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June 3, 2024

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California

**Re: Support Budget Restorations to CalWORKs Program, Child Welfare Services,
Adult Protective Services, In Home Support Services**

Dear Governor Newsom:

Sacramento County is grateful for the Legislature's budget restorations to human services programs that we administer on the state's behalf. These restorations preserve essential core services to support children, families, and older adults recovering from the Great Recession, COVID-19 pandemic, and who are facing economically challenging times. Sacramento County strongly urges you and your Administration to maintain funding for these services in the final budget agreement.

Sacramento County highlights the critical areas of CalWORKs, child welfare services, Adult Protective Services (APS), and In Home Support Services (IHSS) as follows:

CalWORKs Single Allocation –

The County 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.

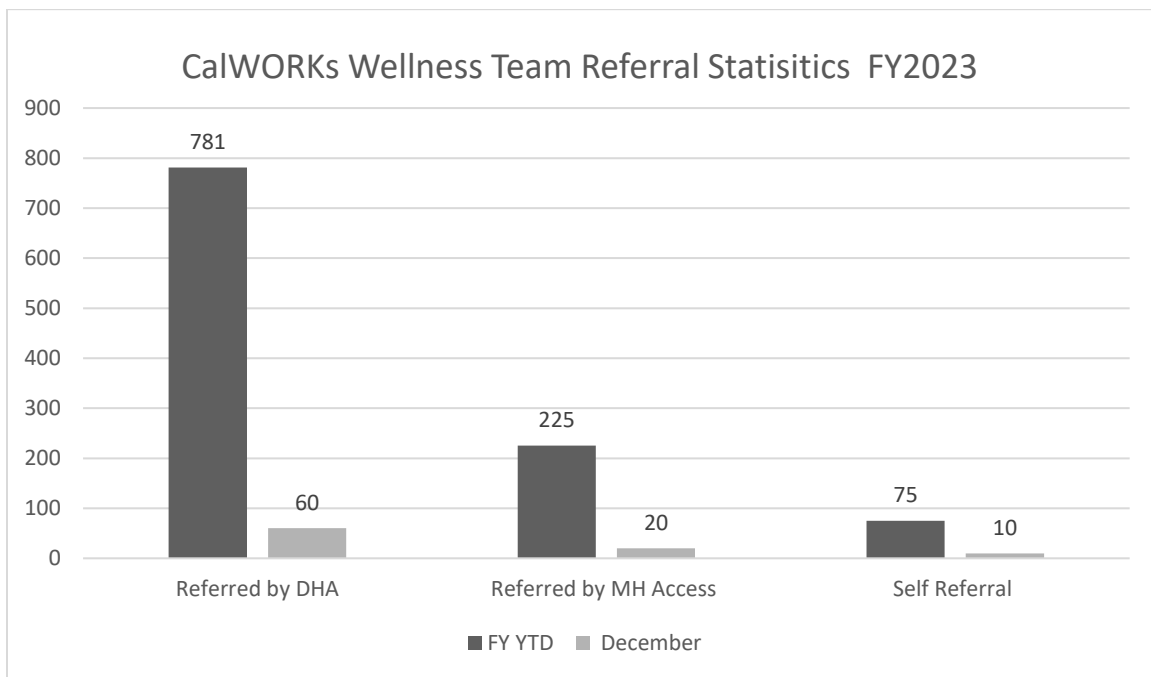
With these funding restorations, CalWORKs clients will continue to have subsidized employment opportunities that connect them to crucial job training, skills, and experiences that lead to higher wages and permanent employment; and families experiencing crises or barriers will continue to have access 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.

Value of Sacramento County's CalWORKs Mental Health and Substance Abuse Program

The Mental Health and Substance Abuse Program assists CalWORKs customers in breaking barriers to employment by providing them with imperative behavioral health services through integrated and direct service referrals. Behavioral health services include mental health and

substance use disorder assessments, individual therapy, group therapy, and case management provided by the Sacramento County Department of Health Services. The services provided by this funding assist the individual in determining a need for more intensive substance use disorder treatment. These services include detoxification, residential treatment, outpatient treatment, and referrals to transitional living/sober living environments.

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.



Value of Sacramento County's CalWORKs Family Stabilization (FS) Program

The FS program effectively serves families on CalWORKs through intensive case management and services to those experiencing crises or who are unable to participate in Welfare-to-Work activities. Services include domestic violence services, behavioral health, education support, and housing support. The FS program also serves the children in the family and offers intentional service selection and family-centered case management. It also prevents CalWORKs families from getting involved in the child welfare system.

In Sacramento County, the FS program provided support to an average of 480 of the most vulnerable individuals and families in our community annually. The elimination of the FS services will limit our CalWORKs customers' access to housing, Welfare-to-Work benefits and other community resources. Specifically, the elimination of this program would halt Social Workers support to customers that need the Welfare-to-Work benefits. County Social Workers advocate on customers' behalf to get them into shelters and permanent rentals, assisting with move-in costs and continual rental subsidy support. The FS program also provides aid by assisting with payments for licensing/schooling fees and vehicle repairs. The FS program also works on providing families with transportation for food, medical, and housing assistance. Since the start of COVID-19, the County has seen a steady increase in the number of domestic violence referrals to the program. The elimination of the FS program would take away intensive case management

for our victims and their children, which can be detrimental to their survival and success in recovery.

