



February 23, 2018

# CHILDREN NOW

To: The Honorable Holly J. Mitchell  
Chair, Senate Budget Committee

The Honorable Philip Y. Ting  
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee

From: Jessica Bartholow, Western Center on Law and Poverty  
Myra Duran, California Latinas for Reproductive Justice  
Nourbese Flint, Black Women for Wellness and In Our Own Voice: The National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda  
Olivia Golden, Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)  
Frank Mecca, County Welfare Directors Association of California  
Michele Stilwell-Parvensky, Children's Defence Fund – California  
Ted Lempert, Children Now  
Frank Daidone, Acting President and CEO, Nurse-Family Partnership National Service Office

**RE: Adopt the Governor's CalWORKs Home Visiting Initiative Proposal and Invest An Additional \$50 Million per Year to ensure Greater Availability of Voluntary Evidence-Based Home Visiting Services for CalWORKs Families with a Pregnant Woman or Young Child**

Dear Chairpersons Mitchell and Ting,

Our organizations are leaders in the fight against child poverty in California. We are writing to urge you to adopt the Governor's proposal to establish a voluntary evidence-based early home visiting program for first-time, young pregnant women and parents served in the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Program. This budget allocation would allow County Human Services Agencies to partner with local programs providing voluntary evidence-based home visiting services to pregnant women and families with children under two years of age who are CalWORKs recipients, when the child is their first born and when the parents are younger than 25 years of age.

Additionally, we ask that you allocate an additional \$50 million to extend and enhance the reach of these services – proven to positively impact family well-being, health and economic self-sufficiency – to additional

families in which parents are older than 25 and/or in which there is a child under age two, even if that child has older siblings.

We further request changes to the proposed process of enrolling families in the Home Visiting Initiative. The current proposal essentially only allows for one cohort of parents to join the Home Visiting Initiative by proposing a limited eligibility window that closes shortly after the program is initially implemented. We believe the initiative should have open and continuous enrollment for eligible parents or caregivers so that parents who find out too late or who become pregnant after the window closes will not unnecessarily miss out on this valuable support. As such, voluntary evidence-based home visiting should be a permanent feature of the CalWORKs program, and should not be limited to first-time moms or caregivers under the age of 25 or those who happen to be eligible during the enrollment window.

### ***Improving the Initiative***

In order to build upon the Governor's Budget proposal, we believe that additional enhancements are needed to be incorporated into the program. Specifically, there should be an allowance for initial one-time costs related to the expansion of local, evidence-based home visiting programs. This includes resources for costs such as training new home visitor staff, program materials, and equipment. Another enhancement needed is a one-time allowance of \$500 per participant in the form of "New Parent Support" for the purpose of assisting families with one-time costs such as cribs, car seats, and childproofing supplies for the home.

We would highlight that the Department of Social Services (DSS) should build in reasonable time for counties to ramp up their programs. In fact, DSS has successfully executed similar programs using this approach to implementation, such as family stabilization or the housing support program. Depending on the magnitude of the overall program expansion, this time period may need to be up to one year. However, to do this as expeditiously as possible, the Department should prioritize expansion of home visiting program models that meet U.S. Department of Health and Human Services evidence-based criteria under the Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting statute. Due to locally specific capacity variances, the Home Visiting Initiative should state preference for expansion of existing locally located evidence-based home visiting programs but also allow for initiation of new sites in counties where locally located evidence-based home visiting programs are not already in place or otherwise infeasible for expansion.

### ***Research on the Benefits of Early Home Visiting***

Voluntary evidence-based home visiting program models (such as Early Head Start Home-Based Option, Healthy Families America, Nurse-Family Partnership, and Parents as Teachers) have a robust evidence base. These models are backed by decades of research demonstrating effectiveness at promoting children's health and development and fostering positive parenting skills. Research also indicates that the success of home visiting programs relies on implementation support practices including: workforce development and training for home visiting staff, continuous quality assurance evaluation processes, partnerships with entities that can aid in problem solving, and strong leadership to guide each step of implementation. We believe that these components are necessary in the current proposal, and when implemented with fidelity to their model standards, these programs can prevent children's involvement with social welfare, mental health, and juvenile corrections systems, which in turn has the potential to result in considerable cost savings for states. Below are the positive effects detailed by the Center for Law and Social Policy and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities in a brief on the topic.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/CLASP-CBPP-Joint-Brief-FINAL.pdf>

- **Home visiting programs effectively support healthy child development, beginning in the prenatal period.** Pregnant women who receive home visiting have better birth outcomes, and home visiting programs have a positive impact on breast feeding, immunization rates, infant hospitalizations, and maternal depression and stress.
- **Home visiting programs increase children’s school readiness.** Studies of various home visiting programs have shown positive impacts on children’s cognitive development and behavior, higher grade point averages and achievement scores at age 9, and higher high school graduation rates from high school.
- **Home visiting programs enhance parenting skills.** Research shows that home visiting programs help parents increase positive parenting actions and reduce negative ones, have more responsive interactions, create more developmentally stimulating home environments, engage in activities that promote early language and literacy, and know more about child development.
- **Home visiting programs can improve family economic self-sufficiency.** By helping parents enroll in educational and training programs and pursue employment, home visiting programs can help counteract the negative consequences of economic insecurity. Studies have found that compared with a control group, more parents participating in home visiting programs work, are enrolled in education or training, and have higher monthly incomes.

The research shows that voluntary home visiting programs help us to support families with infants and toddlers to get the best start while also meeting the goals of the federal TANF block grant and the CalWORKs program.

**For these reasons, we respectfully urge your committees to adopt the Governor’s Budget Home Visiting Initiative proposal and fund a \$50 million additional investment in this program, in order to allow counties to serve additional pregnant and parenting CalWORKs families with a child under age two with voluntary evidence-based home visiting services on an ongoing enrollment basis.**

CC: Gail Gronert, Office of the Assembly Speaker  
 Jason Sisney, Office of the Assembly Speaker  
 Nicole Vazquez, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1  
 Cyndi Hillery, Assembly Republican Fiscal  
 Irene Ho, Office of Assembly Member Phil Ting  
 Marla Cowan, Office of Assembly Member Joaquin Arambula  
 Jennifer Troia, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore  
 Chris Woods, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore  
 Theresa Pena, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3  
 Rebecca Hamilton, Senate Republican Fiscal Office  
 Luan Huynh, Office of Senator Holly Mitchell  
 Chas Alamo, Legislative Analyst’s Office