



**COUNTY OF LAKE
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

Courthouse - 255 North Forbes Street
Lakeport, California 95453
TELEPHONE (707) 263-2368
FAX (707) 263-2207

Helen Owen – District 1

Bruno Sabatier – District 2

Eddie Crandell – District 3

Brad Rasmussen – District 4

Jessica Pyska – District 5

August 11, 2026

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

The Honorable John Laird, Chair
Senate Committee on Budget & Fiscal Review
1021 O Street, Suite 8720
Sacramento, CA 95814

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

The Honorable Caroline Menjivar, Chair
Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
1021 O Street, Suite 6630
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: REQUEST TO PROTECT CHILD SAFETY BY DELAYING CWS-CARES
SYSTEM LAUNCH & ENHANCING ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES**

Dear Chairs Gabriel, Laird, Jackson, and Menjivar:

The County of Lake respectfully urges a six-to-eight-month delay of the State's launch of the Child Welfare Services-California Automated Response and Engagement System (CWS-CARES), enhanced Project accountability measures, and increased legislative oversight of the Project through adoption of County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA)-proposed Trailer Bill Language (TBL) and budget bill language (BBL). The unacceptable child safety and operational risks associated with the Project's planned schedule cannot reasonably be mitigated before the currently planned October 26, 2026, go-live date. The CWS-CARES system remains incomplete, with critical functionality, testing, and county readiness activities still underway approximately three months before the planned go-live date. **Moving forward with the planned October 26, 2026, launch date is no longer acceptable to county child welfare agencies and our county social workers who rely upon this automated system to protect vulnerable children from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.**

Based on ongoing testing by county frontline workers in the CWS-CARES Production Simulation (Prod Sim) environment, we have identified significant and concerning gaps and issues with system functionality, some of which were reported during prior Extended User System Testing (EUST) periods, and that remain unresolved with less than three months before go-live. Releasing an incomplete system to our frontline county social workers jeopardizes the integrity of California's child welfare practice and infrastructure, and **poses a high risk of probable system failures and data gaps that may result in uninvestigated reports of abuse or neglect, severe trauma related to unnecessary removals, placement disruptions, serious injury, or a child fatality.** The sheer number of defects, design flaws, and incomplete functionality, coupled with data conversion concerns and inadequate time for counties to test, train, and prepare (including for any planned work arounds), poses significant risk to county operations, puts undue hardship on county staff, and poses significant risks

to worker safety, privacy and security of case records, placement timeliness and instability for foster children, and foremost, child health and safety.

Compounding these concerns, county child welfare agencies have been provided with insufficient time and resources to adequately train our staff to work in the new system. County staff attempting to train in the new Prod Sim environment have experienced frustration and confusion over which courses to take, some staff are blocked from taking courses due to incorrect settings, materials have not been finalized, and in-person training schedules remain in flux and unknown. County staff also cannot be trained if the system development continues as CWS-CARES functionality remains incomplete. Incomplete training renders the CWS-CARES system largely unusable for county child welfare staff, resulting in additional operational risks to child safety.

The potential negative and lasting impacts of an incomplete CWS-CARES, and an under-prepared child welfare workforce, fall upon county child welfare agencies locally.

Therefore, the County of Lake respectfully requests urgent legislative intervention to delay the CWS-CARES planned go-live date of October 26, 2026, by at least six months and no more than eight months, and to codify enhanced Project accountability measures that must be achieved prior to launch. CWDA estimates a six-month to eight-month extension would require approximately \$100 million to \$180.7 million State General Fund, depending on the level of federal funds drawdown. This is a necessary investment to prevent critical failures and potentially devastating outcomes for California's most vulnerable children and families.

Launching an unfinished system directly endangers California's foster children, places an unbearable administrative burden on our social workers, and passes destabilizing liability and risk onto counties. We urge you to adopt this critical budget action to protect California's most vulnerable families and communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Brad Rasmussen
Chair, Lake County Board of Supervisors

cc: Members and Staff of the Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Members and Staff of the Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2
Staff of Senate Committee on Budget & Fiscal Review
Staff of Assembly Committee on Budget
County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA)
Cecelia M. Aguiar-Curry, California State Assemblymember, District 4
Mike McGuire, California State Senator, District 2