



**STATE SENATOR
MARIA ELENA DURAZO**

LEGISLATIVE FACT-SHEET

Senate Bill 365 CalWORKs Family Emergency Assistance Reform Act of 2019

Summary:

SB 365 would establish new criteria for low-income applicants to meet the definition of apparent eligibility for immediate assistance. This proposed legislation amends the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Immediate Need statute to (1) make certain that parents with a job or a verified job offer who need childcare in order to work or participate in an educational or training activity are deemed to be in immediate need if apparently eligible for CalWORKs; and (2) issue immediate need assistance to prevent imminent evictions.

Background:

Welfare and Institutions Code Section 11266 establishes the criteria for immediate assistance for CalWORKs. Each county determines an applicant's eligibility for immediate assistance based on a demonstration of need, specifically that an applicant lacks sufficient resources to meet emergency needs. California's current Immediate Need statute does not contemplate lack of childcare. CalWORKs parents have to wait for up to 30-days before they qualify for CalWORKs.

Additionally, the law does not consider imminent eviction as an immediate need. When §11266 was enacted into law, most tenants who received a 3-day notice could pay the rent and cure the 3-day notice. Today, with the California housing crisis severely impacting low-income Californians, most 3-day notices are often accompanied by a 30/60-day notice, which means even if the tenant cures the 3-day notice, the 30/60-day notice means they must vacate the premises – and often become homeless.

Problem:

Low-income parents often face significant barriers as they endeavor to secure employment and stable housing. At a recent advocacy gathering, parents shared stories of their extraordinary efforts to find employment and then facing the reality of job loss

after the long approval process for childcare assistance. Although many working parents are eligible and eventually approved for CalWORKs childcare assistance, sometimes it is too late and lack of childcare results in job loss. The ability to establish eligibility sooner will provide hardworking parents the support they need to maintain employment or to engage in training and educational activities on their pathway to meaningful employment.

This bill also seeks to address the growing number of unsheltered individuals in California, many of whom are CalWORKs recipients. Immediate need assistance would prevent some instances of families becoming homeless by providing the funds necessary to pay rent and maintain housing. California represents 25 percent of the nation's homeless population. Many of these families are CalWORKs recipients who could have avoided homelessness had they been eligible for CalWORKs immediate need to pay the rent.

Solution:

For secure self-sufficiency through employment, education or training and stable housing to be a reality for those working to transcend economic barriers, access to vital supportive services needs to be available 365 days a year and, when possible, without delay. SB 365 seeks to amend the CalWORKs Immediate Need statute to define lack of childcare as an immediate need for CalWORKs applicants who are eligible for CalWORKs and need childcare to begin work or training or to maintain employment and to define lack of housing to mean that the rent is due and has not been paid.

Sponsors:

Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations and Western Center on Law & Poverty

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