties. Under current law, counties will be required to provide General Assistance to CAPI recipients at a time when counties are also experiencing the effects of the prolonged economic downturn. Just as with the state, counties are facing budget deficits as revenues from property taxes, sales taxes, fees, and interest earnings decline. Providing assistance to 12,000 additional individuals will require counties to cut other vital services.

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CFAP provides basic food assistance to 22,000 legal immigrants who meet all criteria for Food Stamp eligibility except for their immigration status. Many of the families receiving these benefits are working in low-wage jobs making too little to provide adequate nutrition to remain healthy without assistance. Elimination of this program will press low income legal immigrants to seek assistance from over burdened community food banks.

We therefore urge you to reject the Administration's proposal to eliminate CAPI and CFAP.

cc: Jennifer Troia, Consultant, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review
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