

THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 1996
Author: Bonta (D), et al.
Amended: 8/13/26 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE: 4-0, 6/15/26

AYES: Becker, Ochoa Bogh, Laird, Pérez

NO VOTE RECORDED: Weber Pierson

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/13/26

AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 72-0, 5/21/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: California Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council

SOURCE: Grace INC

DIGEST: This bill establishes the California Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council and requires the council to create benchmarks and metrics that measure California's progress toward reducing child poverty by 50% in 10 years.

ANALYSIS:

Existing Law:

- 1) Establishes, in federal law, the Promise Neighborhood program, which provides grants to nonprofit organizations, tribal organizations, or institutions of higher education, which, together with partners, develop and implement plans to significantly improve outcomes of children living in a given neighborhood. (20 United States Code section 7274)
- 2) Establishes the "California Cradle-to-Career Data Systems Act," which expresses legislative intent to build a data system that services students and families by identifying and tracking predictive indicators to enable parents,

teachers, health and human services providers, and policymakers to provide appropriate interventions and supports to address disparities in opportunities and improve outcomes for all students. (Education Code section 10850 et seq.)

- 3) Establishes the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program to provide cash assistance and other social services for low-income families through the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Under CalWORKs, each county provides assistance through a combination of state, county, and federal TANF funds. (Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) 11200 et seq.)
- 4) Establishes the CalFresh program to administer the provision of federal SNAP benefits to families and individuals meeting specified criteria. (WIC section 18900 et seq.)
- 5) Requires the Governor to create an Interagency Council on Homelessness. (WIC section 8257 et seq.)
- 6) Makes findings and declarations establishing the Homeless Youth Act of 2018 to improve prevention and early intervention services for youth at risk of experiencing homelessness and increase access to services for youth experiencing homelessness. (WIC section 8259)
- 7) Requires CDSS to work with the State Department of Education to maximize participation in the federal Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer for Children program (WIC section 18901.57)
- 8) Requires public assistance program recipients to be supplied with information regarding their potential eligibility for the federal and California Earned Income Tax Credit, Young Child Tax Credit and Foster Youth Tax Credit. (Revenue and Taxation Code section 19854)

This bill:

- 1) Makes findings and declarations about the impact of child poverty and the intent of the Legislature to reduce child poverty by 50% within 10 years.
- 2) Establishes the California Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council (Council) within the California Department of Social Services.
- 3) Requires CDSS to provide staff for and administer the Council.

- 4) Requires the Council to convene no later than April 1, 2027.
- 5) Requires CDSS to assist the task force in carrying out its duties to the extent funding is available.
- 6) Requires the Council to be co-chaired by both the Secretary of California Health and Human Services or their designee and the Director of Social Services or their designee.
- 7) Requires the Council to be made up of 19 members, as follows:
 - a) Fifteen members appointed by the Governor including executive-level representatives from each of the following:
 - i) CDSS.
 - ii) The State Department of Health Care Services.
 - iii) The State Department of Education.
 - iv) The State Board of Education.
 - v) The State Department of Finance.
 - vi) The California Interagency Council on Homelessness.
 - vii) The California Cradle-to-Career Data System.
 - viii) A county organization focused on ending child poverty, including, but not limited to, the First 5 Association of California or a County Children's Cabinet.
 - ix) A county or regional human services agency.
 - x) A statewide nonprofit focused on ending child poverty.
 - xi) A California Promise Neighborhood or similar place-based initiative.
 - xii) An organization representing immigrant families.
 - b) Two individuals with lived experience of child or family poverty.
 - c) One youth representative who is 16 to 25 years of age, inclusive.
 - d) Two members appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly.

