

Date of Hearing: April 29, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1996 (Bonta) – As Introduced February 17, 2026

Policy Committee: Human Services

Vote: 7 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill establishes the California Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council (Council) to develop and publish a plan to reduce child poverty by 50% within 10 years and to evaluate the impacts of state budgets, legislation, and policies on children and families.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Establishes the Council within the California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS) and requires the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to staff and administer the Council.
- 2) Requires the Council to convene no later than April 1, 2027, be cochaired by the Secretary of CalHHS and the Director of CDSS or their designees, and be comprised of 18 council members, with 14 appointed by the Governor, as specified, and two each appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.
- 3) Requires members of the Council to serve without compensation except for reimbursement of reasonable travel expenses.
- 4) Requires the Council, among other requirements, to (a) develop and publish a comprehensive plan with annual benchmarks to reduce statewide child poverty by 50% within 10 years; (b) evaluate the impacts of policy proposals, as specified; (c) submit an analysis of proposed budget provisions expected to affect child poverty and child well-being within 10 days of the release of both the Governor's annual budget proposal and the May revision; and (d) review major changes to the state budget for potential impacts on children and families within 90 days of the enactment of the annual Budget Act.
- 5) Requires the Council to submit to the Legislature an initial report by July 1, 2027, comprehensive recommendations by January 1, 2028, and a progress report every two years, beginning July 1, 2029.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) CDSS estimates, beginning April 1, 2027, ongoing General Fund (GF) costs of an unknown amount, but likely in the mid-hundreds of thousands to low millions of dollars annually for three to seven full-time staff positions to staff and administer to Council, including providing

research, evaluation, and impact assessments, and supporting the logistics of four annual public hearings.

- 2) Additional GF costs of an unknown amount to provide travel reimbursement to Council members. For context, if each of the 20 Council members received \$100 for each of four public hearings, annual costs would be \$8,000.

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:

While California has demonstrated that targeted investments can reduce child poverty, the state currently lacks a coordinated structure to sustain and build on that progress. [This bill] addresses this gap by establishing a Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council to promote accountability, align policy efforts, and ensure that the needs of children and families remain central in budget and legislative decisions. By setting a clear goal of reducing child poverty by 50 percent over the next 10 years, this bill advances an equity-driven, data-informed approach to improving outcomes for children statewide.

- 2) **Background.** Research shows poverty can significantly affect a child's development and long-term outcomes. 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. Research also shows safety net programs play a significant role in reducing poverty.

California administers a number of federal public assistance programs to address poverty, including CalFresh (food assistance), the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program, and Medi-Cal. California also has various state programs aimed at reducing child poverty through income supports, nutrition assistance, and early childhood programs, including tax credits such as the California Earned Income Tax Credit (CalEIT) and the Young Child Tax Credit, access to subsidized childcare and preschool, and access to food assistance for immigrants, among others.

AB 1520 (Burke), Chapter 415, Statutes of 2017, established the Lifting Children and Families Out of Poverty Task Force, for purposes of eliminating deep child poverty and reducing the overall child poverty rate in the state by 50% by FY 2039-40. AB 1520 required CDSS to convene the task force and submit a final report by November 1, 2018. The final report outlined priority recommendations, comprehensive recommendations, and cost estimates and projected economic benefits. The Task Force's work laid the foundation for California's current child poverty reduction framework, with ongoing monitoring and legislative review every two years.

Child advocates assert this bill fills a critical gap by creating an ongoing body responsible for accountability, coordination, and evidence-based policymaking to build on that progress.

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