

County Executive

David Villanueva



Board of Supervisors

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County of Sacramento

May 30, 2024

The Honorable Mike McGuire,
Senate President pro Tempore

The Honorable Robert Rivas, Speaker California
State Assembly

The Honorable Scott D. Wiener, Chair
Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel, Chair Assembly
Budget Committee

The Honorable Roger W. Niello, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review

The Honorable Heath Flora, Vice Chair
Assembly Budget Committee

Re: 2024-25 Joint Legislative Budget Proposal: Preserve Round 6 HHAP Funding

Dear Honorable California State Senators and Assembly Members,

Sacramento County writes to express support for the \$1 billion appropriation for Round 6 of the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) program in the Joint Legislative Budget Plan for the 2024-25 state budget, and to express gratitude for the rejection of numerous proposed cuts to human services programs including CalWORKs, child welfare, and adult protective services. We appreciate the Legislature understanding how vital this funding is for county administered programs and services that vulnerable Californians rely on every day.

We are committed to solutions to address the budget problem in the best interests of California's vulnerable populations and to preserve core services. Sacramento believes that budget priorities should begin with the protection of services that fundamentally protect the most vulnerable members of our communities and preserve the quality of life for all Californians, as the Joint Legislative Budget Plan does by funding Round 6 of the HHAP program and rejecting cuts to critical social safety net programs.

Maintain Investments in Homelessness Programs

The County strongly supports the inclusion of \$1 billion in the 2024-25 state budget for the HHAP program and urges the Legislature to maintain this investment throughout final state budget negotiations. Now is not the time to pull back on the commitment to these programs, but rather to maintain and strengthen our investments.

Failure to provide ongoing funding or funding for Round 6 of the HHAP program will have devastating impacts on local homelessness response efforts. Counties will be forced to reduce services, housing, and support for thousands of clients who are utilizing services and rental support to stay housed. The HHAP program that the Legislature previously funded at unprecedented levels is successfully transitioning individuals into permanent housing. However, the inflow into homelessness continues to outpace our collective efforts and progress can only be accelerated by providing necessary funding to maintain and strengthen these investments.

The HHAP program has been transformative to local efforts to address homelessness. In Sacramento County, HHAP funding has enabled our ability to expand our multi-disciplinary

outreach teams, who work directly with people living unsheltered and connect them to critical resources, including permanent housing. In calendar year 2023, the efforts of these teams have supported the exit of 350 unique individuals out of unsheltered homelessness and the provision of almost 35,000 service “touches,” such as housing search and placement, case management, and connections to health care in the unincorporated County. HHAP funds have been instrumental in Sacramento County’s expansion of re-housing focused interim housing programs, supporting operations and intentional re-housing supportive services, including 40 units of family interim housing (serving approximately 120 people at a point in time) and over 300 beds for single adults and couples.

Preserve Safety Net Programs

Sacramento County strongly supports the Legislature’s rejection of the May Revision cuts that impact core safety net services. Individuals and families are at risk of falling further into poverty if these funding reductions and program eliminations are enacted. The proposed cuts to CalWORKs, child welfare, adult protective services, and other human services programs will have detrimental impacts to the services that vulnerable Californians rely on every day. Unfortunately, these cuts will exacerbate challenges counties are facing to operate programs, hire and retain staff, and meet required mandates for enrolling individuals and providing access to services. We urge you to not balance the budget on the backs of the most vulnerable Californians, but instead preserve the state’s safety net.

For example, the elimination of CalWORKs Mental Health and Substance Abuse program in Sacramento County would hinder our most vulnerable population’s journey to self-sufficiency. In FY 2023 alone, substance abuse services were provided to over 850 CalWORKs eligible customers. In the same FY, Sacramento County’s Mental Health Program assisted with over 1,000 CalWORKs customer referrals to receive mental health services.

Sacramento County has a high success rate of customers after the CalWORKs Expanded Subsidized Employment (ESE) program as well. In 2022-2023, 75.7% of customers were still employed and no longer received CalWORKs support. In 2021-2022, there was also a 70.4% success rate of customers employed and continuing to be off CalWORKs support. The ESE program assists customers who are “hard to serve” find employment that they may otherwise not find on their own. These are customers who are not able to find and keep employment due to various reasons, such as having a criminal background, attendance, and time management issues. In addition, the customer is supported by Workforce Coordinators who provide retention services during the subsidy period. We currently have 18 Workforce Coordinators and three Workforce Career Assessment Supervisors. The elimination of ESE will impact our CalWORKs customers, CBO Providers, and our Direct Hire Employers. The elimination would stop a quality program in Sacramento County that has served over 1,400 customers. These are only two examples of impacts among many CalWORKs programs likely to be cut.

Regarding Child Welfare Services, the loss of \$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. The cut to caregiver approvals in Sacramento County would drastically increase caseloads. Sacramento County Resource Family Approval (RFA) caseloads are already 27% higher than the recommended caseload to get assessments done timely. The result of these proposed cuts would increase caseloads to 66 (120% increase from the recommended caseload). This will increase our average time to approval to 257 days

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(8.5 months). Reduction of such a great proportion would increase caseloads 120% effectively ensuring caregivers would not be approved for at least 8 and a half months, well beyond the 90-day mandated timeframe. This would also be devastating for families who desperately want to care for their grandchildren, niece or nephew or family friend. This would add to the traumatization of children during an already difficult time in their lives. With the push to increase relative and non-relative extended family member placements for youth coming into care, reducing the number of staff who conduct these assessments and approvals would ensure that more kids will in fact not be with relatives and non-relative extended family member placements, and will instead be in Temporary Shelter Care Facilities for longer duration.

Also, Sacramento County's 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, Sacramento County APS clients aged 60-64 have more than doubled from about 276 cases in 2021 to roughly 681 in 2023. The proposed cut will result in the immediate loss of 20% of our social worker staff 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 general fund) 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 on this training to provide core, standardized responses 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 to adopt 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.

These are a few examples of direct impacts to Sacramento County programs and services and more information has been provided in recent letters. Thank you for your continued engagement to strengthen state and local relationships, and to realize the opportunities to safeguard fiscal resources to best support the people we serve.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David Villanueva', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Villanueva
County Executive