



CWDA

Advancing Human Services
for the Welfare of All Californians

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May 23, 2022

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
County Welfare Directors Association

**RE: MAY REVISION BUDGET MEMO – WRITTEN
TESTIMONY RELATED TO HEALTH AND HUMAN
SERVICES PROGRAMS**

Due to the limited time available for public testimony during the budget subcommittee hearings, the County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) is submitting written testimony regarding proposals for investment that we support. We believe these proposals will provide critical support to the children, families, and adults whom county human services agencies also serve and they merit strong consideration.

Adults Programs

Public Guardians and Conservators

CWDA is in strong support of a request by the California Association of Public Administrators, Guardians and Conservators (CAPAPGPC) to provide \$200 million General Fund (GF) in 2022-23 and on-going to fund Public Guardian (PG) and Public Conservator (PC) services. This funding will address critical staffing shortages and a growing demand for services due to increases in persons experiencing severe mental illness, severe cognitive deficits, and persistent mental illness and homelessness. Increases to the older adult population coupled with increased complexity of cases is straining existing staff. Our county

Adult Protective Services program staff often rely upon PG staff to conduct joint investigations and, when appropriate, to assume care responsibilities for victims of abuse or neglect who have diminished capacity for decision-making.

Older Americans Act Program Investment

CWDA supports the request by the California Area Agencies on Aging (C4A) for \$212 million in 2022-23 and on-going to maintain and permanently increase supports to older adults and persons with disabilities served through local area agencies on aging (AAAs). This request includes an increase to the Senior Nutrition Program (\$70 million); inflation-based adjustments and an increase to the Community Based Support Program (\$90 million); Title IIIB increase (\$33 million) to provide housing navigation, legal services, home modifications/repairs, and other critical supports and services; and development of a Family and Caregiver Support Program (\$3.45 million) through the Aging and Disability Resource Connections. This request is consistent with, and furthers the intent and goals of, both the Governor's Master Plan for Aging and the Olmstead Act and are critical community-based services that our human service programs rely upon to promote safe and independent living in our communities.

Older Adults Behavioral Health Services

CWDA supports the request by the California Commission on Aging (CCoA) for \$212,00 total funds (\$148,000 GF) to establish a leadership position within the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to serve as the lead on issues relating to older adult behavioral health. CWDA believes this investment is timely in light of the implementation of CalAIM and the increasing aging population in California. Older adults and persons with disabilities who suffer from mental health or substance use disorders have unique needs that, if left untreated, can lead to other impairments in physical health and social function, increasing their use of health and hospital systems and decreasing overall life expectancy. A focused role within DHCS will help guide implementation of various investments and initiatives in support of older adults.

Children's Programs

Pandemic Relief for Short Term Residential Treatment Programs (STRTPs)

CWDA supports a request by the California Alliance of Child and Family Services (CACFS) to provide additional COVID relief funding to STRTPs who incurred increasing costs and ongoing expenses related to serving our most vulnerable foster youth during the pandemic. The 2021-22 State Budget provided a total one-time \$42 million GF investment (\$30 million in 2021-22 and \$12 million in 2022-23) to prevent closures and reduce financial strain for providers. It is our understanding that the requests for financial support exceeded available

funding, and in response, the CACFS is requesting an additional \$73 million GF to help financially stabilize STRTPs as California continues to face workforce shortages and pandemic-related operational issues and costs. Based on California Department of Social Services (CDSS) data, California has lost 1,193 residential beds since the start of 2021, due to facility closures. This data, however, does not capture those providers who have stayed open but reduced the number of youth served due to staffing shortages. Additional one-time funding to STRTPs will help alleviate the current strain on providers so that foster youth can access the intensive therapeutic services and care they need.

Housing Assistance for Current and Former Foster Youth

CWDA supports a request by the John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY) related to housing and navigation for current and former foster youth. The proposal would invest \$34 million GF to expand the Transitional Housing Program-Plus, increase funding to the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to support transitional housing, and would increase the age of eligibility from 21 to 24 years for the Housing Navigators Program to align eligibility for navigation services with the federal Housing Choice Voucher program. This proposal, also contained in AB 1615 (Ting), would reduce homelessness among former foster youth and help achieve housing stability by improving California's supportive housing programs and enable the state and counties to maximize federal housing assistance opportunities.

Emergency Child Care Bridge Expansion

CWDA supports Children Now and other advocates in their request for an additional \$48 million to increase the level of funding for the Emergency Child Care Bridge Expansion. The funding request will expand the amount of funding available to counties to provide additional vouchers to children in care, support additional navigators who are working to find child care for foster children, and support the delivery of additional trauma-informed training for child care providers as they care for foster children in their local early childhood programs.

Children's Crisis Continuum Pilot

CWDA supports the request sponsored by the County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California (CBHDA) and Seneca Family of Agencies for \$100 million to expand the Children's Crisis Continuum Pilot to serve all children eligible for Medi-Cal services who are in need of highly-intensive behavioral health services. This proposal, also contained in AB 2786 (Stone), would build upon the pilot established through trailer bill legislation last year (AB 153, Ch. 86, Statutes of 2021) to provide access to the continuum of services beyond foster children, to other children and youth in the Medi-Cal program. These services are critically needed given the mental health crisis impacting children and youth—a crisis that began prior to 2020 and has since been magnified by the pandemic. Parents who are unable

to access the necessary care for their children’s serious mental health needs are coming to the child welfare system for help. This proposal would broaden eligibility to the pilots for low-income children and families served through the Medi-Cal program, so that children can receive the intensive care and services they need to prevent foster care entry.

