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March 21, 2025

Honorable Dr. Akilah Weber Pierson, Chair
Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
1021 O Street, Suite 7310
Sacramento, CA 95814

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

RE: California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs): Rightsize County Administrative Funding

Dear Chair Dr. Akilah Weber Pierson and Chair Dr. Corey A. Jackson,

On behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors, I urge your support for a one-time \$245 million allocation in FY 2025-26 and an updated CalWORKs Single Allocation budget methodology starting FY 2026-27 to address chronic underfunding of program administration. These changes are essential to ensuring families receive the services they need while also helping them achieve long-term stability.

The CalWORKs program is a proven tool for breaking the cycle of poverty. However, counties are forced to divert funds from employment services to cover shortfalls in eligibility administration. In FY 2023-24 alone, counties overspent eligibility funding by \$245 million, redirecting 20% of employment services funds to cover the shortfall—resources that should have been used for job training, case management, and other vital supports—not filling budget gaps.

A state assessment in FY 2023-24 confirmed that the current funding formula—unchanged since 2018-19—falls short by \$210 million in covering actual costs. Without proper funding, counties cannot fully support families in gaining employment, securing childcare, and accessing training programs. Updating the budget methodology is critical to shifting CalWORKs from a compliance-driven system to a trauma-informed, family-centered program.

We urge you to support this one-time funding patch and budget update to ensure CalWORKs continues to serve families effectively, allowing counties to focus on lifting families out of poverty rather than shifting resources to fill funding gaps.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Leticia Perez".

Leticia Perez, Chair
Kern County Board of Supervisor

cc: Members and Staff of the Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Members and Staff of the Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2
County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA)
Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange