

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 1969 (Bonta)

As Amended March 26, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Establishes the It Takes a Village Act and creates the California Coordinated Neighborhood and Community Services Grant Program that funds place-based partnerships to coordinate cradle-to-career services, align community resources, and improve outcomes for children and families experiencing intergenerational poverty.

Major Provisions

- 1) Establishes the It Takes a Village Act of 2026 and creates the California Coordinated Neighborhood and Community Services Grant Program to be administered by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) or another department within the California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS), as designated by the Secretary of CalHHS.
- 2) Specifies the purpose of the grant program is to reduce child poverty and advance economic mobility for children and families disproportionately affected by intergenerational poverty by supporting place-based partnerships that align services, address systemic barriers, and improve long-term outcomes through all of the following solutions:
 - a) Increase community health and safety;
 - b) Provide cradle-to-career access to high-quality education and care;
 - c) Connect residents to quality jobs and in-demand occupations;
 - d) Enable family-sustaining income and access to affordable high-quality housing, childcare, and health care, including reproductive, maternal, behavioral, and mental health care;
 - e) Provide high-quality support for high-need populations, such as children with disabilities, children experiencing disparity gaps in school performance based on income or racial or ethnic disaggregation, foster youth, child welfare, and justice-involved youth and young adults;
 - f) Connect individuals to state programs; and,
 - g) Leverage federal, local, and private funding for the place-based partnership.
- 3) Requires grants to be awarded to eligible entities that are place-based partnerships.
- 4) Requires CDSS, in consultation with the California Department of Education (CDE), to develop an application process for eligible entities to apply for the grants.
- 5) Requires CDSS to aim to achieve geographic equity by giving priority to applicants serving remote communities, including rural and tribal communities, through the selection process.

- 6) Requires CDSS, for the 2026-27 and 2027-28 fiscal years, to competitively award grants to place-based partnerships across the state to be expended in accordance with the activities specified in 7) below.
- 7) Requires each implementation grant recipient under this program to use the grant funds for all of the following activities:
 - a) Regional or neighborhood partnership development, which may include all of the following: identifying a community lead organization and building local capacity; convening partner organizations; engaging community residents; and, analyzing existing local data;
 - b) Plan development, which may include all of the following: solidifying partnerships; conducting community asset mapping and a needs assessment; engaging in community-driven planning and prioritization processes; and, developing a plan to implement place-based solutions that address at least two of the purposes of the program; and,
 - c) Implementation, which may include all of the following: launching the approved plan; leveraging additional federal, state, local, or private funding streams; conducting progress monitoring and continuous improvement activities; engaging community residents on an ongoing basis; implementing the cradle-to-career services based on results of the needs analysis described in the application and plans to build system and organizational capacity; and, continuously evaluating the success of the program and improving the program based on data and outcomes.
- 8) Requires grant recipients developing new or expanded longitudinal data systems to coordinate and align their data collection and reporting with the Cradle-to-Career Data System.
- 9) Requires CDSS to establish performance standards to measure progress on indicators and results relevant to the evaluation of the grant program.
- 10) Requires CDE, in consultation with CDSS, to establish a core set of academic results and indicators by which the grant recipients will be measured.
- 11) Requires CDSS to establish a core set of family and community support results and indicators by which the grant recipient will be measured. Requires a grant recipient to choose to measure and report on two or more family and community support results and indicators.
- 12) Requires CDSS, in consultation with CDE, to also establish at least two indicators related to health, social and emotional development, mental health, and wellness. Authorizes a grant recipient to choose to report on additional social or socioemotional indicators, drawn from either of the following: existing surveys, including the California Healthy Kids Survey or the YouthTruth Student Survey; or, other sources, as determined by the eligible entity and their partner agencies.
- 13) Authorizes CDSS to establish other engagement, academic, and social indicators.
- 14) Requires each grant recipient to prepare and submit an annual report to CDSS that includes both of the following:

- a) Information about the number and percentage of children, family members, and community members in the area served by the place-based partnerships who are served by the grant recipient, including a description of the number and percentage of children accessing each of the pipeline services and the number of family and community members served by each program; and,
 - b) Disaggregated data at population and program levels related to the grant recipient's program's success in annual growth along program and project indicators. To the extent feasible, data should be disaggregated by all of the following: gender; major racial and ethnic groups; disability status; economic disadvantage status; and, information relating to the performance metrics.
- 15) Requires the provided data, at a minimum, to meet all of the following requirements and prohibitions:
- a) A program participant identified to share data shall be able to provide their separate and distinct consent to the grant recipient for their provided data to be shared with CDSS for the sole purpose of the evaluation of the grant program;
 - b) The provided data shall not include any personally identifiable information;
 - c) The provided data, with the separate and distinct consent of the grant recipient's program's participants, shall not be shared with any other entity or used for any purpose other than those specified;
 - d) The provided data shall be subject to all applicable privacy laws; and,
 - e) No other data elements shall be collected that significantly differ from the data elements specified and authorized without prior authorization from the Legislature.
- 16) Requires CDSS to enforce data privacy and protection policies with all grant recipients.
- 17) Authorizes CDSS, in consultation with CDE, to establish an appropriate method, process, and structure for grant management, fiscal accountability, payments to grant recipients, and technical assistance and supports for grant recipients that ensure transparency and accountability in the use of state funds. Authorizes CDSS to, at its discretion, contract with one or more entities, including, but not limited to, community development financial intermediaries, state financial entities, or other community-based organizations, for these purposes.
- 18) Exempts, notwithstanding any other law, and to the extent permitted by federal law, funds utilized by grant recipients to provide guaranteed income payments pursuant to this chapter to not be considered as income or assets when determining eligibility and benefit amount for any means-tested program, including, but not limited to, CalWORKs, CalFresh, General Assistance, Medi-Cal, Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment, Adoption Assistance Program, Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants, and any scholarships for public colleges and universities, including, but not limited to, Cal Grant awards, Chafee grant awards, Middle Class Scholarship Program awards, California College Promise Grants, California State University Educational Opportunity Program grants, Community College Extended

Opportunity Programs and Services grants, and grants from the University of California, upon approval by the Regents of the University of California, or California State University.

- 19) Authorizes CDSS, notwithstanding the rulemaking provisions of the Administrative Procedure, in consultation with CDE, to implement, interpret, or make specific this grant program without taking any regulatory action.
- 20) Exempts contracts or grants awarded pursuant to this grant program from the personal services contracting requirements, as specified.
- 21) Exempts contracts or grants awarded pursuant to this grant program from the Public Contract Code and the State Contracting Manual and are not subject to the approval of the California Department of General Services.
- 22) Requires implementation of this grant program to be subject to an appropriation in the annual Budget Act or another statute for the purposes of this program.

COMMENTS

Background: *Poverty in California*. Despite California's large economy and substantial public investments in programs that support families, many children continue to experience poverty or economic hardship. According to the August 2025 Public Policy Institute of California fact sheet, *Poverty in California*,¹ the state's poverty rate increased from 15.2% in 2022 to 16.9% in 2023 under the California Poverty Measure, which accounts for the regional cost of living and the effects of safety-net programs. This represents approximately 6.4 million Californians living below the poverty level. Child poverty rose to 17.6% in 2023, returning to roughly its pre-COVID-19 pandemic level after temporary relief programs expired.

Research shows that poverty can significantly affect children's development and long-term outcomes. Children growing up in low-income households are more likely to experience unstable housing, food insecurity, and limited access to quality early learning opportunities and healthcare, which shape early development.² Economic hardship can also increase stress within families, affecting children's social-emotional development, cognitive growth, and school readiness. These early disparities can contribute to differences in academic achievement, educational attainment, health outcomes and lifetime earnings. Conversely, safety net programs play a significant role in reducing poverty. In 2023, programs such as CalFresh, tax credits, housing subsidies, and school meals kept an estimated 2.6 million Californians, including about one million children, out of poverty.

Federal Promise Neighborhoods. Evidence suggests that coordinated, place-based approaches can improve outcomes for children and families. One example is the federally funded Promise Neighborhoods program,³ launched by the United States Department of Education in 2010 to support cradle-to-career services in high-poverty communities. The program provides competitive planning and implementation grants to nonprofit organizations, higher education institutions, and tribal entities to coordinate education, health, and social services in distressed

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

² <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12448094/>

³ <https://promiseneighborhoods.ed.gov/>

neighborhoods. Since its launch, the program has awarded 46 applicants across at least 30 states and tribal lands. California currently has ten Promise Neighborhood sites located in San Francisco's Mission District, Oakland, Hayward, Los Angeles, Chula Vista, San Diego, Corning, and Klamath River. After federal funding for the program sunset, the Budget Act of 2022 provided a one-time \$12 million appropriation to CDSS to prevent the closure of four existing sites.

