



January 29, 2021

To: The Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman
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, Executive Director

**RE: STATUTORY FLEXIBILITIES FOR CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES-ADMINISTERED
HOUSING PROGRAMS**

The County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) respectfully requests your consideration of several statutory changes to housing programs administered by the California Department of Social Services and county human services departments, including the Housing Support Program (HSP) and the Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP).

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the housing crisis in California, particularly for those who are linked to the state's social safety net programs. These individuals are, in general, already living in poverty and with some level of additional vulnerability. Counties operate an array of housing programs, including HSP and HDAP, for those they already serve in larger safety-net programs that are tailored and targeted towards individuals who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. However, these programs are often constricted in their use of funds, particularly for preventative purposes, or have some statutory limitations that are barriers to clients and counties in utilizing the programs. To address these issues, CWDA is requesting the following statutory changes:

- In HSP: Allow for interventions with clients to take place prior to the issuance of an eviction notice from a client's landlord. Currently, CalWORKs recipients are only eligible for HSP once they have received an eviction notice. Once an eviction notice

is issued, families often have mere days to try to rectify the situation. This stress coupled with the trauma of losing one's home can cause negative impacts on families. These stressors have been recognized nationwide with the institution of eviction moratoriums during the current pandemic. With the additional flexibility of allowing for HSP services to be utilized as interventions for those at risk of homelessness, counties would have the ability to assist families prior to the deleterious impacts of receiving an eviction notice.

- In HDAP: Move from a grants-based to an allocation-based fund distribution process. Counties are currently required to submit a lengthy application as well as an updated plan each year to receive HDAP funds, even though it is a long-established program. The application process leads to funding uncertainty for counties since they do not know from year to year whether their grant will increase or decrease or be approved at all. Other established programs within CDSS utilize an allocation-based distribution, which provides funding amounts to counties without an up-front application. There is still the ability to report on program outcomes and adjust funding levels as appropriate, but an allocation-based process provides for more predictable and timely funding.
- In HDAP: Remove the Interim Assistance Reimbursement (IAR) requirement. There is a requirement in the current HDAP statute that counties must ask a client if they will agree to reimburse the county once they receive their disability benefits check. Even though this agreement is voluntary, counties have noted that its mere presence discourages clients from continuing with the program. The requirement is also administratively burdensome. Rather than yield program savings as it was originally intended, the requirement has become a barrier to participation and an additional source of workload for county staff that is not directly related to the services these clients need.

These statutory changes would both allow counties to serve additional individuals who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness and would remove known barriers for both clients and for counties who are administering the programs. With homelessness growing and low-income and vulnerable Californians bearing the brunt of the housing crisis and COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative that these changes be made so that these programs can best serve them.

For these reasons, we urge you to consider the above requested changes to HSP and HDAP.

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
Gail Gronert, Office of the Speaker of the Assembly
Renita Polk, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 3
Nicole Vazquez, Assembly Committee on Budget Subcommittee No. 1
Rebecca Hamilton, Senate Republican Fiscal Office
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