



ASSEMBLYWOMAN PILAR SCHIAVO

AB 2343 – Childcare Support for Those Experiencing Homelessness and/or Domestic Violence

Summary

This bill would allow agencies administering CalWORKs Stage 1 and Stage 2 Child care programs to provide, as a part of case management, enhanced support, and navigation to child care services for families experiencing homelessness or surviving domestic violence. These services may be provided in partnership with homeless service agencies, domestic violence agencies, or other supportive housing groups.

Background

Homelessness is a problem and is primarily due to the rising cost of housing and the low inventory of affordable housing. Housing stability is difficult to attain as parents experiencing homelessness must be able to look for and maintain work, participate in job training, education, and other supportive programs, and make and attend appointments to be connected with public assistance and community resources. This is virtually impossible for parents to attain without access to affordable child care.

Child care can be a source of great support and relief to families, and child care providers can serve as an important source of trust and connection for both children and parents. Child care can also play a vital role in meeting the specific needs of children experiencing homelessness. At its best, early care programming has the potential to mitigate the traumatic and destabilizing effects of homelessness for children.

Currently, California has a wide array of subsidized child care programs that have eligibility for homelessness. The CalWORKs child care program

offers a multi-stage process to assist families with employment and economic stabilization. Many families experiencing homelessness would be eligible for these programs but are missing opportunities to get connected and enroll their children.

Problem

The face of homelessness has changed in the last five years. Families with children are at higher risk of homelessness than adults without children due to economic pressures such as maintaining employment, stable housing, accessing child care, transportation, social support, health care, food, and other basic needs. Families with children also face higher rates of eviction due to challenges with balancing caregiving work responsibilities, lease violations related to overcrowding and damages, and complaints about noise of children's behavior. From 2018 to 2019, California experienced a 14.6% increase in unhoused families. In 2020, there were over 161,000 people experiencing homelessness in the state which accounted for about 28% of the nation's homeless population. Our safety net system is not equipped for newly unhoused people and most shelters are not designed to house women with children or couples with children, forcing families to split up.

Family reunification is a critical need for families experiencing homelessness. In Los Angeles County, 16.7% of parents experiencing homelessness between 2013 and 2016 had experienced the removal of one or more children to out-of-home placement. This experience results in the parent being reclassified as a single adult, which means they will go into a separate system and can no longer access the same pool of family resources. Family separation also results in immediate loss of CalWORKs benefits and other welfare programs.



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Moreover, families are escaping the system, and the numbers collected do not always represent the population clearly. Some potential reasons families may be hiding from the system are because of stigma, lack of trust, fear of potential retaliation from partners, and fear of losing other family stabilizing resources such as their access to affordable child care.

This Bill

AB 2343 would allow agencies administering CalWORKs Stage 1 and CalWORKs Stage 2 child care to target their existing program dollars to provide navigation and enhanced enrollment support for families experiencing homelessness and surviving violence. These services could be provided in collaboration with County Services, Homeless and Domestic Violence agencies and other appropriate partners. This bill would also allow these agencies to partner in local initiatives to serve vulnerable communities and target their existing resources to provide maximum access to families.

Support

Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) (Sponsor)

For More Information

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