SENATE RULES COMMITTEE SB 1030
Office of Senate Floor Analyses
(916) 651-4171

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Bill No: SB 1030
Author: Smallwood-Cuevas (D), et al.
Amended: 8/13/26
Vote: 21

SENATE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE: 5-0, 4/6/26
AYES: Becker, Ochoa Bogh, Laird, Pérez, Weber Pierson

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 5/14/26
AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

SENATE FLOOR: 38-0, 5/20/26
AYES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener
NO VOTE RECORDED: Becker, Grove

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 77-0, 8/19/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: CalWORKs: unrelated adult male

SOURCE: Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations; Western Center on law and Poverty

---

DIGEST: This bill removes the statute that requires an unrelated adult male who lives in a household that is receiving aid from the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids program (CalWORKs) to contribute financially to the family on July 1, 2027 or when the necessary automation can be performed.

Assembly Amendments delays the repeal to July 1, 2027 or the date that the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has notified the Legislature that the Statewide Automated Welfare System can perform the necessary automation to implement the repeal. Amendments also allow implementation by all county letters until regulations are adopted.

ANALYSIS:

Existing federal law:

1) Establishes the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, which provides block grants to states to develop and implement their own state welfare-to-work programs which provide cash assistance and other support and services to low-income families. (42 United States Code [U.S.C.] §601 et seq.)

2) Finds that the increase in the number of children receiving public assistance is closely related to the increase in births to unmarried women and that the increase in out-of-wedlock pregnancies is a national crisis, and states therefore it is the sense of Congress that prevention of out-of-wedlock pregnancy and reduction in out-of-wedlock birth are very important Government interests and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 is meant to address that crisis. (42 U.S.C. §601(a))

3) Describes the criteria to determine whether a child has been deprived of parental support thereby qualifying them for aid. Prohibits states from finding ineligibility solely based on the presence of a "substitute parent" or "man-in-the-house". (45 Code of Federal Regulations §233.90(a))

Existing state law:

1) Establishes the CalWORKs program to provide cash assistance and other social services for low-income families through the federal 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.)

2) Defines a "needy child" to be a person under 18 years old who has been deprived of parental support or care due to: (a) the death, physical or mental incapacity, or incarceration of a parent, (b) the unemployment of a parent or parents, or (c) continued absence of a parent from the home due to divorce, separation, desertion, or any other reason. (WIC §11202)

3) Establishes the income, asset, and real property limits used to determine eligibility for the CalWORKs program, and CalWORKs grant amounts, based

on family size and county of residence. (WIC §§11150 to 11160; §11450 et seq.)

4) Requires every CalWORKs beneficiary to participate in welfare-to-work activities in order to be eligible for CalWORKs aid, unless they are exempt, as specified. (WIC §11320.3)

5) Establishes the number of weekly hours of welfare-to-work participation necessary to remain eligible for aid, including requirements for an unemployed parent in a two-parent assistance unit, as specified. (WIC §11322.8)

6) Requires an unrelated adult male who lives with a family that is receiving aid from CalWORKs to contribute financially at least as much as it would cost him to provide for himself in an independent living arrangement. Counties are required to determine the minimum financial contribution to the family using regulations set by the CDSS. Those regulations should include requirements that the mother of the children and unrelated male provide all information about household expenses and create an agreement about shared expenses. The agreement must be signed by the mother of the children and unrelated male under penalty of perjury. If either the mother or unrelated male willfully and knowingly violate the agreement the family may lose CalWORKs aid. (WIC §11351.5)

This bill:

1) Repeals the statute that requires an unrelated adult male who lives with a family that is receiving aid from CalWORKs to contribute financially to the family and report their income and contribution on July 1, 2027 or the date that the CDSS has notified the Legislature that the Statewide Automated Welfare System can perform the necessary automation to implement the repeal.

2) Provides that no continuous appropriation shall be made to implement the statute.

3) Allows CDSS to implement this bill through all- county letters or other written instructions until regulations are created.