CalFresh and Nutrition Programs

Food Banks

CWDA supports the request from the California Association of Food Banks (CAFB) for \$180 million GF (one-time) to expand capacity and improve facilities for local food banks to meet community need for food and to make sure food is available for communities affected by impacts of climate change. Additionally, we support CAFB’s proposal to codify the State Disaster Food Assistance Program in the Welfare and Institutions Code so the state can respond quickly during times of disasters.

Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs)

CWDA supports the CAFB proposal to build the necessary infrastructure and an appropriate contingency plan to avoid cutting off vital food assistance for individuals with ABAWD status, who would be subject to the three-month time limit work requirement currently waived, should the ABAWD rule need to be implemented in California in the future. The ABAWD rule disproportionately harms people who are working in low-wage jobs where they may not be able to keep a consistent work schedule of 20 hours per week.

CalWORKs/Anti-Poverty Programs

CalWORKs Maximum Aid Payment (MAP) Increase

CWDA supports the 11.1 percent MAP increase included in the May Revision. CWDA urges consideration of adopting the proposal put forth by the End Child Poverty Coalition to fund CalWORKs grants at the assistance unit plus one level. Most aided CalWORKs families have an ineligible adult due to time limits, immigration status or sanctions, and will continue to receive grants below 50 percent of the Federal Poverty Level without this proposed change. CWDA continues to support increasing the spending power of our CalWORKs recipients via grant increases.

Increased Funding for the California Home Visiting Program

CWDA supports the Nurse Family Partnership’s request to provide an additional \$15 million annually for the California Home Visiting Program administered by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). This would only begin to cover the number of families who are

eligible but unenrolled. CDPH states that in 2020, there were 2.1 million families in California who were pregnant or have children up to age 6 who could have benefitted from home visiting services. Prior to GF support beginning in 2018-19, 2,979 women and 2,318 children received home visiting services. While the May Revision investment is expected to serve up to 6,000 more families, it does not go far enough to reach the total population eligible to receive Home Visiting benefits.

Family Fee Waivers

CWDA appreciates the May Revision's inclusion of the continuance of family fee waivers through September 2023 and supports the \$187 million request by Parent Voices and other childcare advocates to extend these waivers through September 2024 for all families with childcare subsidies. This puts much needed cash back in the pockets of parents and childcare providers, so they have resources to pay for rent, food, and other necessities.

California Earned Income Tax Credit (CalEITC)

CWDA supports the following proposals from the CalEITC Coalition's priorities for supporting low-income Californians:

- Creation of a \$255 minimum CalEITC for all workers, which would provide a larger credit for 3.1 million taxpayers – including 400,000 families.
- Provision of a \$2,000 per child credit for all children in families who receive the CalEITC, which would support the 1.7 million children that have fallen back (or fallen deeper) into poverty because the Federal child tax credit was not extended.
- Enactment of statutory changes to ensure that tax credits intended to reduce poverty are not intercepted by government agencies.

Automation

CalSAWS Migration Impacts on SAWS Automation Capacity

Counties are in the midst of the federally mandated migration to a single CalSAWS eligibility automation system that must be completed by the end of 2023 to avoid the loss of significant federal funding. While many proposals for investment by the Administration and stakeholders have already received input from the SAWS regarding automation timing, these capacity and timing assessments may be impacted by various factors, including changes to the proposals and the other policy changes included in the final overall budget package. Because of this, we urge policy makers to consult with CWDA and SAWS to coordinate implementation timing and procedures as the final budget package comes together.

From late 2022 through late 2023, there will be six waves of migrations of the 18 CalWIN

counties to CalSAWS, representing approximately 40 percent of the statewide caseload for programs contained within the system. The federal mandate for completion of this migration to CalSAWS by the end of 2023 does not allow for implementation of any new policy changes that would negatively impact migration. Some examples of proposals that have been put forth this year that would impact migration are the CFAP expansion and the proposal for continuous Medi-Cal coverage for children under the age of 5. It is also important to note that the intersection of the federal Public Health Emergency's (PHE) requirement for continuous Medi-Cal coverage with the migration means that a much higher number of cases will require manual intervention by county eligibility workers after conversion and after the PHE is lifted – meaning that any Medi-Cal changes that would normally be accomplished largely by automation, such as the final segment of the Health4All expansion to those 26-49 years of age, regardless of immigration status, would require manual processing to be applied for a much larger proportion of the caseload, and could result in delays in the application of any new policy as a result.

Some policies, such as CalWORKs and CAPI grant increases, can be automated during the migration period, although the timing will need to be closely coordinated with the SAWS, as they may need final figures earlier than usual due to the migration work. There are already several significant policy commitments from prior budgets, such as the elimination of the Medi-Cal asset test and implementation of pre-populated Semi Annual Reports for CalWORKs and CalFresh that are queued up for early 2024, and the CFAP expansion for 2024-25. While some small policy changes could potentially be enacted manually until automation can be accomplished, many could not be implemented during this period without disrupting the CalSAWS migration schedule and/or already established policy commitments, and are not feasible to implement manually prior to automation. Furthermore, manual workarounds result in additional costs in the short term to implement; however, even with additional administrative, short-term funding, the workload associated with certain activities may be difficult for counties to successfully undertake. CWDA appreciates opportunities to engage with legislative budget staff and stakeholders to address the automation and workload impacts of various proposals under consideration by the Legislature in CalFresh, CalWORKs, Medi-Cal, and other programs with a CalSAWS intersection

We thank you for your attention to these issues and urge inclusion of these proposals in the 2022-23 budget.

cc: Chris Woods, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore
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