



CWDA

Advancing Human Services
for the Welfare of *All* Californians

March 27, 2025

To: The Honorable Dr. Akilah Weber Pierson
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3

Honorable Members
Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3

The Honorable Dr. Corey Jackson
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2

Honorable Members
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2

From: Carlos Marquez, Executive Director, CWDA

**RE: VULNERABLE POPULATIONS TO LOSE ACCESS TO
KEY HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS PROGRAMS**

The County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) urges the Legislature to maintain funding for critical county-administered housing and homelessness programs, including Bringing Families Home (BFH), Home Safe, the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Housing Support Program (HSP), and the Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP). These programs have a proven track record of success stabilizing, rapidly rehousing, and transitioning vulnerable populations at risk of homelessness into permanent housing while concomitantly advancing safety, permanency, and economic security for families in the child welfare system, low-income families receiving cash assistance through CalWORKs, older adults experiencing elder abuse, and people with disabilities. Compared to other local homeless response systems which exit 35% of overall participants into permanent housing, Home Safe exits 62%, CalWORKs HSP exits 53%, and BFH exits 52% into permanent housing. Despite their effectiveness, two of these programs - Home Safe and BFH - will cease to exist while CalWORKs HSP and HDAP will face up to a 67% and 86% reduction, respectively, if no additional funding is included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-26 Budget.

These housing programs received significant, one-time investments in the 2021 and 2022 Budget Acts which are set to expire or face drastic reductions in the next one

to three fiscal years. At least fifteen counties have halted their BFH or Home Safe programs entirely, and forty counties will soon fully expend their funds or be forced to wind down operations for one or both programs. Without additional funding, both the BFH and Home Safe programs will come to an end. Across all human services housing programs, many counties have scaled back the number of individuals and families served to keep the programs operational and prevent the loss of critical infrastructure, including contracts with community-based organizations specializing in housing and homelessness services. Loss (or dramatic reductions) of these effective housing programs will significantly limit the availability of services that help low-income Californians maintain or secure housing and housing-related supports and meet their goals for safety and economic stability.

Given some counties have expended their funds and others have reduced program operations, an immediate infusion of dollars is requested beginning FY 2025-26. CWDA estimates that to maintain access to these core housing and homelessness supports and fully scaled service delivery levels, a new investment of approximately \$471.7 million General Fund annually with multi-year availability will be needed across all four housing programs for county human services agencies. CWDA also supports additional resources for tribal social services agencies and tribal grantees to maintain their programs. Our estimate is based on county spending data, focusing on the one-time investments from the 2021 Budget Act over its available spending window, when counties had maximized service levels and access to programs while simultaneously drawing on the 2022 Budget Act investment. The estimate is not inclusive of the ongoing, annual appropriations for CalWORKs HSP and HDAP.

Cognizant of the difficult budget situation likely ahead at the 2025 May Revision and challenging feasibility of funding these programs based on the multi-year maximum spending lookback estimate of \$471.7 million, CWDA has alternatively reviewed county data for the highest service-delivery year across all FYs for the FY 2021-22 one-time allocations (FYs 2021-22 through 2024-25), and calculated a funding option of \$308.8 million General Fund annually with multi-year availability across all four housing programs could sustain these programs. Although this scenario would be insufficient to maintain the full multi-year scaling of services at the programs' peak, this scenario would allow counties to provide more targeted services and support potentially some of the highest need populations. We continue to believe there are various pathways to making investments at a reduced appropriation initially, given that some counties may have operating funds for the next year or two,

or a trimmed allocation that may allow counties to maintain scaled versions of their programs.

CWDA Estimate Scenarios (in Millions)		
Program	<i>Based on Multi-Year Spending Lookback</i>	<i>Based on Highest Single Year Spending Lookback</i>
	2025-26	2025-26
BFH	\$ 81.0	\$ 55.1
Home Safe	\$ 83.8	\$ 53.1
HSP	\$ 173.8	\$ 117.0
HDAP	\$ 133.1	\$ 83.6
TOTAL	\$ 471.7	\$ 308.8

**Funding recommended annually with multi-year availability.*

BUDGET AND PROGRAM HISTORY

In the 2021 and 2022 Budget Acts, the State invested significant and historic one-time funds with multi-year availability across multiple housing and homelessness programs that serve Californians who have touch points with or are served by county human services programs such as CalWORKs, Adult Protective Services (APS), and the child welfare system.¹ These housing and homelessness programs, which are administered and operated by county human services agencies, are integral to achieving positive program outcomes by helping vulnerable populations remain safe and achieve their goals for safety, permanency, and economic stability. As briefly referenced above, these programs and their funding include:

- **Bringing Families Home (BFH)**, which serves families in the child welfare system, including tribal child welfare systems experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
 - The 2021 and 2022 Budget Acts each appropriated \$92.5 million General Fund to BFH. The appropriation from the 2021 Budget Act is available through December 31, 2025.² Pursuant to the 2024 Budget

¹ Note: Tribal governments also receive funding allocations for all housing programs listed in this budget memorandum.

