CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS
AB 1996 (Bonta)
As Amended August 13, 2026
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Establishes the California Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council (Council) within the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) 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.

Senate Amendments

1) Change the location of the Council to CDSS.

2) Add members to the Council."

3) Make the Council temporary by adding a July 1, 2030, sunset date for the Council.

4) Remove requirements for multiple reports and instead only require one report by January 1, 2030, and recommendations by March 1, 2028.

5) Remove Council requirements to analyze proposed budget provisions expected to affect child poverty and child well-being within 10 days of the Governor's annual budget and the May revision, 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, and analyze pending legislation for impacts on children upon request of the council chairs, the Governor, the Speaker of the Assembly, or the President pro Tempore of the Senate, or by majority vote of the council.

6) Add Council requirements as follows:

   a) Determine considerations to evaluate whether a policy proposal, budget provisions, or pending legislation increases or decreases child poverty.

   b) Determine considerations to evaluate whether a policy proposal, budget provisions, or pending legislation increases or decreases administrative burdens for families with children.

   c) Meet quarterly instead of holding at least four regional public hearings, including hearings during nontraditional hours to maximize participation by working families.

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

[1] https://www.ppic.org/publication/poverty-in-california/

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 from 15.2% in 2022 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. Without safety nets, poverty would be even higher, especially among children.

Reducing Child Poverty. California administers a number of public assistance programs to uplift those out of poverty. Many of those programs are federally funded, housed within CDSS and administered by counties, including CalFresh, California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids, and Medi-Cal. Each county works to determine eligibility under federal and state standards and then helps disburse aid to recipients. In addition to core federal programs, California 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 and Young Child Tax Credit, access to subsidized childcare and preschool, and access to food assistance for immigrants, among others.

Impacts of H.R. 1 on Child Poverty. On July 1, 2025, H.R. 1 was signed into law, which is expected to significantly affect children in families receiving public benefits by reducing eligibility, lowering benefit levels, and increasing administrative barriers across key safety net programs. Specifically, H.R. 1 includes substantial cuts to the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which provides food assistance benefits to low-income families. It introduced stricter work requirements and eliminated eligibility for certain lawfully present immigrants. These changes may result in reduced or terminated benefits for households with children and are projected to decrease SNAP participation, with estimates indicating that households with approximately 500,000 children could see benefit reductions of about $100 per month and that up to 1.3 million individuals, including children, could lose assistance.[3]

Other changes in H.R. 1 include cuts to Medicaid and restrictions on refundable tax credits, which are expected to increase the number of children facing barriers to health coverage and income supports, compounding economic instability for low-income families. Because participation in SNAP and Medicaid is a pathway for automatic enrollment in free or reduced-price school meals, reductions in program eligibility are expected to decrease the number of children who qualify for school nutrition programs, potentially disrupting access to consistent

[2] https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12448094/
[3] https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-budget/2025-budget-impacts-house-bill-would-cut-assistance-for-children-raise

meals during the school year and summer months.[4] These changes are expected to increase food insecurity, reduce access to essential services, and place additional fiscal and administrative pressure on states, which may further constrain their ability to maintain or expand programs that support children and families.

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

According to the Author
"[This bill] 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. [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 % over the next 10 years, this bill advances an equity-driven, data-informed approach to improving outcomes for children statewide."

Arguments in Support
End Child Poverty California powered by GRAC writes that, "California must not lose sight of its moral compass and north star agenda to end child poverty across the state. California must continue to utilize a data-driven approach to smart, effective policy development and evaluation. AB 1996 will put us back on a pathway to tracking our progress on ending child poverty."

Arguments in Opposition
None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations on June 26, 2026, "Unknown ongoing General Fund costs, likely hundreds of thousands, to support the council."

VOTES:

ASM HUMAN SERVICES: 7-0-0
YES: Lee, Castillo, Calderon, Elhawary, Jackson, Solache, Tangipa

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[4] https://schoolnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/TAM-25-SNA-BBB-Bill-Summary.pdf

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0
YES: Wicks, Hoover, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 72-0-8
YES: 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
ABS, ABST OR NV: Arambula, Chen, Garcia, Hoover, Lackey, Ramos, Celeste Rodriguez, Wilson

UPDATED

VERSION: June 10, 2026

CONSULTANT: Bri-Ann Hernandez-Mengual / HUM. S. / (916) 319-2089   FN: 0004084