

FACT SHEET

SB 290 (Smallwood-Cuevas) CalWORKs Children and Family Act

SUMMARY

SB 290 removes the \$50 sanction requirement for a household that has not submitted documentation of immunization and repeals the requirement that families provide proof that they first applied and were denied unemployment before applying for CalWORKs.

BACKGROUND

CalWORKs is California's version of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) core cash assistance and supportive services safety net aiding low-income families to meet their basic needs. Nearly 90% of CalWORKs families are led by Black or Latina mothers, which reflects systemic racism and sexism in our work and education systems.

California penalizes parents by reducing their share of the cash grant [if they cannot prove](#) that their children under age 6 have received required immunizations, even if the child has received all necessary vaccination. California has chosen to deny or terminate aid to adults who cannot prove that they have applied for or refused to accept UI.

PROBLEM

CalWORKs families often access vaccines through community health clinics or other locations that do not have digitized records making it difficult to provide the necessary verification.

Access to the UI application is already challenging for people experiencing poverty, and in times of recession or emergency such as COVID or the LA

fires, EDD often cannot handle the volume, people cannot obtain proof and are denied CalWORKs aid through no fault of their own.

SB 521 (Smallwood-Cuevas, 2023) removed the penalty on pregnant and parenting teens, but the immunization and truancy penalties remain in law.

SOLUTION

SB 290 follows the evidence that supporting rather than punishing families in deep poverty is proven to build pathways out of poverty by:

- Repealing the CalWORKs penalty for failure to prove immunization, while reinforcing public school immunization requirements;
- Repealing the CalWORKs penalty for chronic truancy, while supporting youth through referral to continuation schools and the CalWORKs Family Stabilization;
- Repealing the UI application mandate.

SUPPORT

GRACE/ End Child Poverty California (Sponsors)_
Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organization

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