

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 2510 (Arambula)

As Amended August 20, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Clarifies that eligibility for the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) beneficiaries can still receive benefits if a child is removed from the home even if other children remain in the home, if they are otherwise still eligible.

Senate Amendments

- 1) Remove the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) reporting requirements on the readiness of the Statewide Automated Welfare System.
- 2) Allow CDSS to interpret or make specific provisions of this bill via an all-county letter, which is exempt from the Office of Administrative Law.
- 3) Clarify that for families where the children have been placed with the former noncustodial parent, but reunification is recommended for the former custodial parent, the custodial parent is eligible to receive family reunification aid.
- 4) Repeal welfare-to-work requirements for those participating in CalWORKs family reunification services.

COMMENTS

Background: California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids. CalWORKs, the state's largest anti-poverty program, provides temporary cash assistance aimed at moving children out of poverty and helping qualified low-income families meet their basic needs, such as rent, clothing, utility bills, food, and other items needed to ensure children are cared for at home and safely remain with their families. In addition to cash assistance, adult CalWORKs recipients are provided education, employment, and training services designed to help remove barriers to work and promote self-sufficiency.

Child Welfare Services.(CWS) California's CWS system plays a vital role in the state's safety net. Social workers across counties receive reports of abuse or neglect, investigate these concerns, and work to address them. Children who have been removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect fall under the jurisdiction of the county's juvenile dependency court. While the court maintains legal authority over the child, the CWS social worker is responsible for supporting the child's well-being.

The primary goal of the system is to ensure the safety and protection of children, while also striving to preserve and strengthen families through visitation and efforts at family reunification when possible. The CWS system allows for regular evaluations and reviews of the child's custody and placement, with decisions made in consultation with the child's social worker to ensure the best outcomes for the child. The state prioritizes the reunification of foster children with their biological families whenever feasible. When reunification is not possible, the state aims to provide a permanent alternative placement, such as adoption or guardianship, with a secondary priority of placing the child with relatives or nonrelative extended family members.

Using California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids to Reunite Families in the CWS System. Most counties report a significant number of children and families involved in both CalWORKs and the CWS system. Under such circumstances, parents or caretakers must navigate between the two systems, which often have conflicting requirements and timeframes.

AB 429 (Aronor), Chapter 111, Statutes of 2001, allowed for the continuation of CalWORKs services only for the parents of children who have been removed from the home and are receiving out-of-home care when a county welfare department or a court recommends family reunification services only.

Effective January 1, 2025, AB 135 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 85, Statutes of 2021, expanded upon AB 429 and now allows for cash aid, childcare, and reunification services to families participating in the CalWORKs family reunification program as part of their reunification plan for up to six full months, provided all other eligibility criteria are met.

The general premise of this program is to help families reunify rather than continue separation which is both harmful to the child and more costly to the state.

To be eligible, all participants who were members of the CalWORKs family when the CalWORKs-eligible child(ren) was removed from the home are eligible for the CalWORKs cash aid, childcare, and/or reunification services for up to six full months when all of the following conditions apply:

- 1) All CalWORKs-eligible children were removed from the home and temporarily placed in out-of-home care by the county welfare department or a court;
- 2) The family was receiving CalWORKs cash aid when all CalWORKs-eligible children were removed from the home; and,
- 3) The county welfare department or a court has determined that CalWORKs reunification program cash aid, childcare, and/or services are necessary for reunification, and a reunification plan is in effect or being developed.¹

This bill would clarify that not all children in the home need to be taken away in order to be eligible, and that if only some of the children were reunified, the family remains eligible.

Equity Implications: Reducing cash aid to CalWORKs families while their children are in foster care can further destabilize the family and hinder their ability to successfully reunify. Family reunification is considered to be one of the ultimate goals of the CWS system, when reunification is considered a safe and appropriate outcome. *This bill* seeks to clarify the provisions of the CalWORKs family reunification program to allow for maximum usage.

According to the Author

"Family reunification is often in the best interest of children and their families. When children are placed in foster care, parents must meet a variety of requirements in order to reunify, including maintaining stable housing, employment, and access to supportive services. CalWORKs Family Reunification assistance was created to help stabilize families during this

¹ <https://cdss.ca.gov/Portals/9/Additional-Resources/Letters-and-Notices/ACLs/2025/25-05.pdf?ver=t95-5SCcYoYyUior45ueSQ%3d%3d>

critical period by providing temporary cash aid and services when they are necessary to support reunification.

"Unfortunately, guidance issued by the California Department of Social Services has restricted eligibility for this assistance in ways that are inconsistent with legislative intent. Current administrative interpretation requires that all CalWORKs-eligible children be removed from the home for a family to qualify and ends assistance if any eligible child joins the household. These restrictions can undermine family stability and make it more difficult for parents to meet reunification requirements.

"[This bill] clarifies the law to ensure families can receive CalWORKs Family Reunification assistance when children are temporarily absent due to foster care placement, even if other children remain in or return to the home. By removing unnecessary barriers to assistance, the bill will help promote family stability, supports successful reunification, and ensures the program operates as the Legislature originally intended."

Arguments in Support

According the Reimagine CalWORKs coalition, "AB 2510 helps to fulfill the State's goal of reunifying CalWORKs families with their children by removing unnecessary barriers. These changes are necessary to fulfil the intent of the original law and will help to support these vulnerable families and help make them whole."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations on July 31, 3026: "CDSS estimates an initial General Fund cost of \$2 million and annual ongoing General Fund costs of \$1.6 million for CalWORKs grants that will be maintained for families even after placing the child with child welfare services and for removing penalties related to immunization requirements. These costs also include a one-time automation cost of \$805,000 for the California Statewide Automated Welfare System (CalSAWS). Unknown costs to counties for administration. Costs to counties would be potentially reimbursable by the state, subject to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates."

VOTES:

ASM HUMAN SERVICES: 5-0-2

YES: Lee, Calderon, Elhawary, Jackson, Solache

ABS, ABST OR NV: Castillo, Tangipa

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-0-4

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

ABS, ABST OR NV: Hoover, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 59-7-14

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Connolly, Elhawary, Fong, Gabriel, Garcia, Gipson, Mark González, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lee, Lowenthal, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Valencia, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO: DeMaio, Dixon, Ellis, Gallagher, Hadwick, Macedo, Sanchez

ABS, ABST OR NV: Alanis, Castillo, Chen, Davies, Flora, Jeff Gonzalez, Hoover, Johnson, Lackey, Patterson, Celeste Rodriguez, Ta, Tangipa, Wallis

UPDATED

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