

# Coalition Letter: Calling on Restoration of the CalWORKs 60-Month Time Clock & to Stop the Clock During High Unemployment and When Services Are Not Available



**Coalition Letter:** Calling on Restoration of the CalWORKs 60-Month Time Clock & to Stop the Clock During High Unemployment and When Services Are Not Available

May 28, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor, The State of California  
California State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, California 95814

The Honorable Holly J. Mitchell  
Chair, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review  
Committee  
California State Senate  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Richard Pan  
Chair, Senate Budget Committee Sub 3  
California State Senate  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting  
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee  
California State Assembly  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Dr. Joaquin Arambula  
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee Sub 1  
California State Assembly  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Restore the CalWORKs 60 Month Clock & Don't Count Months During High Unemployment and When Services aren't available**

Dear Budget Leaders,

We are writing to ask that the budget committees repeal changes made in the 2011-12 and 2012-13 budget acts that reduced the number of months an adult can receive aid and services through the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program. The changes have proven ineffective in helping families find meaningful employment and have proven difficult to administer for counties. Recent reforms by the Legislature and counties to modernize the CalWORKs program and make it more accountable are impeded by the changes made during the last recessionary times. We are asking the Legislature to restore the 60-month lifetime limit and to prevent months during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, during any period of 10% or more unemployment or any period within which a person had no access to welfare-to-work services from counting toward an adult recipient's lifetime on aid.

As you know, the restoration of the CalWORKs 60 months clock is a benchmark established by the [Lifting Children and Families Out of Poverty Task Force Report](#).

## **Background**

The changes made in the early part of this decade not only shortened the time clock from 60 months to 48 months, it also split the 48 months into two separate welfare to work programs. For 24 months a recipient could participate in any activity called for by the assessment of the recipient's needs. But after 24 months, the recipient had to meet federal work requirements that were more rigid and punitive. An evaluation by the RAND corporation found that SB 1041 resulted in *“very small changes and suggest that the initial effects of the SB 1041 reforms have been modest and that much of the observed trends are likely the result of favorable economic and demographic trends.”*<sup>v</sup> RAND also reported that *“caseworkers said that while it was difficult for them to understand the changes brought about under the legislation, an even greater challenge was explaining it to participants. Data from the ACS reinforces this finding—93 percent of counties reported that explaining the complexity of SB 1041 to participants was a barrier.”*<sup>vi</sup> This is consistent with what recipients have told us for years. They do not understand the different time clocks, the different work requirements, and how the extension policies work.

What's worse, the current 48- month time limit only works to penalize parents who are trying to comply with welfare-to-work requirements and utilize the self-sufficiency opportunities in the program. Often times, the denial comes just as they are reaching the end of their educational, barrier removal or job-training programs. Restoring the final 12 months of CalWORKs assistance is a smart investment to allow parents to complete their course work and gain fulfilling employment.

And, to add insult to injury, during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency and related stay-at-home order, many students have been sent home from the programs they were participating in order to achieve economic self-sufficiency. While the executive order has allowed for parents to continue to receive the cash assistance provided in CalWORKs during this period, without legislative and budget changes, these families will still have to count those months on aid, in which they were unable to participate in their welfare-to-work activities toward their lifetime limit, perhaps derailing them from their self-sufficiency plan permanently.

## **Please Include Changes to Welfare-to-Work Lifetime Limit in the 2020-21 Budget**

In order to ensure that CalWORKs parents have their best chance at exiting poverty, we are requesting that budget committee leaders adopt a budget that accomplishes the following:

- Provide the full 60 months on CalWORKs assistance as provided under federal law.
- Preserve the “flexible” welfare to work approach adopted in SB 10041 and apply it to the entire 60 months.
- Repeal the extension policy for the 24 month flexible clock
- Eliminate SB 1041 mandatory notice and consultation requirements adopted to conform to the shortened time clock and the differing work requirements.
- Establish that no month during which the state had higher than 10% unemployment will count against a parent’s lifetime welfare-to-work time-clock.
- Ensure that no month during the COVID-19 Public Health Pandemic or in which welfare-to-work services are not available is counted as a month against the lifetime limit.

We urge you to adopt the above changes in trailer bill language in the 2020-21 budget. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alameda County Community Food Bank  
 Asian Americans Advancing Justice - California  
 California Alliance of Child and Family Services  
 California Alternative Payment Program Association (CAPPA)  
 California Association of Food Banks  
 California Catholic Conference  
 California Community College CalWORKs Association  
 California Council of Churches IMPACT  
 California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA)  
 California Latinas for Reproductive Justice  
 California Partnership  
 Californians for Disability Rights Inc. (CDR)  
 Child Care Law Center  
 Child Care Resource Center  
 Children's Defense Fund-California  
 Children's Institute  
 Coachella Valley Immigrant Dignity  
 Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations  
 County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA)  
 Dolores Huerta Foundation  
 East Bay Community Law Center  
 Ella Baker Center for Human Rights  
 End Child Poverty California

Equal Rights Advocates  
Fresno Barrios Unidos  
Friends Committee on Legislation of California  
GRACE Institute  
Hunger Action Los Angeles  
Lutheran Office of Public Policy-California  
Martin Luther King, Jr. Freedom Center  
National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter  
National Lawyers Guild SF Bay Area  
Para Los Niños  
Parent Voices California  
Public Interest Law Project  
Second Harvest of Silicon Valley  
SHIELDS for Families  
South Bay Community Services  
St. Anthony's Foundation SF  
Voices for Progress  
Western Center on Law and Poverty  
Work Equity

cc: Honorable Toni Atkins, President Pro-Tempore of the California State Senate  
Honorable Anthony Rendon, Speaker of the California State Assembly  
Members of the Budget Committee  
Mr. Marko Mijic, Health and Human Services Agency  
Ms. Paula Villescaz, Health and Human Services Agency  
Mr. Richard Figueroa, Office of the Governor  
Ms. Tam Ma, Office of the Governor  
Ms. Daphne Hunt, Health and Human Services Agency  
Director Keely Bosler, Department of Finance  
Director Kim Johnson, California Department of Social Services  
Ms. Jacqueline Barocio, Office of Legislative Analyst Office  
Mr. Ryan Anderson, Office of the Legislative Analyst Office