Value of Sacramento County’s CalWORKs Expanded Subsidized Employment (ESE) Program

The ESE program may also be eliminated this fiscal year as previously stated. The CalWORKs ESE program offers CalWORKs customers Subsidized Employment placement, providing crucial training, skills, and experiences essential for securing and maintaining permanent employment. Many CalWORKs customers do not have any meaningful work experience or have low-skilled work experience.

In Sacramento County, the ESE program offered CalWORKs customers important job training skills to obtain meaningful employment opportunities. These services provide the ability to increase wage earnings and develop steady income, all of which lead to housing stability for them and their families. These positive results are a direct impact of the Retention Services provided by the ESE program. The Retention Services provided to the participant aim to remove barriers to employment, such as childcare, transportation to work, attendance, and time management guidance. The County also tracks positive trends regarding the increase in wages earned by the participant after the subsidies end. Below is an example of the wage increase in 2021 and 2022.

Year	Average Wage at 6 Months	Average Wage at 12 Months	% Increase
2021	\$16.46	\$17.14	4.2%
2022	\$18.32	\$19.74	7.8%

The County has a high success rate of customers after the program. 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.

Value of Sacramento County’s CalWORKs Home Visiting Program (HVP)

The CalWORKs HVP utilizes powerful, evidence-based home visiting models to promote family resilience and connection. These home visiting models help reduce stressors on the family and allow parents to focus on the developmental and behavioral needs of their child. The Child Abuse Prevention Center (CAPC) has implemented two evidenced-based models: Healthy Families of America (HFA), and Parent as Teachers (PAT). HFA performs screenings and assessments to determine families at risk for child maltreatment, and home visiting services for children until the child’s fifth birthday. PAT performs personal visits, group connections, child screenings and provides a resource network to families with young children through entry into kindergarten.

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The Sacramento County Department of Health Services Public Health also serves CalWORKs Home Visiting customers through implementation of the evidence-based model, Nurse Family Partnership (NFP). NFP provides public health nurse home visits to women during pregnancy to improve pregnancy outcomes and provide prenatal care. NFP also provides home visits during the first two years of a child's life to improve the child's health and development. In addition, NFP supports parents to develop skills that will allow them to better care for their children, continue their education and find gainful employment.

Further, a reduction to CAPC will lead to a 53% decrease in staff, resulting in the loss of 23 full-time employees, decreasing the number of families served from 360 to 180 annually and the number of home visits from 2,700 to 1,350. Specifically, Sacramento County will lose two Public Health Nurse positions, one Supervising Public Health Nurse position, and one Office Assistant position, decreasing the number of families served from 50 to 22.

We are thankful that there are no proposed cuts to CalWORKs grant levels. Cash grants are essential to helping poor families, but drastic cuts to CalWORKs services and case management undermines California's TANF program which is a model for the nation. We urge you to maintain funding for these essential services.

Child Welfare Services – Sacramento County strongly supports funding restoration for programs serving vulnerable youth and families in the child welfare system. These programs stabilize youth and families, and elimination will increase 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 (RFA) process. The proposed cut contradicted efforts to maintain relative-based placements for foster youth and would have led to 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. Restoration of this funding aligns 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.

In Sacramento County, the restoration to caregiver approvals allows us to better meet the needs of our clients. Sacramento County RFA caseloads are already 27% higher than the recommended caseload to get assessments done timely. The proposed cuts would increase caseloads to 66 (120% increase from the recommended caseload). This would increase our average time to approval to 257 days (8.5 months), and thereby devastate families who desperately want to care for their grandchildren, niece or nephew or family friend.

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.

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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 effectively promotes supportive housing and rapid re-housing for families reunifying with their children. BFH also helps 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 (APS) – The County strongly supports the restoration of funding for the APS program, which provides 24/7 response to reports of abuse and neglect for individuals over 60 and dependent adults ages 18-59. The program will continue to be important as one in five Californians will be 65 or older by 2030. The proposed cut would result 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.

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. Expansion funding was used to build data and analytic capacity within APS and strengthened and broadened cross system community collaborations related to justice, family violence, food security, isolation, access to technology, utilization of public benefits, behavioral health, and general healthcare. Many of these would be eliminated or reduced.

We also urge the preservation of funding (\$4.8 million GF) for APS training. The statewide training is essential to our social worker staff to meet the needs of vulnerable older and dependent adults and supports consistent practices across counties. Sacramento 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.

We further 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 now more than ever that we preserve resources to prevent homelessness and help older adults maintain stable and safe housing.

In Home Support Services (IHSS) - Sacramento County urges you to preserve IHSS funds. The Career Pathways program and the IHSS Back-Up Provider System are essential components of the Newsom Administration's commitment to increase options for affordable care at home, as is IHSS eligibility for all Medi-Cal beneficiaries regardless of citizenship status, which is also proposed for elimination. At a time when the direct care shortage is at crisis levels, proposed eliminations will negatively impact individuals' choices for the least expensive and least restrictive care options when needed.

Each of these programs protect people and help them become self-sufficient, less dependent on the system, and more equipped to properly care for families and themselves. The County asks

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you to safeguard our vulnerable families and agree to the Legislature's budget proposal. Please feel free to contact me at (916) 874-4627 or deborde@saccounty.gov.

Sincerely,



Elisia De Bord

Governmental Relations and Legislative Officer

cc: 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
Sacramento County Delegation
Chair and Members, Board of Supervisors
Audrey Ratajczak, Cruz Strategies
Jenny Nguyen, County Welfare Directors Association