² California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has provided a one-time 6-month spending and claiming extension through December 31, 2025, for counties for all housing and homelessness allocations with a previous county claiming deadline of June 30, 2025, though the state expenditure and liquidation timelines remain. See more at [CFL 24-25-65 \(March 10, 2025\)](#).

Act, \$40 million of the 2022 Budget Act appropriation remains available through June 30, 2026, and with another \$40 million available through June 30, 2027.

- There is no state funding allocated for BFH beyond June 30, 2027.
- As of February 2025, 20 counties have reported winding down operations for BFH, with 8 counties having reported concluding operations altogether.³
- **Home Safe**, which serves victims of elder abuse and neglect who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness and involved in APS or in the intake process for APS, as well as older and dependent adults who come to the attention of a Tribe, or Tribal grantee, due to potential abuse or neglect.
 - The 2021 and 2022 Budget Acts each appropriated \$92.5 million General Fund to Home Safe, with each pot set to respectively expire December 31, 2025, and June 30, 2026.
 - There is no state funding allocated for Home Safe beyond June 30, 2026.
 - As of February 2025, 28 counties have started ramping down operations for Home Safe and 8 counties have ceased Home Safe operations.
- **CalWORKs Housing Support Program (HSP)**, which provides assistance and support services for homeless and at risk of becoming homeless CalWORKs families by helping them obtain and keep stable permanent housing.
 - The 2021 and 2022 Budget Acts each appropriated \$190 million General Fund to HSP. Those funds will expire on December 31, 2025.
 - HSP will continue to receive an ongoing, annual appropriation of \$95 million General Fund, which will be the only source of funding after December 31, 2025.
 - As of February 2025, 9 counties have started ramping down operations for CalWORKs HSP.
- **Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP)**, which serves individuals likely eligible for disability benefit programs who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, with a focus on chronic homelessness.
 - The 2021 and 2022 Budget Acts each appropriated \$150 million

³ Program status data provided by CDSS.

General Fund to HDAP, with each pot set to respectively expire December 31, 2025, and June 30, 2026. The Budget Act of 2024 reverted \$50 million of the \$150 million appropriation from the 2022 Budget Act.

- HDAP will continue to receive an ongoing, annual appropriation of \$25 million General Fund, which will be the only source of funding after June 30, 2026.
- As of February 2025, 25 counties have started ramping down operations for HDAP, and one county has reported closing.

Reductions and program eliminations of this magnitude will undo the progress made in combatting homelessness and will weaken the comprehensive and coordinated approach that protects our most vulnerable Californians from experiencing homelessness. The lack of ongoing funding is detrimental to the infrastructure, capacity, and relationships with community-based providers, partnerships that have taken years for counties to build and maintain, ultimately eroding the trust built with these organizations. These housing programs have led to expanded networks and leveraging of resources with local Coordinated Entry Systems and Continuums of Care to serve as a bridge to permanent housing options—options that will now be jeopardized. As noted above, counties report already making difficult choices of winding down operations and limiting intake of new clients in anticipation of exhausting one-time funding, despite significant needs of those served. While this infrastructure is still largely in place at the county level, we urgently encourage the Administration and the Legislature to invest in preserving the critical funding for these programs.

PROGRAM IMPACTS & ESTIMATES

Bringing Families Home (BFH)

The BFH program is a proven program that helps to prevent family separation and promotes timely reunification of foster children with their families. This reduces trauma to children that may result from lengthy stays in foster care. The BFH program is flexibly designed to align with and support case plan goals for the child and family, offering a variety of services that often include security deposits, rental assistance, legal assistance for eviction prevention and expungements, tangible items such as furniture, transportation support, and navigation services through enhanced case management. The BFH program is an important resource for black

and Native American children and families who are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system.

Since BFH's launch in 2016 through June 2024, more than 9,000 families have been served and more than 4,400 have been permanently housed through the program.⁴ Foster children whose families benefited from the BFH program were 68% more likely to reunify with their families at the 180-day mark than non BFH-served families, and most families exited to permanent housing.⁵

The BFH program made a difference for one father in Los Angeles County, who fell into homelessness due to an eviction. With the help of his community-based caseworker, provided by BFH through a locally contracted agency, the father received guidance and support to improve his life and meet his child welfare case plan goals. BFH allowed him to reunify with his 11-year-old son and have multiple felonies expunged, which enabled him to be hired full-time after six years of unemployment.

To maintain varying degrees of service levels, caseloads, and existing infrastructure at the county level, we estimate that \$55.1 to \$81.0 million General Fund annually is needed beginning in 2025-26, ideally with three-year spending availability for each appropriation. The high range of the estimate captures expenditures for when most counties had programs to scale and before certain counties started to wind down. More specifically, we looked at total spending data for the 2021-22 one-time allocation, relying on spending data beginning 2021-22 and projected through 2024-25. As noted above, the low end of the range represents one FY's worth of spending data (at its highest for each county) across the same window. The low-end estimate reflects what a more targeted and lean version of the program would potentially cost.

⁴ Bringing Families Home Fact Sheet, 2025 (CDSS):
<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Housing/BringingFamiliesHomeFACTSHEET.pdf>

⁵ Ruffini, K., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Mauldon, J., Suthar, H. (2024). Bringing Families Home Program Evaluation. California Policy Lab, University of California.
<https://capolicylab.org/bringing-families-home-program-evaluation/>

Home Safe

Established in 2018, the Home Safe Program has served 15,615 older adults, successfully exiting 5,879 into permanent housing. Home Safe offers critical support that enables APS programs to assist older and dependent adults who are victims of abuse, neglect and financial exploitation. Home Safe is also flexibly designed to utilize a range of strategies to meet the individual needs of APS clients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including housing-related intensive case management coupled with one-time or short-term housing assistance, housing-related financial assistance (e.g., security and utility deposit), deep cleaning and home modifications to maintain safe housing, eviction prevention, landlord mediation, and more.

The UC San Francisco's Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative⁶ found that older adults (aged 50 and over) are proportionately the fastest increasing group of homeless individuals, also finding that 48% of all unhoused single adults in California are 50 or older and 41% of unhoused older adults became homeless for the first time after age 50. In San Mateo County, for example, 44% of Home Safe clients served reported being homeless at least one time in the past three years. Moreover, in FY 2022-23, Home Safe served over 40% of the APS population with identified housing needs, with 62% percent of recipients being reported to exit into permanent housing in FY 2023-24.⁷

APS assists vulnerable older and dependent adult populations with often complex, multi-faceted needs. Housing supports promote aging safely and with dignity for a population that is highly at risk for care in institutional settings. Home Safe is also supported by California's Master Plan for Aging.

San Luis Obispo County APS received a referral for a 63-year-old male who was at risk of eviction due to the property owner terminating multiple leases

⁶ Kushel, M., Moore, T., et al. (2023). Toward a New Understanding: The California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness. UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative. <https://homelessness.ucsf.edu/our-impact/studies/california-statewide-study-people-experiencing-homelessness>

⁷ Per data provided by CDSS.

to replace existing units with tiny homes. The client faced significant risks if he became homeless, as he suffers from chronic medical conditions that require 24/7 oxygen. Given the severity of his health conditions, securing stable housing was critical to ensure the client's safety and wellbeing. APS referred the client to the Home Safe program where the social worker was able to successfully secure a Section 8 Voucher for the client, allowing him to access affordable housing options throughout the community. Home Safe provided ongoing housing navigation assistance, and the client was successfully placed in permanent housing, effectively preventing the client from experiencing homelessness.

Home Safe also leverages funding to prevent homelessness in emergencies.

In 2023, multiple Merced County residents were displaced by floods caused by a series of atmospheric rivers. APS social workers assisted clients at the congregate shelter. Older clients who were not found to be appropriate for the shelter due to health reasons were placed in non-congregate shelter. Home Safe was able to secure permanent housing for two households and provided financial assistance for emergency shelter and housing navigation for a total of nearly \$22,300. A Home Safe program social worker additionally completed assessments to assist with coordination of services for all impacted seniors or adults with disabilities. This continued far after FEMA and other emergency supports stepped away.

To maintain varying degrees of service levels and infrastructure across counties, CWDA estimates that \$53.1 to \$83.8 million General Fund annually is needed, ideally with three-year spending availability for each appropriation. Encompassing tribal funding (approximately \$5 million), the fully scaled amount would be \$88.8 million General Fund annually, as identified by the Home Safe Statewide Collaborative for the 58 counties and 23 tribal social service agencies. The methodology is consistent with that of the BFH estimate.

