

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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May 22, 2024

The Honorable Scott Wiener
Chair, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Comm
1020 N Street, Room 502
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Caroline Menjivar
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
1020 N Street, Room 502
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8230
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Corey Jackson
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2
1021 O Street, Suite 6120
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: May Revision Proposed Cuts in CalWORKs, Child Welfare Services, and Adult Protective Services – OPPOSE

Dear Honorable Members,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to express our strong opposition to the proposed cuts across the human services programs that our local agencies oversee. We recognize that the state is facing unprecedented financial challenges and that difficult choices must be made to address the multi-year budget deficit. However, we urge that the budget is not balanced on the backs of children, families and older adults already experiencing deep poverty and for the most vulnerable who are victims of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

The Administration has proposed a total of over \$1.3 billion in budget cuts in human service programs, with approximately \$850 million of that ongoing. No human services program area is spared – the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs), Child Welfare Services, In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS), CalFresh, and Adult Protective Services (APS) programs, as well as housing programs, including Bringing Families Home, Home Safe, and the Housing and Disability Advocacy (HDAP) programs are all impacted.

While all the proposed program cuts and eliminations are deeply troubling, our county has notable concerns and strongly objects to the proposed cuts in CalWORKs, child welfare services, and Adult Protective Services. The following are details of the impacts of the proposed cuts.

CalWORKs Single Allocation – We object to the proposed cuts to the Single Allocation totaling \$355.3 million in FY 2024-25, which is a 21.2% cut compared to 2023-24 amount. This cut will have a devastating impact on each component in the Single Allocation. The actual eligibility costs incurred by counties will be underfunded by over 50% under the May Revision proposal, a shortfall of over \$400 million. This means that counties will have to shift \$400 million from the employment services

component of the Single Allocation to cover workload associated with state and federally mandated eligibility work to ensure clients receive timely access to CalWORKs benefits. This shift of funding from the employment services component to the eligibility component will in turn result in a reduction of over 50% of the funding available for employment services in FY 2024-25. Overall, a cut this deep to the Single Allocation, especially when combined with the other approximately \$400 million in permanent cuts to CalWORKs services, including 1) the proposed elimination of the Expanded Subsidized Employment, Family Stabilization, and WINS programs, 2) the proposed ongoing reduction to the Home Visiting Program, and 3) the proposed complete elimination of the Mental Health and Substance Abuse funding, will completely undermine counties' ability to provide services and support to CalWORKs families and meet performance outcomes. Statewide, we estimate over 1,700 CalWORKs positions would have to be held vacant or eliminated to absorb this cut to the Single Allocation. Here in Kern, these cuts to the Single Allocation would eliminate \$11.8 million in programmatic funding and primarily impact job placement services at a time when our unemployment is hovering above 10%, twice as high as the state's rate at 5.3%.

Child Welfare Services – We strongly object to the cuts proposed in Caregiver Approvals and the Family Urgent Response System (FURS). The May Revision proposes to eliminate the entire funding of \$50 million GF for caregiver approvals beginning in FY 2024-25 and annually ongoing. This funding was finally implemented on an ongoing basis beginning in FY 2022-23 to support state-mandated case management activities to perform timely approval of relative caregivers through the Resource Family Approval (RFA) process. Caregiver approval requirements were enhanced and expanded for all counties and caregivers as part of the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) enacted in 2016. The one-time and eventually ongoing funding never fully funded the costs to counties of the new mandated workload, which is over \$100 million annually. County human services agencies have funded the difference from local realignment funding, even though they are not required to do so, because we recognize the foundational importance of this work to the child welfare system. However, the loss of this \$50 million will eliminate funding for over 200 child welfare social workers statewide and will diminish county capacity to perform caregiver approvals. This proposed cut, along with the proposed elimination of the Family Urgent Response System (FURS) program, undermines the foundation of our child welfare system and will remove vital services proven to stabilize youth and families.

Adult Protective Services – We strongly oppose the May Revision proposal to significantly cut the APS expansion by \$40 million GF beginning in FY 2024-25 and annually ongoing, reducing the annual funding amount from \$70 million GF to \$30 million GF. The APS program provides 24/7 response to reports of abuse and neglect for individuals over 60 and dependent adults ages 18-59. Since the implementation of the APS expansion, APS clients aged 60-64 have almost doubled from about 920 cases per month to an average of roughly 1,700 cases per month statewide. The proposed cut will result in the immediate loss of 200 social worker staff statewide who provide critical and often life-saving response and services to victims of abuse, neglect, and exploitation, leaving older and dependent adults more vulnerable to hospitalization, institutionalization in nursing homes and premature death.

The May Revision also proposes to eliminate all funding (\$4.8 million GF) associated with training of APS social workers beginning in FY 2024-25 and annually ongoing. The statewide training is essential in supporting our social worker staff to meet the needs of vulnerable older and dependent adults and supports consistent practices across counties. Our county relies upon this training to provide core, standardized response and services in alignment with national and statewide standards. APS social workers are required to complete intensive investigations, must coordinate with other professionals in their investigations and service delivery, and need to receive regular training in order to adapt to the ever-changing nature of abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation of older adults. Additionally, this training enables our Public Guardians to access mandated state training, allowing us to better coordinate our response to protect this population.

We are grateful that the benefit levels themselves have been preserved in this budget, but the proposed cuts will negatively impact eligible Californians' ability to access those benefits and are cuts to core services. While we understand that tough decisions must be made, the ongoing nature of the reductions and eliminations will have detrimental impacts to families and county workers.

For these reasons, the Kern County Board of Supervisors urges you to reject these cuts to CalWORKs, child welfare services, and APS.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David Couch', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

David Couch, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Members and Staff, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Members and Staff, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2
Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation
County Welfare Directors Association
California State Association of Counties
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