Comments

According to the author, “The inclusion of the unrelated adult male rule in California’s welfare program reflects a broader legacy of punitive policy design that has disproportionately harmed families of color. Policies structured around work requirements, time limits, and restrictive household composition rules trace back to stereotypes that cast Black and Brown mothers and caregivers as suspect, irresponsible, or undeserving. These frameworks reinforce stigma rather than address the structural barriers to economic security that communities of color face, including wage inequities, housing instability, and systemic discrimination.

"SB 1030 is an important step toward dismantling elements of welfare policy that echo this racist legacy and replacing them with policies grounded in dignity, equity, and evidence. By eliminating harmful and outdated barriers, SB 1030 moves California closer to a safety net that truly supports family stability and economic mobility. It represents a commitment to designing a system that supports families equitably and improves economic stability for all children and caregivers."

California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs). As California's version of the federal TANF program, CalWORKs is the state's largest anti-poverty program. CalWORKs 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.

CalWORKs services and requirements are typically outlined in a welfare-to-work plan. Welfare-to-work plans are documents that describe the work activities an adult must participate in for the family to receive aid. The plan also describes the support services they will receive to ensure they can fulfill their work requirements. Work activities can include employment, education, job skills training, and/or vocational education, work study on college campuses, on-the-job training, community service, job retention services, or activities to address or remove barriers like mental health, substance use disorder, and domestic abuse. An adult in a one-parent household must work 30 hours per week each month (or 20 hours per week if they have a child under six years old) in order to remain eligible for aid. In two-parent households, one or both adults must participate for a combined 35 hours per week.

Eligibility for CalWORKs is based on family size, income level, and region and tied to the needs of the children in the home. Families must show economic hardship through income and asset tests and participation in the program is also time limited. Family size and income are based on CDSS procedures that county eligibility workers use to establish who is living in the home, including adults unrelated to the children, and the income of those adults, and whether enough of that income is available to support those children.

Adults receiving aid are only allowed to use CalWORKs for 60 months in their lifetime. Children of adults who receive cash aid can continue to receive benefits until they are 18 years old in California. However, families can have cash aid temporarily cut through "sanctions" for not complying with certain required elements of CalWORKs or their welfare-to-work- plan.

Welfare Reform. In 1996, the federal government made a number of changes to the Aid to Families with Dependent Children welfare program. The reform bill was called the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. The bill came in response to concerns that the number of families relying on welfare was growing too quickly due to an increase in single mothers. The program was renamed the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program and included major changes like being funded as a block grant to states with a capped amount instead of an entitlement guaranteed by the federal government. The program also emphasized two-parent families and proponents often referenced the stereotype of the "welfare queen" and a lack of men acting as breadwinners as why reforms were needed.

Those assertions were debunked by academics and antipoverty advocates as often based on racist, sexist, and homophobic stereotypes. The "welfare queen" stereotype is based on a story from the Chicago Tribune in 1974 about Linda Taylor that was retold by President Ronald Regan when he was campaigning for president. She had been investigated for multiple more serious crimes like insurance fraud, kidnapping, and murder but also convicted of committing $8000 worth of welfare fraud. When the story was retold during the campaign he focused only on welfare fraud, saying she was using welfare, food aid, and veterans benefits to make $150,000 a year.[1] Taylor was seen as the rule, not the exception, to how women in welfare programs behaved. The story aligned with a larger narrative**.** According to one article, "even when the [Aid to Families with Dependent Children] program was at its largest, no more than 6 percent of Americans received cash welfare, so most people weren't actually affected by the changes within the program. Their image of welfare was less about the changing contours of the actual program than about longstanding stereotypes of the *lazy poor* [emphasis added] that have existed in one form or another—think of the so-

[1] Levin, Josh. "The Welfare Queen." Slate. December 19, 2013. www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/history/2013/12/linda_taylor_welfare_queen_ronald_reagan_made_her_a_notorious_american_villain.html

called welfare queen—since long before welfare became a big political issue in the 1980s.” [2]

This bill will strike the statute that assumes facts about the contributions of a person living in a household based only on gender, relationship status, and sexual orientation.