California's Existing Efforts to Improve Service Coordination. California has undertaken several initiatives in recent years to improve coordination across programs serving children and families. One key example is the C2C Data System, authorized in 2019 and established in statute through AB 132 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 144, Statutes of 2021. C2C is a statewide longitudinal data system that links existing data across education, workforce, and related systems to provide information that supports student success, informs policymaking, and identifies disparities in outcomes.

The state has also invested in community schools, which operate as neighborhood hubs that integrate education with health, social, and family supports. The California Community Schools Partnership Program, established in 2021, includes \$4.1 billion to expand this model statewide by providing grants to local educational agencies to develop partnerships with community organizations and service providers. Early findings from a December 2025 evaluation report show reductions in chronic absenteeism, increases in credit accrual, and improvements in student outcomes associated with stronger family engagement and community partnerships.⁴ The Governor's January 2026-27 budget proposes \$1 billion in ongoing Proposition 98 funding to sustain the existing 2,500 schools that already received one-time funding and expand the model to 3,700 new schools.

This bill seeks to address child poverty by establishing the California Coordinated Neighborhood and Community Service Grant Program to support place-based partnerships that align services and resources in communities with high levels of need. The grant program aims to strengthen coordination across education, health, workforce, housing, and social service systems, improve access to supports, and promote data-informed decision-making to improve outcomes for children and families.

According to the Author

"A strong understanding of the community and regional context, as well the effective coordination of services and supports aligned with the needs of the community, are essential to achieving better outcomes for children and families at every stage of life – from cradle to career."

"Over the last 10 years, Promise Neighborhoods, Cradle to Career (C2C) networks, and similar entities have worked in disadvantaged communities. Utilizing a place-based, equity-focused approach, these networks coordinate services and supports across the public and private sectors and collect and share data to maximize the efficiency and efficacy of programming. Areas where these networks have operated have seen substantial improvements in healthcare access, literacy,

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and college and career readiness, as well as reduced child welfare and juvenile justice involvement. To scale these proven cradle to career solutions, the state must invest in the "It Takes A Village" strategy. "

"[This bill] will establish a California Coordinated Neighborhood and Community Services grant program to fund the implementation of new, and strengthen existing, neighborhood and regional cradle to career (C2C) networks. By ensuring coordinated investments in services and supports, this bill will expand California's capacity to challenge poverty, address disparities, and provide support for children and their families from cradle to career."

Arguments in Support

According to California Cradle to Career Coalition and End Child Poverty California powered by GRACE, "Communities across the state are urgently seeking stronger local coordination and more effective delivery of social benefits, particularly amid increasing federal instability. This proven model implements state priorities at the neighborhood level, strengthening access to essential benefits, and building long-term economic mobility. This framework provides the collective-impact infrastructure necessary to protect children and families from the consequences of federal actions, including nearly one million CalFresh households losing food benefits, 1.5 million to two million Medi-Cal households losing access to healthcare, and heightened pressures on immigrant communities."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee on April 15, 2026:

- 1) General Fund (GF) cost pressures of an unknown amount, likely in the high tens of millions to low hundreds of millions of dollars, over two years to fund the competitive grants. The exact cost will depend on the number and dollar amount of the grants, which the bill does not specify.
- 2) CDSS estimates GF costs of approximately \$1 million to \$3 million, over three years for consultant costs, and additional costs, likely in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, for one staff position to implement the program.
- 3) Estimated GF costs to CDE of an unknown amount, likely in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, for two years to establish performance standards, among other tasks.

The author is requesting \$200 million in one-time funding in the 2026-27 budget in support of this bill.

Specifically, the author is requesting \$17.5 million to reestablish state funding that sunset at the end of fiscal year 2024-25, to sustain the state's existing place-based programs. The remainder of the funding would be used to expand the state's Promise Neighborhoods and Regional Partnership model statewide and to sustain CDSS' oversight, data, and evaluation infrastructure

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.

VOTES

ASM HUMAN SERVICES: 5-2-0

YES: Lee, Gipson, Elhawary, Jackson, Solache

NO: Castillo, Tangipa

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-4-0

YES: Wicks, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache

NO: Hoover, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

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