
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1655 (Bryan) - CalWORKs: temporary absence: immigration detention

Version: July 7, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: HUMAN S. 4 - 1, JUD. 11 - 2

Mandate: Yes

Consultant: Agnes Lee

Bill Summary: AB 1655 would require that, for purposes of determining eligibility for CalWORKs, a child or other member of the assistance unit who is detained in a federal immigration detention facility must be considered temporarily absent from the home for the duration of the detention.

Fiscal Impact:

- The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) estimates initial General Fund costs of \$1.9 million and ongoing General Fund costs of \$1.8 million thereafter per every 100 CalWORKs families. This includes ongoing costs for grants, employment services, child care services, and includes one-time automation costs of \$126,500.
- Unknown costs to counties for administration. Costs would be potentially reimbursable by the state, subject to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates.

Background: The CalWORKs program provides temporary cash assistance to help low-income families meet their basic needs, such as rent, clothing, utility bills, food, and other items. In addition to cash assistance, adult CalWORKs recipients are provided education and employment and training services designed to help remove barriers to work and promote self-sufficiency. These services are typically outlined in a welfare-to-work plan. CalWORKs program rules include time limits on eligibility, work requirements, and the provision of supportive services, including subsidized child care. Counties are responsible for administering the CalWORKs program at the local level.

The CalWORKs program provides for situations where a child or member of the assistance unit is “temporarily absent” for purposes of maintaining eligibility. During this time, the family remains eligible for cash aid and services. For example, state law provides that a child who is a patient in a public or private hospital for medical or surgical care must be considered temporarily absent from the home for the duration of the hospital stay for purposes of CalWORKs eligibility. Children who are removed through the child welfare system but are receiving family reunification services may be considered temporarily absent. Adults hospitalized for mental health or substance abuse may also be considered temporarily absent.

Proposed Law: Specific provisions of the bill would:

- Require that, for the purposes of determining cash aid for CalWORKs, a child or other member of the assistance unit who is detained in a federal immigration

detention facility must be considered temporarily absent from the home for the duration of the detention; and require that the assistance unit must continue to remain eligible to receive continued assistance and services for this period if both of the following conditions are met:

- The remaining members of the assistance unit continue to meet eligibility requirements.
 - If the member or members are held in detention outside of the state, the detained member or members intend to return to the state once they are released from detention.
- Provide that a sworn statement by the applicant or recipient must be sufficient to establish that a member of the assistance unit has been detained in an immigration detention facility.

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