King v. Smith, 392 U.S. 309 (1968) and Lewis v. Martin, 397 U.S. 552 (1970). Even before welfare reform, under Aid to Families with Dependent Children, California had a regulation that assumed the income of stepfathers or non- parent men living in a house is available to the children of the house as did many other states. This would affect the household’s eligibility for and level of assistance. Two United States Supreme Court cases, *King v. Smith* and *Lewis v. Martin*, challenged the assumption that the income of stepfathers or a man assuming the role of a spouse (now known as the unrelated adult male) is available to children when determining the amount of CalWORKs aid they are eligible to receive.

In *King v. Smith*, the Supreme Court held that Alabama’s substitute father regulation was invalid because it defines “parent” in a manner that is inconsistent with section 406(a) of the Social Security Act. In *Lewis v. Martin*, the Supreme Court held that the income of a nonadoptive stepfather or man not married to the mother of the children in the household cannot be treated as available countable income unless there is proof that he is contributing by stating, “California may not consider the child’s ‘resources’ to include either the income of a nonadopting stepfather who is not legally obligated to support the child as is a natural parent or the income of a MARS [man assuming role of spouse]” This was based on a federal statute that says only the income and resources of the parent is considered available for children and used to establish eligibility and assistance levels unless there is proof otherwise.

California passed a law in 1969 that changes the unrelated adult male statute to remove the assumption that the income of the unrelated adult male is available but still required the man to financially contribute to the family at least as much as it would require him to support himself and to report that information. While the reported income doesn’t automatically count as income available to a child, failure to report any income could lead to sanctions on aid for the family. This occurs even though that person has no legal obligation to financially support the children at the time of reporting or in the future. That statute has remained unchanged since 1969 through the major changes created by the Personal Responsibility and Work

[2] daily.jstor.org/why-welfare-reform-didnt-end-welfare-stigma/

Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 and state regulatory changes that modernize eligibility determinations.

Today, households with an unrelated adult male living in the household need to submit an additional form, the Statement of Cash Aid Mother and Unrelated Adult Male (CW 71), that households with unrelated adult women, grandparents or adult siblings of the parent do not. Households with unrelated adult males must also abide by the shared financial responsibilities stated on the form or they could be vulnerable to sanctions. According to CDSS, as of April 2023, 19,950 CalWORKs households contained an unrelated adult male, approximately 6% of CalWORKs households.

This bill removes the statute that requires financial contributions, reporting, and related sanctions for CalWORKs families with an unrelated adult male in the home. It would allow county eligibility workers to evaluate a family's eligibility and aid levels the way they would for any adult of any gender or relationship status living in the home.

Related/Prior Legislation

SB 290 (Smallwood-Cuevas, 2025) would have sunset the requirement that CalWORKs recipients must provide evidence of vaccination for children under the age of six years old and required CDSS to provide CalWORKs recipients and applicants information on childhood immunizations and where to access immunizations through fee-for-service Medi-Cal providers. SB 290 was held on the Assembly Appropriations Suspense file.

AB 79 (Committee on Budget, Chapter 11, Statutes of 2020) authorized a 60-month CalWORKs lifetime time limit and eliminated the 24-month time clock for certain welfare to work activities.

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

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

1) Ongoing General Fund (GF) costs of $935,000 based on data assumptions that 48 families would be newly eligible for CalWORKs benefits. This includes estimated costs for related increases in employment and childcare services.

2) One-time absorbable GF automation costs of $116,000 to update the California Statewide Automated Welfare System.

3) Ongoing likely cost savings to counties due to reduced administrative burden on county workers who would no longer be required to determine single-parent families' financial arrangements with unrelated adult males.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/19/26)

Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations (Sponsor)
Western Center on Law & Poverty (Co-Sponsor)
California Legislative Women's Caucus
California Partnership to End Domestic Violence
Center for Access to Qdros
City of Glendale
Coalition of Welfare Rights Organizations
County Welfare Directors Association of California
End Child Poverty California Powered by Grace
First 5 California
First 5 LA
Glide
Grace Institute - End Child Poverty in CA
National Council of Jewish Women Los Angeles
Parent Voices
Seiu California
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Western Center on Law & Poverty

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/19/26)

None received

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 77-0, 8/19/26
AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas
NO VOTE RECORDED: Blanca Rubio, Tangipa

Prepared by: Naima Ford Antal / HUMAN S. / (916) 651-1524
8/19/26 15:01:41

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