



County of Monterey

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June 5, 2024

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1020 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Budget Restorations to CalWORKs, Child Welfare Services, and Adult Protective Services – SUPPORT

Dear Governor Newsom:

The County of Monterey is deeply grateful for the budget restorations provided in the Legislature's budget plan for the human services programs that we administer on the state's behalf. These restorations save the social services safety net, preserving core services and supports that have proven essential to supporting children, families, and older adults in recovering from the Great Recession and during and after the COVID-19 pandemic – and ensuring that those resources continue to be available to support the most vulnerable Californians during these current economically challenging times. We strongly urge you and your Administration to maintain funding for these vital and life-saving services and supports in the final budget agreement.

In particular, we highlight restorations in the following three main areas as especially critical: 1) CalWORKs, 2) child welfare, and 3) older adults.

CalWORKs

The County of Monterey strongly supports the restoration of funding for the Single Allocation and Family Stabilization, and the partial restorations for Expanded Subsidized Employment, mental health and substance abuse services, and the Home Visiting Program. The cuts as originally proposed reversed well over a decade of investments in the CalWORKs program and the families served by it, eliminating services and supports that are proven to improve family well-being and their economic security. The restorations prevent the decimation of the existing CalWORKs services infrastructure.

With these funding restorations, CalWORKs clients will continue to have subsidized employment opportunities that connect them to crucial job training, skills, and experiences that lead to higher wages and permanent employment; and families experiencing crises or barriers will continue to have access to intensive case management and services (e.g., domestic violence services, behavioral health, education, and housing supports) through the Family Stabilization program. Restorations of the deep cuts to the Single Allocation will allow our county to continue providing supportive services and re-engagement with clients, in addition to our eligibility work, rather than having to make actual reductions to current service and staffing levels.

In Monterey County, restoration of funding to the Single Allocation will directly impact 500 vulnerable families in need of critical services for housing, mental health including substance abuse and domestic violence trauma, childcare, transportation, clothing, and employment. With the proposed cuts, it is estimated these families would lose access to nearly \$11 million in CalWORKs direct assistance as a direct result of a reduction in staff and services.

We continue to be gratified to see that there are no proposed cuts to CalWORKs grant levels. Cash grants are essential to helping poor families. But the drastic cuts to CalWORKs services and case management would have undermined the very attributes that make California's Temporary Assistance



for Needy Families (TANF) program a model for and leader of the rest of the nation. We urge you to maintain funding for these essential services.

Child Welfare Services

The County of Monterey strongly supports restoration of funding for programs serving vulnerable youth and families in the child welfare system. These programs have proven to stabilize youth and families and their elimination would have resulted in increased costs in other systems including housing, criminal justice, health, and behavioral health.

Specifically, we urge the preservation of funding (\$50 million General Fund (GF)) for caregiver approvals. This funding supports state-mandated case management activities to perform timely approval of relative caregivers through the Resource Family Approval process. This proposed cut was contrary to efforts to maintain relative-based placements for foster youth and would have led to even longer approval times for relative caregivers, during which time relatives will be unable to access other foster care benefits to which they would otherwise be entitled, including higher foster care rates through the current home-based foster care rate structure and county specialized care increments. Furthermore, restoration of this funding puts the state budget back in alignment with the Administration's permanent Foster Care Rate Reform proposal, which is intended to invest directly in family-based placements to keep youth connected to their relatives and communities of origin.

The proposed cut to caregiver approvals would require the County of Monterey to ensure that our social workers complete the expanded mandated assessments with less funding causing us to dismantle the support that has been established through our community network of Service Providers. This will increase the workload of social workers and require them to spend more time completing full assessments. The work they do in the homes of our Resource Family Approval Programs will take much longer and result in delayed approvals. This will also delay payments to our Resource Families, which include relatives, near kin, and community members who are stepping in to provide a safe placement for our children entering Foster Care. The impact of budget cuts will be felt most keenly by relatives and near kin who are often called upon with little notice to step in for their relative's children who are in desperate need of placement.

