



CWDA

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for the Welfare of All Californians

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TO: County Welfare Directors Association

FROM: Tom Joseph, Director, CWDA Washington, D.C. Office

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RE: Federal Update

The House has returned after a two-week recess. Before leaving town, the House Ways and Means Committee adopted a measure to terminate the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) and make it more difficult for immigrant to receive the federal child tax credit.

The Senate last week passed a long-awaited reauthorization of the Older Americans Act, which now goes to the president for his signature. And, both houses are struggling to make progress on the fiscal year 2017 appropriations measures.

Social Services Block Grant & Child Tax Credit Eliminations: The House Ways and Means Committee has adopted a bill (HR 4724) to eliminate the Social Services Block at the end of this federal fiscal year. The measure was adopted along party lines, with Rep. Dold (R-IL) the lone Republican opposing it. During the mark up, Republicans argued that SSBG duplicated other federal programs, had no accountability measures and states were not required to provide a financial match to receive the funds. Democrats countered that SSBG provided a flexible source of funds to provide services to vulnerable individuals. Democrats also noted the Republicans were voting in the budget resolution to block grant Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program using the argument that states and localities are in the best position to determine local needs.

CWDA sent a letter to the Committee opposing the bill. California expects to receive nearly \$192 million in SSBG during federal fiscal year 2016 and targets most of funds to serve persons with disabilities and provide child care for low-income working individuals. Committee Democrats quoted from CWDA's letter in a press release. The Association was the only state-based group to receive recognition. In that same letter, CWDA also opposed a bill to require immigrants to provide a Social Security Number in order to receive a refundable child tax credit (HR 4722). The measure targets working undocumented immigrants who have an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number. It is estimated that over 4 million citizen children would be affected by the policy, and CWDA noted that California will be disproportionately harmed, given its diversity.

The House will likely consider the bills later this year with other measures intended to reduce the deficit. There is no Senate companion bill currently and if such a deficit reduction bill were to reach President Obama's desk, he would veto it.

Electronic Interstate Bill Passes: The bipartisan *Modernizing the Interstate Placement of*

Children in Foster Care Act (HR 4472) was adopted unanimously by the House Ways and Means Committee and adopted by the full House the following week. The bill sets aside \$5 million to expand the HHS pilot project developed by the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) that assisted six states in speeding up interstate placements of children in foster care, adoptions and kinship care by using a web-based information system. CWDA sent a letter of support for the bill. Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA) has introduced a companion measure (S 2574) in the Senate.

Older Americans Act Reauthorized: During the past month, the House and Senate finalized and passed the Older Americans Act (OAA) Reauthorization of 2016 (S 192). The OAA had been pending a reauthorization since FY 2011. Among its provisions, the bill directs the Administration on Aging to conduct training of service providers on screening and preventing elder abuse. The underlying programs did not receive any increase in the authorized spending levels. The OAA is separate from the Elder Justice Act which received an \$8 million appropriation last year.

Budget & Appropriations Update: The House budget resolution (H Con Res 125) awaits floor action. The resolution serves as menu of policy and spending options for congressional committees and does not go to the president for his signature. As in past years, the resolution proposed to block grant the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicaid. The committees of jurisdiction have not considered those proposals in recent years, and it is unlikely that they will do so this year.

Given conservative Republican demands that the measure cut federal programs further, it is uncertain whether the House will be able to pass a budget resolution this year. The appropriations committees may need to begin their work without the blueprint.

Across Capitol Hill, Senate appropriators have indicated that they will begin considering FY 2017 spending measures without a budget resolution and plan on beginning that process later this week. The Labor-HHS spending bill, however, is likely to be considered much later in the year.

Child Welfare Reform: Senate Finance Committee movement on the Families First Act appears to be stalled. The draft paper has yet to be introduced as legislation and the congressional schedule is very short this year due to the November elections. The measure would provide for the first time a federal IV-E foster care match for a select group of prevention and post-permanency services. The costs of the new entitlement would be partially offset with new federal requirements for congregate care which are similar to the provisions in AB 403.