- e) Two members appointed by the President pro Tempore of the Senate.
- 8) Requires members of the Council to serve without compensation except for reimbursement of reasonable travel expenses.
- 9) States that a vacancy occurs upon the resignation, death, removal, or failure of a member to attend three consecutive meetings without good cause.
- 10) Permits an appointing authority to remove a member for misconduct, neglect of duty, chronic nonattendance, change of employment, conflict of interest, or conduct inconsistent with the mission of the council and requires the vacancy to be filled by the original appointing authority within 60 days.
- 11) Prohibits a vacant seat from counting toward a quorum.
- 12) Requires the Council to determine where there is overlap of existing child poverty reduction or child welfare commissions and reports and develop a comprehensive plan for reducing redundancy. The plan shall include annual benchmarks to reduce statewide child poverty by 50% within 10 years.
- 13) Requires the Council to determine considerations to evaluate whether a policy proposal, budget provisions, or pending legislation increases or decreases child poverty. Policy proposals include, but are not limited to, expansion of refundable tax credits, guaranteed income or cash plus supports, affordable and subsidized childcare, housing and homelessness prevention, nutrition programs, behavioral health supports, workforce, and living wage pathways.
- 14) Requires the Council to determine considerations to evaluate whether a policy proposal, budget provision, or pending legislation increases or decreases administrative burdens for families with children.
- 15) Requires the Council to, at least once per year, apply the considerations to at least one policy proposal budget provision, or pending piece of legislation that requires interagency or multiagency collaboration.
- 16) Requires the Council to post the application of the considerations required by the preceding point on a platform of its choosing.
- 17) Allow the Council to apply the considerations to other relevant policy proposals, budget provisions, and pending pieces of legislation. The council may post the application of considerations on a platform of its choosing, including an existing department internet website.

- 18) Requires the Council to, at least once per year, apply the considerations to least one interagency or multiagency state program or administrative process that can be modified to reduce barriers to access and improve equity for children and families.
- 19) Requires the Council to post the application of the considerations required by the preceding point on a platform of its choosing.
- 20) Allow the Council to apply the considerations to other state programs or administrative processes. The council may post the application of considerations on a platform of its choosing, including an existing department internet website.
- 21) Requires the Council to meet at least quarterly.
- 22) Requires the Council to submit both of the following reports to the Legislature:
 - a) Comprehensive recommendations by March 1, 2028.
 - b) A progress report by January 1, 2030.
- 23) Requires all the reports listed above to be submitted in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code.
- 24) Makes the bill inoperative on July 1, 2030 and repealed as of January 1, 2031.

Background

According to the author, “AB 1996 is grounded in the principle that every child in California deserves to grow up with stability, dignity, and access to the resources necessary to thrive. Yet today, nearly one in five children lives in a household struggling to afford basic necessities like housing, food, and healthcare—placing immense strain on families and limiting opportunities for youth through no fault of their own. As pandemic-era supports have expired and federal cuts loom, families are being asked to do more with less, and the consequences are immediate and real.

“The impacts are visible every day: missed meals, delayed care, preventable health inequities, and chronic stress that disproportionately burden communities already facing systemic barriers. 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. AB 1996 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.”

California’s Safety Net. The majority of California’s safety net programs have stringent and unique eligibility criteria with different application and access points, which make programs difficult to navigate and attain for families who need support, especially when compounded with the chronic stress of living in poverty.¹ This bill will require the Council to consider whether policy proposals increase or decrease these types of administrative burdens for families with children.

Lifting Children and Families out of Poverty Task Force. AB 1520 (Burke, Chapter 415, Statutes of 2017) created the Lifting Children and Families out of Poverty Task Force (Task Force) to identify comprehensive strategies aimed at addressing deep childhood poverty and reducing child poverty in California. As a part of this effort, the Task Force examined strategies to better coordinate services, noting that families in poverty often have an array of service needs, but linking families with support services can be challenging due to disparate eligibility rules across programs and families’ lack of time to find and apply for services they could be eligible for. The Task Force drew from the research support of Goldman School of Public Policy, University of California, Berkeley, and Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality as well as state departments and stakeholders. It also convened meetings, discussions, and subcommittees that created a list of recommendations to reduce child poverty by 50%. The final Task Force report, the End Child Poverty Plan, was published in 2018 and notes that:

