

ERIN HANNIGAN
District 1, Vice-Chair (707) 553-5363
MONICA BROWN
District 2, (707) 784-3031
WANDA WILLIAMS
District 3, (707) 784-6136
JOHN M. VASQUEZ
District 4, (707) 784-6129
MITCH MASHBURN
District 5, Chair, (707) 784-6030

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



BILL EMLEN
County Administrator
(707) 784-6100

675 Texas Street, Suite 6500
Fairfield, CA 94533-6342
Fax (707) 784-6665

www.solanocounty.com

June 4, 2024

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel
Assembly District 46
1021 O Street, Suite 8230
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Corey Jackson
Assembly District 60
1021 O Street, Suite 6120
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Scott Wiener
Senate District 11
1021 O Street, Suite 8620
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Caroline Menjivar
Senate District 20
1021 O Street, Suite 6720
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: OPPOSE, proposed budget cuts that fund California's Local Child Support Agencies

Dear Legislative Budget and Subcommittee Chairs:

On behalf of the Solano County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to express Solano County's concern about the May 29th joint legislative proposal that includes a \$29.4 million reduction in funding for California's local child support agencies (LCSA). This cut represents \$10 million from the State General Fund and \$19.4 million to be lost from Federal Financial Participation (FFP). The loss of state and federal funding will have a significant impact our local program, staff, and the families we serve in Solano County.

The California Child Support program funding was held flat for over 15 years. In 2018, the Child Support Directors Association (CSDA) and the Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) conducted a Level of Effort Study in 2018 which analyzed federal and state mandated casework activities and identified the minimum level of funding needed to provide enough resources to LCSAs to conduct those activities. The Level of Effort Study resulted in a funding methodology which was codified in Family Code 17306.1. California has been working to fully implement this methodology to ensure LCSAs have the allocation needed to perform mandated work, and to bring funding equity to California counties. This has not been accomplished; the California program was already underfunded by \$100.9 million (\$34.3 million General Fund). This proposed cut will increase this program's funding deficit to \$130.3 million (\$44.3 million General Fund).

Instead, since that time, money has been given to, and taken away from the local program repeatedly in such a way that has created program instability and an inability to hire and retain trained staff,

Honorable Legislative Budget Subcommittee Chairs
June 4, 2024

complicated by the unstable and tight labor market following the Covid 19 pandemic. Solano County, prior to this proposal, was already underfunded \$1.6 million. Now exacerbated by an additional cut of \$367,273.

Child poverty in California stands at nearly 14 percent, according to the Public Policy Institute of California, and the child support program is crucial in addressing this issue. By ensuring that both parents contribute to their children's support, our program helps reduce poverty and avoid additional social costs. The recent implementation of the Formerly Assisted Pass-Through program aims to distribute more child support to low-income parents. However, these budget cuts will hinder our ability to collect and distribute child support and reduce child poverty.

The childhood poverty rate in Solano County is 17 percent. We see firsthand the impact of child poverty and how essential our services are in alleviating it. During Federal Fiscal year 2022/23, Solano County DCSS distributed \$40,222,424 in child support payments. Additionally, 1,540 new cases were opened for families in need of support. This is a testament to the need and impact that the child support program has locally to the families we serve.

California is poised to implement the federal Flexibility, Efficiency, and Modernization in Child Support Enforcement Programs (FEM) Final Rule, which acknowledges the unique economic needs and limitations of each case. The new federal guidelines require gathering and analyzing information from a broader range of sources than currently available. Adequate staffing is essential for LCSAs to meet these requirements, particularly in addressing disparities for historically underserved communities. Ensuring equal opportunities for all Californians is vital for the prosperity of our communities.

The Legislature's Budget Committees are proposing to make this cut permanent. While understanding the need to address California's budget challenges, making this cut permanent will have long-lasting adverse effects and will reduce federal funding on an ongoing basis. LCSAs are already underfunded and not at parity. I strongly urge you to reconsider and avoid any permanent California Child Support program reductions.

In conclusion, while recognizing the fiscal challenges facing the Legislature, there are more viable solutions than permanently cutting the Child Support Program. This cut will exacerbate family and child poverty, increase reliance on other programs, reduce federal funds for California and may/will result in layoffs at the county level. I urge you to reconsider this proposal. If you have any questions, please contact Liane Peck, Director of Solano County Child Support Services at (707) 784-3606 and LLPeck@SolanoCounty.com.

Sincerely,



Mitch Mashburn, Chair
Solano County Board of Supervisors

CC:

The Honorable Bill Dodd, California State Senate
The Honorable Lori D. Wilson, California State Assembly
The Honorable Solano County Board of Supervisors
Gerald Huber, Director, Solano County Health and Social Services
Paragon Government Relations
Karen Lange, SYASL Partners, Inc.