

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1655 (Bryan) – As Amended April 9, 2026

Policy Committee:	Human Services	Vote:	5 - 0
	Judiciary		9 - 2

Urgency: No                      State Mandated Local Program: Yes                      Reimbursable: Yes

**SUMMARY:**

This bill extends a temporary absence exception to a child or other member of a California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKS) assistance unit who is unlawfully detained in a federal immigration detention facility for purposes of receiving CalWORKS cash aid.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Deems a child or other member of the assistance unit who is unlawfully detained in a federal immigration detention facility temporarily absent from the home for the duration of the detention for purposes of determining cash aid for CalWORKS.
- 2) Deems a child or other member of the assistance unit as unlawfully detained in a federal immigration detention facility if a report of misconduct by federal agents is submitted to the California Attorney General (AG). Specifies that a confirmation message from the AG that the submission was received is sufficient to establish a report was submitted for purposes of this bill.
- 3) Requires a county human services agency to inform and provide notice to an applicant or recipient household on how to submit a report of misconduct by federal agents to the AG upon request.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

Due to the lack of data on the number of unlawful detainments of CalWORKs recipients, CDSS provided an analysis of the costs for every 100 CalWORKs families impacted by this bill.

Using this methodology, CDSS estimates an initial General Fund (GF) cost of \$1.5 million and an ongoing GF cost of \$1.7 million per every 100 CalWORKs families. These costs are primarily cash aid that otherwise would not have been paid and additional social worker time, as well as one-time automation costs in the first year. Actual costs will depend on the number of CalWORKs recipients illegally detained. If only 25 families are affected, GF costs would be approximately \$400,000.

Specifically, for every 100 CalWORKs families, CDSS estimates:

- 1) One-time General Fund (GF) costs of \$1.5 million in fiscal year (FY) 2026-27. This estimate includes \$871,000 in CalWORKs grant aid and one hour of county social worker time per case, one-time administrative costs of \$500,000 to train county staff to submit a report of

misconduct by federal agents to the AG, and one-time GF automation costs of approximately \$109,000 to update the California Statewide Automated Welfare System (CalSAWS).

- 2) Ongoing GF costs of \$1.7 million in FY 2027-28 and annually thereafter for CalWORKs grant aid and social worker time.

This estimate assumes an average monthly grant cost of \$992 and an assistance unit with one eligible member who is being detained by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The estimate accounts for employment services costs and childcare costs based on recent utilization rates.

Although California's annual \$3.7 billion federal TANF block grant may be used flexibly within the CalWORKs program, it is fully allocated within the existing and proposed state budgets. Thus, although the above costs are “total fund” costs to the CalWORKs program, they are considered GF costs.

Because this bill creates new duties for counties (social workers) relating to expanded eligibility under CalWORKs and reporting assistance, the bill imposes a state-mandated local program. These costs, approximately \$8,000 annually per 100 CalWORKs families, are included in the above estimates.

The Legislative Analyst’s Office recently warned of General Fund structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 fiscal year and ongoing.

#### COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

When ICE kidnaps a child, families are thrown into a traumatic situation. Parents must juggle legal battles, missed wages, and the fear of not knowing when their child will return home. Despite this trauma, California law does not clearly protect these families from losing CalWORKs support during a child’s detention, exposing them to sudden income loss and jeopardizing their ability to maintain housing, food, and stability for their other children.

“[This bill] closes this harmful gap by ensuring that immigration detention counts as a temporary absence under CalWORKs for the duration of the detention. It ensures families keep their full grant and access to job training while they work to reunify with their child.

- 2) **Background.** California is home to nearly a quarter of the country’s immigrant population, totaling approximately 10.6 million people across the state. The most recent data indicated 83% of California’s immigrant population were naturalized citizens or had some form of legal residency status. Nearly half of all children in California have at least one immigrant parent, either documented or undocumented.

The CalWORKs program provides temporary cash aid and support services to eligible families in California. To be eligible, a recipient must be a U.S. citizen, a legal permanent resident, or otherwise have legal status in the United States.

Under existing law, a portion of the CalWORKs grant is reduced or terminated when a member of the assistance unit is temporarily absent from the home. Existing law provides a “temporary absence” exception for a child who is a patient in a public or private hospital for medical or surgical care, who is considered temporarily absent from the home for the duration of the hospital stay, for purposes of CalWORKs aid.

According to the Assembly Judiciary Committee’s analysis:

In the first year and four months of his second term, Donald Trump and his administration have carried out a “mass deportation” scheme with seemingly little to no care for whether those being detained were actually eligible for deportation or detention. Across the country children and adults with lawful status or even citizenship have been detained by ICE and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) agents with no apparent justification.

In response to Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s immigration detention practices, the California Attorney General’s office launched a website for any Californian to report misconduct by a federal agent. The new portal allows any person to submit a form detailing potentially unlawful activity in California by federal agents or personnel. After the report is submitted, the user receives a confirmation page.

This bill expands the CalWORKs temporary absence exception to include a child or other member of the assistance unit who is unlawfully detained in a federal immigration detention facility for the duration of the detention. The temporary absence would apply only when the detention is unlawful and results in a child or other member of the assistance unit being held in a federal immigration facility. A confirmation message from the AG that a report of misconduct by federal agents was submitted is sufficient to deem the detention unlawful for these purposes.

**Analysis Prepared by:** Jennifer Swenson / APPR. / (916) 319-2081