Recommendations to address both immediate and long-term needs include increased tax credits, larger CalWORKs grants, expanded Medi-Cal eligibility and more child care and early education access. The Task Force reported that the phase-in of their recommendations would cost \$1.4 billion in 2019–20, \$3.5 billion in 2020–21, and \$5.6 billion in 2021–22 but would ultimately create \$12 billion in benefits to state and local government as children exit poverty and become successful adults. According to the End Child Poverty California coalition, 41 of the 43 recommendations have now been partially or fully implemented. It should be noted that these estimates are based on the Medi-Cal and CalFresh program before changes in federal law made by H.R. 1 (Public Law 119-21), which will make it harder for families to remain eligible for these programs.

¹ Francis, L., DePriest, K., Wilson, M., & Gross, D. Child Poverty, Toxic Stress, and Social Determinants of Health: Screening and Care Coordination. Online journal of issues in nursing, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.3912/OJIN.Vol23No03Man02>

This bill creates a Council that would have a similar mission to the Task Force but be a permanent entity housed in the Health and Human Services Agency. It will also create considerations that can be used to determine whether a policy proposal will increase or decrease childhood poverty and the administrative burden on families in poverty.

Federal Promise Neighborhoods. One recommendation of the Task Force was to create 20 new Promise Neighborhoods throughout California. Promise Neighborhoods are a federally funded effort to provide holistic, place-based approaches to reducing poverty and improving economic, social, and academic outcomes in disadvantaged communities. According to the Lifting Children and Families out of Poverty Task Force, “Promise Neighborhoods tailor their specific set of cradle-to-college-and-career solutions to the local context, but each share the following characteristics: results-driven focus on impacting population-level results; place-based to focus on a specific high-need geography; collective impact is achieved through partnerships; [...] and most importantly, Promise Neighborhoods implement a comprehensive cradle-to-college-and-career continuum that addresses all of a family’s needs to help them move out of poverty.” Additionally, the Task Force noted that the model is community-powered, relies on both public and private investments, and is equity-focused.² This bill includes representatives from Promise Neighborhoods on the Council.

Related/Prior Legislation:

AB 1969 (Bonta, 2026) would establish the It Takes a Village Act of 2026 which creates the California Coordinated Neighborhood and Community Services Grant Program to be administered by CDSS or another department within the California Health and Human Services Agency, as designated by the Secretary of California Health and Human Services. AB 1969 is pending on the Senate Floor.

AB 132 (Committee on Budget, Chapter 144, Statutes of 2021) establishes the Cradle-to-Career Data System to link data on student progress through education, workforce training, employment, health and social services; establishes a governing board comprised of 21 members; and, establishes the Office of Cradle-to-Career Data within Government Operations Agency until July 1, 2026, among other things.

² *ibid*

AB 1520 (Burke, Chapter 415, Statutes of 2017) created the Lifting Children and Families out of Poverty Task Force to identify comprehensive strategies aimed at addressing deep childhood poverty and reducing child poverty in California.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

Unknown ongoing General Fund costs, likely hundreds of thousands, to support the council.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/14/26)

Grace INC (source)

California Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

California Coalition for Youth

California Family Resource Association

Child Abuse Prevention Center and its Affiliates Safe Kids California, Prevent

Child Abuse California and the California Family Resource Association; the

County Welfare Directors Association of California

First 5 Association of California

Los Angeles County

Mission Economic Development Agency (MEDA)

Oakland Unified School District

Silicon Valley Community Foundation

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/14/26)

None received

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 72-0, 5/21/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-

Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo,

Castillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong,

Gabriel, Gallagher, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney,

Harabedian, Hart, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lee, Lowenthal,

Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel,

Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez,

Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache,

Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Arambula, Chen, Garcia, Hoover, Lackey, Ramos,

Celeste Rodriguez, Wilson

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**** **END** ****