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April 4, 2025

Honorable Dr. Akilah Weber Pierson, Chair
Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
1021 O Street, Suite 7310
Sacramento, CA 95814

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

RE: RIGHT-SIZE COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE FUNDING, California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs)

Dear Chair Dr. Akilah Weber Pierson and Chair Dr. Corey A. Jackson:

The County of Solano respectfully requests your support for an investment of one-time \$245 million total funds in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-2026 and updates to the CalWORKs Single Allocation eligibility administration budget methodology effective FY 2026-27 for county administration of the CalWORKs program to address critical and persistent underfunding of CalWORKs program operations. This funding and the update to the budget methodology are essential to ensuring that families in need receive the support and services they are entitled to through the CalWORKs program. By equipping counties with the necessary resources, this investment helps families overcome employment barriers, paving the way for long-term stability and well-being.

The CalWORKs program is one of the few tools our state must not only stabilize families, but to prevent generational harm caused by poverty. Moreover, the CalWORKs program leads the nation as a model, placing emphasis beyond solely supporting families in deep poverty, but to also providing beneficiaries with lasting benefits by improving families' well-being, self-sufficiency, and outcomes. County human services agencies, like Solano, are at the frontlines of this work on behalf of the state. Unfortunately, the state's Single Allocation, the funding that counties use for eligibility determinations as well as employment services, is woefully underfunded, specifically in the eligibility component. This has forced counties to redirect funding from employment services to backfill eligibility activities each year for the last four years.

In the most recent fiscal year, FY 2023-24, counties overspent eligibility funding by \$245 million, which resulted in the redirection of 20-percent of total employment services funding to cover for the overspending in eligibility. Had the eligibility allocation been fully funded, these employment services funds could have been used instead to enhance our employment services case management capacity, increase availability of supportive services, or provide more frequent contacts with our clients with the most complex needs.

The Administration's own assessment in FY 2023-24, as required by the 2022 Budget Act, exemplified shortcomings in the existing methodology for eligibility funding, which was last updated in 2018-19. This work revealed an additional \$210 million is needed to fully fund counties for the workload associated

The Honorable Dr. Akilah Weber Pierson
The Honorable Dr. Corey A. Jackson
CalWORKs / Solano County Board of Supervisors

with the full volume of applications and to update for more real-time worker costs. This inadequate funding has significant and downstream ramifications and hamstrings counties' ability to help families obtain and maintain employment through services (such as job preparation activities), training programs (such as certificate and credential programs), and supportive services (such as childcare and transportation)—services and supports that counties are aiming to maximize, enhance, and scale to lift families and children out of poverty. Ultimately, the underfunding for eligibility administration needs to be addressed so counties have the resources to maximize employment services funding to continue shifting from a punitive, compliance-based program to one rooted in a trauma-informed framework for alleviating poverty.

In Solano County, insufficient eligibility administration funding has necessitated redirection of employment service funding to cover overspending in eligibility, as eligibility requirements must come first. The resulting erosion of employment service resources has prevented work to expand job opportunities, strengthen support programs, and improve outcomes for job seekers in our community.

Furthermore, maximizing our employment services funding would allow us to enhance service capacity and broaden our range of employment offerings and support programs. These expansions could include life skills and soft skills workshops on parenting, household budgeting, and interview preparation, as well as the facilitation of support groups centered on shared lived experiences. Additionally, we could provide financial assistance to help job seekers overcome employment barriers, such as obtaining work attire, covering automotive repairs and insurance costs, paying storage fees, and resolving traffic violations. These enhancements would offer more tailored support, ultimately leading to improved employment outcomes and opportunities for long-term self-sufficiency.

We believe it is critical to provide counties the one-time funding patch and adopt an updated Single Allocation eligibility administration methodology so that counties can better serve families in need of and entitled to CalWORKs without jeopardizing counties' ability to provide services to help families overcome barriers of employment, and effectively implement program offerings that continue to cultivate and demonstrate a family-centered CalWORKs program.

For these reasons, Solano County urges your support.

Respectfully,



Mitch Mashburn, Chair
Solano 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
County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA)
The Honorable Christopher Cabaldon, California State Senator
The Honorable Lori Wilson, California State Assemblymember
The Honorable Solano County Board of Supervisors
Paragon Government Relations
Karen Lange, SYASL Partners, Inc.