



April 9, 2024

The Honorable Marie Alvarado-Gil
Chair, Senate Committee on Human Services
1021 O Street, Suite 7240
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 1396 (Alvarado-Gil): CalWORKs Home Visiting Program
As Amended APRIL 8, 2024 — SUPPORT
Set for Hearing April 15, 2024 in Senate Human Services Committee**

Dear Senator Alvarado-Gil:

On behalf of the Urban Counties of California (UCC) and the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), we write in support of your SB 1396, related to Home Visiting Programs (HVPs). This bill would extend the timeframe in which children may be enrolled and the period in which CalWORKs families are eligible to participate in HVPs.

Home Visiting Programs match trained professionals with expecting and new parents to help them with critical early development for their children. This includes offering resources, mentoring, cultural community building, and other supports that utilize parent's strengths and build skills. Research shows that participation in an HVP has immense benefits to children under 2 years old and their families, such as better maternal and infant health, reduced emergency room visits, and increased safety practices. Long term, for children who participate to age 5, research shows improved language and cognitive development, improved math and reading scores, reduced absenteeism, and decreased school suspensions. For every dollar invested in HVPs, communities receive a benefit of up to five dollars in savings in child welfare, K-12 education, and community safety.

There are two Home Visiting Programs funded by the state: the California Home Visiting Program (CHVP) managed by the Department of Public Health and the CalWORKs Home Visiting program (HVP) managed by the Department of Social Services. The CHVP under CDPH follows models that allow families to remain in the program until the child turns five years old. Under existing law, however, the CalWORKs HVP can only be offered to pregnant individuals and families with a child under 24 months of age. Those families may receive CalWORKs HVP services for 24 months or until the first enrolled child's second birthday, whichever is later. There are presently 41 counties administering CalWORKs HVP in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-24.

Children and families participating in CalWORKs HVP miss out on the critical developmental benefits that result from continued participation. Families that would otherwise like to remain

involved in the CalWORKS HVP are forced out of the program due to the statutory time limit. Although it is possible they may transition to another HVP funded by CDPH or another community-based organization, that is only possible if there is funding and space available in those programs. Furthermore, research shows interruption to participation in a home visiting program leads to families dropping out.

SB 1396 will extend the enrollment timeframe from a child under 24 months of age to a child under 36 months of age. This bill also removes the 24-month statutory limit on participation in HVPs for children in CalWORKS families and instead allows those children to continue to participate through the duration of the applicable HVP model. Finally, SB 1396 allows children whose participation would otherwise be terminated because the family no longer meets CalWORKS income, eligibility, or need criteria to continue through the duration of the program or for up to an additional 12 months, whichever is longer.

This bill will help to maximize the health and developmental benefits of this highly effective program for families in need across the state. For these reasons, UCC and RCRC support SB 1296. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,



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