

April 19, 2021

Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman, Chair
Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Sub. No. 3
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Joaquin Arambula Chair
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Child Welfare Services: Cash Assistance for CalWORKs Parents in Family Reunification - SUPPORT \$9.5 million State General Fund Request

Dear Chair Talamantes Eggman and Chair Arambula:

The County of Lake respectfully requests your support for the \$9.5 million State General Fund requested by the County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) to reinstate CalWORKs cash assistance grants for eligible parents whose children have been temporarily removed and placed into foster care while the parents are engaging in family reunification efforts. This includes \$9 million in on-going direct support to families and a one-time \$500,000 cost for necessary automation changes.

Removing cash benefits from a family already struggling in poverty can further destabilize a family in reunification. AB 429 (Chapter 111, Statutes of 2001) allowed parents to continue to receive supportive services from the CalWORKs program, but without the needed cash assistance, parents are at risk of becoming homeless. While the child welfare program cannot remove a child solely due to homelessness, the juvenile court and child welfare agency cannot reunify a child with an unsheltered parent.

This proposal would also support county efforts to address racial disparities and help to combat poverty and family separation which disproportionately impacts families of color. California's children and youth continue to experience high poverty rates (18.8%) and both Latino/Latinx (22.9%) and Black families (18.2%) also face disproportionately higher poverty rates.¹ Cash assistance, coupled with supportive services from the CalWORKs program for parents actively engaging in family reunification efforts, will help parents meet their case plan goals and allow them to provide a safe and loving home for their children. This reduces longer-term costs in the foster care program and ultimately, strengthens families.

For these reasons, the County of Lake urges your support.

Sincerely,

cc: Members and Staff of the Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Members and Staff of the Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA)

¹ <https://www.ppic.org/publication/poverty-in-california/>