



Senator Holly J. Mitchell

SB 982 CalWORKs - Ending Childhood Deep Poverty

THIS BILL

SB 982 will endeavor to end childhood deep poverty in the CalWORKs program by setting a floor for grants at 50% of the federal poverty line.

PROBLEM

Growing up in deep poverty impairs children's ability to learn, develop and thrive. Decades of research reveal the negative impacts of poverty on children's health, educational achievement, and adult success. "Deep poverty" is defined as living in a family with an income below 50 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Children in deep poverty suffer the worst outcomes. Deep poverty causes toxic stress that harms brain development and early functioning, disrupting a child's ability to succeed in school and in life. Even a short amount of time spent in deep poverty can derail a child emotionally, psychologically, physically, and educationally for a much longer time period.

Chronically unmet basic needs experienced by children living in deep poverty not only impact their health and well-being, but also their future potential. Children who live in deep poverty are less likely to graduate high school, more likely to have poor health as children and as adults, and more likely to become involved in the criminal justice system. Deep poverty damages the chance that a child will ever escape poverty and fuels an intergenerational cycle of poverty. Children who are born in deep poverty are three times as likely to be deeply poor at age 40 than children not born in deep poverty.

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program provides basic needs cash aid and services to low-income families with children to alleviate the impact of poverty on children and help parents overcome barriers to employment. The CalWORKs program serves 1.1 million individuals in California, 80 percent of whom are children. Yet, the level of support provided to CalWORKs families is insufficient to meet basic needs

and lift all of these children out of deep poverty. The current maximum grant for a family of three is \$714 or 41 percent of FPL. However, most families receive less than the maximum grant: the average CalWORKs grant for a family of three is \$556 per month, or 33 percent of FPL.

SOLUTION

SB 982 will endeavor to eliminate deep poverty in the CalWORKs program by placing a minimum grant level to ensure no CalWORKs grant falls below 50 percent of the federal poverty line. By doing so, this bill will protect children from the worst harms of chronically unmet basic needs and better enable the CalWORKs program to achieve its goals.

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