We also urge the preservation of funding for the Family Urgent Response System (FURS) (\$30 million GF). FURS currently responds to 5,000 calls from youth and caregivers a year, connecting them to ongoing mental health services, leading to a reduced likelihood of foster children and youth's needs escalating to the point of requiring residential treatment or having a psychiatric emergency. Elimination of FURS would have led to placement disruptions and hospitalizations, causing further trauma to foster youth, and contacts with law enforcement which will lead to criminalization of youth's trauma-based reactions.

Lastly, we strongly support the alternative in the Legislature's budget plan to defer funding for the Bringing Families Home (BFH) Program rather than eliminate it. The BFH Program is proven effective in promoting supportive housing and rapid re-housing for families reunifying with their children and helping to prevent foster care entry by supporting the parents of children who are at risk of abuse and neglect. BFH is an important resource for black and Native American children and families who are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system.

Adult Protective Services

The County of Monterey strongly supports the restoration of funding for the Adult Protective Services (APS) program, which provides 24/7 response to reports of abuse and neglect for individuals over the age of 60 and dependent adults ages 18-59. The program is and will continue to be important as it is projected that by 2030, one in five Californians will be 65 or older. The proposed cut would have resulted in the immediate loss of 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. Restoration of funding would mean that our county would retain existing staffing levels including the 2 new APS Social Workers, 1 APS Intake Social Worker, and 1 APS Supervisor that were hired using expansion funds. The purposed cut, on the other hand, would greatly limit our ability to respond timely on a 24/7 basis to the more than 2,800 of reports of abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation that our county receives annually. It is important to note that reports to our county's APS hotline continue to increase year over year, increasing by 38% in the last 3 years since the APS expansion funding was approved by the Legislature.

We also urge the preservation of funding (\$4.8 million GF) for APS training. The training supports social worker staff to meet the needs of vulnerable older and dependent adults. Elimination of the funding would have jeopardized the uniformity, consistency, and quality in the administration and delivery of the APS program statewide. Training programs are essential for supporting the County of Monterey's 14 APS Social Workers in their role providing critical services to vulnerable adults. Training supports our APS intake staff, support staff, supervisors, and managers, and promotes consistency across APS programs statewide. Trainings such as the intensive multi-week APS Induction Series are especially important for developing new workers' knowledge and skill sets and have been invaluable to several of our new APS staff in their onboarding process.

Lastly, we strongly support continuation of funding for the Home Safe Program, which provides tangible housing assistance for victims of abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation. As the fastest growing segment of the unhoused population, it is more critical than ever that we preserve resources to prevent homelessness and help older adults maintain stable and safe housing.

California is a leader in pushing towards a more equitable and thriving community for all Californians through services and supports provided in CalWORKs, child welfare services, and older adults programs. County human services agencies, the Administration, and the Legislature have invested and worked extremely hard over the past decade to serve our most vulnerable Californians, including families and individuals living in deep poverty, foster youth and their caregivers, and vulnerable and neglected older adults. We recognize that the state is facing significant financial challenges and that difficult choices are needed to address the multi-year budget deficit. However, we urge you to avoid balancing the budget on the backs of children and families already experiencing deep poverty and that you preserve the restorations of these core services and supports.

For these reasons, the County of Monterey urges you and your Administration to maintain the state's commitment to vulnerable and older adults by funding for these vital and life-saving services and supports. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the County of Monterey's Public Policy Advisor, Ashley Walker of Nossaman LLP at 916-442-8888.

Sincerely,

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Sonia M. De La Rosa

County Administrative Officer

cc: The Honorable Anna Caballero, 14th Senate District
The Honorable John Laird, 17th Senate District
The Honorable Robert Rivas, 29th Assembly District
The Honorable Dawn Addis, 30th Assembly District
Richard Figueroa, Office of the Governor
Dr. Mark Ghaly, Health and Human Services Agency
Joe Stephenshaw, Department of Finance
Kim Johnson, California Department of Social Services
Chris Woods, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore
Jason Sisney, Office of the Speaker of the Assembly
Christian Griffith, Assembly Committee on Budget
Jenny Nguyen, County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA)
California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)