CalWORKs Housing Support Program (HSP)

CalWORKs HSP enables families receiving CalWORKs cash aid and welfare-to-work services to focus on developing skills and gaining workforce experience to move towards economic stability, instead of worrying about where they and their children will sleep at night. Specifically, HSP offers financial assistance and housing-related

wraparound supportive services, including but not limited to: rental assistance, emergency lodging/hotel assistance, intensive case management, housing navigation, security deposits, utility payments, moving costs, and legal services. Since its launch in 2014 through June 2024, CalWORKs HSP has served over 85,000 families, with more than 45,000 families successfully securing permanent housing. HSP has demonstrated success while continuing to meet the growing needs of CalWORKs-served families. In FY 2023-24, for example, 53% of HSP participants exited to permanent housing, compared to 35% of overall participants receiving services through local homeless response systems in California exiting to permanent housing.⁸

The one-time augmented funds of \$190 million statewide for HSP, with multi-year spending authority, will end on December 31, 2025, leaving just \$95 million statewide. This represents a 67% funding reduction despite increasing demand and continued growth in the number of participants served, which nearly doubled in FY 2023-2024. For example, in Los Angeles County, if HSP were rebased to only the annual \$95 million appropriation, it is projected that hundreds of families would likely be unable to retain their housing as of January 1, 2026. For counties to continue providing services, we estimate that \$117 to 173.8 million General Fund annually is needed in addition to the annual, ongoing appropriation of \$95 million General Fund. The methodologies are generally consistent with that of the Home Safe and BFH estimates, though relies on spending data through 2023-24, due to a technical nuance in how funds were distributed.

In Napa, HSP provided critical assistance to a permanently disabled single father and his three teenage sons after they lost their home in a fire. With limited income, the family struggled to find stable housing, a challenge made even more difficult by one of the son's severe mental health issues. HSP connected the family with mental health services for the teenager and provided the father with case management support, including budgeting assistance and financial literacy training. With HSP's help, he secured affordable housing for his family and improved his credit score, creating a

⁸ CDSS CalWORKs HSP Fact Sheet (Jan 2025):
<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Housing/calworks-housing-support-program.pdf>

more stable future for himself and his sons.

Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP)

Established in 2016, HDAP assists participants to secure disability benefits and stable permanent housing. The program partners county agencies, disability advocacy organizations, and housing service providers to offer a cross-systems approach to increase financial resources, address health disparities, and secure stable housing. HDAP offers outreach, case management, disability benefits advocacy, and housing assistance concurrently; housing-related financial assistance and wraparound supportive services provided include interim shelter assistance, rental assistance, housing navigation, security deposits, utility payments, moving costs, legal services, and credit repair, among others. Clients who are eligible will be offered these services until a final disability benefits determination is made and the participant is stabilized in permanent housing. From 2017 through June 2024, the program served over 30,200 individuals with more than 8,200 permanently housed. It has a 77% approval rate for disability benefits compared to 35% nationally, and most individuals retain housing long-term after.⁹

The one-time augmented funds of \$100-150 million statewide for HDAP, with multi-year spending authority, will revert to \$25 million statewide as of June 30, 2026, an approximately 80-86% funding reduction. For counties to continue serving program recipients, CWDA estimates that \$83.6 to \$133.1 million General Fund annually is needed in addition to the annual, ongoing appropriation of \$25 million General Fund. The methodology is consistent with that of the aforementioned programs estimate.

After enduring significant mental and physical health challenges, Butte County supported a senior community member who became trapped in a domestic violence situation that left her with lasting trauma and permanent physical scars. When she was able to escape her abuser, she found herself in an unstable living situation with an unrelated roommate who created an unsafe environment, ultimately leading to homelessness. With the support of a Housing Navigator, she was enrolled in HDAP, and successfully secured Supplemental Security Income benefits, and obtained permanent subsidized

⁹ CDSS HDAP Fact Sheet (Jan 2025):
https://www.cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Housing/HDAP_FACTSHEET.pdf

housing in a senior community. Her story underscores the critical role these housing programs play in helping vulnerable Californians rebuild stability, regain dignity, and secure long-term housing solutions.

These stories reveal just how life-altering these programs are for some of our most vulnerable Californians, and how devastating the impacts will be absent continued investment or augmented funding in these programs. Across all four programs—BFH, Home Safe, CalWORKs HSP, and HDAP—CWDA implores the Legislature and Administration to work with counties and stakeholders on funding options that ensure we continue to help our most vulnerable and low-income populations critically maintain or secure housing and other housing-related supports.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to continued engagement and collaboration with the Legislature and Administration on ensuring successful housing and homelessness programs that help promote equitable access to housing supports and assistance can continue serving our most vulnerable Californians.

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. 2
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