



CWDA

Advancing Human Services
for the Welfare of All Californians

925 L Street, Suite 350
Sacramento, CA 95814
p: 916.443.1749 | f: 916.443.3202
cwda.org

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: EMERGENCY SERVICES AND DISASTER RESPONSE
SUPPORT – MAY REVISION**

The County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) continues to request your support for \$141 million General Fund (GF) in 2023-24 and \$130 million GF annually thereafter to provide funding and resources to bolster county human services departments' emergency services and disaster preparedness and response. While the state's revenue situation may be uncertain, we know with certainty that there will continue to be natural disasters and other emergencies that challenge county human services agencies to maintain operation of basic, necessary social service programs.

A Comprehensive County Human Services Response is Critical

Dedicated staff, funding and resources are greatly needed on the county level to improve emergency and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. To this end, CWDA previously requested \$140 million GF in 2023-24 and \$130 million GF annually thereafter to comprehensively support county human services agencies' response and emergency services work, including the following components:

- \$70 million GF ongoing to provide every county with funding for full-time employees dedicated to coordinating emergency planning, response, and recovery support.

- \$44 million GF in 2023-24 and \$9 million in 2024-25 and ongoing for the purpose of training county staff and volunteers on emergency response.
- \$25 million GF in 2023-24 and \$50 million GF ongoing for development of a fund to support counties affected by disaster each year during a disaster response, supporting mass care and shelter services, and supporting recovery efforts.
- \$1 million GF ongoing for the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to establish a state-county planning group for the purpose of successfully and efficiently improving disaster and emergency response for persons living in poverty, AFN populations, those experiencing pre- and post-disaster homelessness and other disadvantaged communities.

Background

As the state continues to experience unprecedented emergencies and disasters, storms, funding for disaster-related work outside of regular work activities overwhelmingly comes from existing county department budgets and takes significant time to be reimbursed, if it is reimbursed at all. Strained county budgets coupled with exhausted and distracted staff further reduce counties' capacity to respond to new emergencies. Additionally, there is an adverse impact to the operations of ongoing, day-to-day program activities for vulnerable populations through the state's social service programs.

County human services agencies are at the front line of disaster response and recovery. They are the lead for Emergency Support Function (ESF) #6, which includes the primary functions of Mass Care and Shelter. In addition to this role, many coordinate resources, take the lead on disaster notifications and outreach, assist program recipients with disaster assistance applications, transport program clients, and provide services to persons considered to be part of the "access and functional needs" (AFN) population, in need of targeted and/or specialized services. County human services departments often provide services well after a disaster occurs, with one-third reporting that they provide support or services for more than 12 months after an event.

Funding and staffing support are counties' top needs during an emergency. Counties typically must redirect personnel for emergency and disaster response, including caseworkers, social workers, and others whose regular work is critical to the provision of human services programs. While the proportion of staff redirected outside their regular jobs during disasters varies, some counties report having to redirect more than 50 percent of their staff due to past emergencies.

Final Remarks

In a difficult budget year, we are open to exploring options for prioritizing and phasing in the components of our comprehensive plan and look forward to discussions with you and your staff on this topic. Without dedicated and trained staff, in particular, county human services agencies will increasingly struggle to maintain operation of basic, necessary social service programs as existing staff and resources must be redirected to responding to the immediate needs of the community in disasters that are occurring with greater frequency and intensity.

Thank you for your continued consideration of this request.

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
Joe Shinstock, Assembly Republican Fiscal Office
Jessica Bartholow, Office of Senator Skinner
Ginni Bella Navarre, Legislative Analyst's Office
Richard Figueroa, Office of the Governor
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