**SUPPORT LETTER SB 380 (Limon) Child Care Rate Reform & Suspension of Family Fees**

*All letters to the Committee and Republican Caucus Consultant shall be submitted electronically through the Position Letter Portal at* [**Position Letter Portal**](https://calegislation.lc.ca.gov/Advocates/)*.*

PLACE ON LETTER HEAD

[DATE]

The Honorable [Senator/Assemblymember First Name Last Name], Chair

Senate/Assembly Committee Name

Street Address, Suite XX

Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: AB 310 (Arambula) – Support to Reimagine CalWORKs [*if applicable*, “as Amended <date>”]**

Dear Chair [Last Name],

[Insert Organization Name] writes to express our support for **Assembly Bill 310 (Arambula)**, a bill that will reimagine the CalWORKs (California Work, Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids) program by providing all parents with the critical support they need to ensure economic security for their children and themselves. AB 310 undoes historical harms of the CalWORKs program rooted in racist and sexist federal and state law.

In 1996, Congress enacted the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program under the leadership of then House Speaker Newt Gingrich. In 1997, Governor Pete Wilson instituted the CalWORKs program, the state version of the federal program. With the passage and implementation of both pieces of legislation, there came a foundation for states, including California, to perpetuate racist, sexist, and classist ideas that have dominated safety net programs since their passage.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Classist and sexist stereotypes of CalWORKs recipients perpetuate narratives that people living in poverty seek to take advantage of public assistance programs. However, CalWORKs participants face significant barriers to economic security and wellbeing such as gender, race, and immigration status-based discrimination in the labor market. This is partly due to welfare-to-work activities addressing barriers to employment that are not fully counted towards the federally-defined workforce participation rate (WPR), such as completion of a secondary school program and domestic violence services.[[2]](#footnote-2) Racist tropes and stereotypes of Black workers in particular perpetuate narratives that Black people only face issues of unemployment. However, the larger employment crisis the majority of Black workers face is access to quality jobs with fair wages and safe working conditions.[[3]](#footnote-3)

While California has made strides to remove barriers to the CalWORKs program, the program remains deeply flawed as a product of federal law and its own history of racist welfare legislation. Indeed, we must reimagine CalWORKs in order to fulfill prior efforts such as Cal-OAR and CalWORKs 2.0 and fully center the program on family’s needs and well-being.

AB 310 undoes these historical harms through several critical reforms, including to:

* Eliminate or reduce sanctions to federal minimums - ensuring parents have the income to afford critical necessities like food, rent, utilities, and school supplies
* Shift CalWORKs’ rigid work-first focus only on adults to a “family assistance” model enabling counties to quickly offer supports tailored to parents and children
* Move from a punitive, compliance approach to a process that respects and meets family’s needs
* Expand work activities to include a wide variety of anti-poverty related activities necessary for families in crisis; and
* Eliminate the Work Participation Rate pass-through to remove the specter of financial penalty on counties and make clear that family well-being and long-term success are the program’s guiding goals

AB 310 makes long-overdue changes necessary to undo the real stigma and suffering CalWORKs parents continue to report, and fundamentally move the program to reflect anti-racist values and drive family-centered outcomes. For these reasons, we ask that you support and vote “**AYE**” on **Assembly Bill 310 (Arambula)**.

Sincerely,

<INSERT SIGNATURE BLOCK>

<FULL NAME>

<TITLE>

Cc: Applicable Members / Senators

Bill Sponsors

Author office / Staff

1. For more on TANF’s racist history, see Elisa Minoff, “[The Racist Roots of Work Requirements](https://cssp.org/resource/racist-roots-of-work-requirements/),” Center for the Study of Social Policy, February 2020; and Ali Safawi and LaDonna Pavetti, “[States Have Flexibility to Move TANF Work Programs in an Antiracist Direction](https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/4-21-22tanf.pdf),” CBPP, April 21, 2022; and Ife Floyd and LaDonna Pavetti, “[Improvements in TANF Cash benefits Needed to Undo the Legacy of Historical Racism](https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/1-26-22tanf.pdf),” CBPP, January 26, 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For more on CalWORKs WPR, see Sara Kimberlin, “[Harmful Obstacles: CalWORKs Work Participation Rate (WPR) Penalty](https://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/harmful-obstacles-calworks-work-participation-rate-wpr-penalty/),” California Budget & Policy Center, February 2023, and Esi Hutchful, “[Undercutting the Needs of California Families: The Harm of Racist, Sexist Work Requirements & Penalties in CalWORKs](https://calbudgetcenter.org/app/uploads/2022/03/IB-FP-CalWorks.pdf),” California Budget & Policy Center, March 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Fine, J., Burnham, L., Griffith, K., Ji, M., Narro, V., Pitts, S. (2018). The National Black Worker Center Project: Grappling with the Power-Building Imperative. Pitts, S. (Eds.), *No one size fits all: Worker organization, policy, and movement in a new economic age* (pp. 115-137). Labor and Employment Research Association. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)