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To: County Welfare Directors Association of California
From: Tom Joseph, Director, CWDA Washington, D.C. Office
Date: March 6, 2012
Re: Federal Update

The National Association of Counties is holding its Legislative Conference here in Washington, DC, March 3-7. Obama Administration officials, members of Congress and committee staff are meeting with county officials to discuss a wide range of issues.

TANF Reauthorization: Last week, Cathy Senderling-McDonald and I met with majority and minority staff to the House Ways and Means Committee to discuss the reauthorization of TANF. Extended through September 30, 2012, the program must once again be reauthorized before then.

From the discussions, it was clear that there is no schedule of hearings slated, much less a draft bill. There continues to be concern on the majority side about some states' maintenance of effort contributions and child-only cases. CWDA briefed both staffs on the status of the CalWORKS program, using the recent brief prepared by CWDA staff: *Get the Facts - CalWORKS Works*. We also answered questions on the State and county efforts on deactivating ATMs for CalWORKS cash benefits in adult entertainment venues. CWDA and others worked with both Republicans and Democrats to ensure that a similar federal provision now enacted into law would not require California to change its practices and procedures.

This past weekend, Mark Greenberg, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy at the Administration for Children & Families (ACF), spent nearly an hour and a half with members of the National Association of County Human Services Administrators (NACHSA) to discuss issues, primarily those related to TANF. For their part, the Administration has stated it is willing to work with Congress to craft a reauthorization bill that strengthens the effectiveness of the program, including providing more flexibility to state and county governments so that there is more focus on outcomes. It has not sent any draft legislation to the Hill. Mark Greenberg urged counties to provide him with specific examples where administrators believe that ACF's interpretation of the statute or regulations has been unnecessarily strict.

Also, during the workshop portion of the NACo Conference, NACo invited CWDA to participate on a panel to discuss TANF reauthorization. That session is slated for Tuesday. CWDA will provide NACo delegates with an overview of the state and county experience in barring EBT access in adult entertainment venues, given that all states are now required to

institute similar procedures. CWDA will also discuss some of CWDA's key TANF policy recommendations.

SNAP Reauthorization: The Senate Agriculture Committee is conducting a series of hearings on the Farm Bill reauthorization. The Senate still intends to mark up a bill later this spring.

The House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee held a hearing last week with Administration officials. House Republicans are very focused on fraud and abuse within SNAP, despite the fact that error rate of 3.81 percent in 2011 was a record low and, in fact is lower than that experienced in the farm commodities program. This week, a similar hearing entitled, "Food Stamp Fraud, A Business Model..." is being held by the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, which is chaired by Rep. Issa (R-Riverside/San Diego Counties).

The House Agriculture Committee has announced four field hearings on the overall Farm Bill. To be conducted through the end of April, none of the hearings are slated for California. The House is likely to wait until the Senate is progressing on its reauthorization bill before it will begin considering its version. It is unknown whether there will be time this year to fully reauthorize the programs, leaving yet another short-term extension as an option in early fall.