



FISCAL CONCERNS AND REQUESTED AMENDMENTS TO AB1992 (Chu)

CalWORKs eligibility: immunizations

The intent of AB1992 is to help those in poverty maximize their CalWORKs benefits by ensuring recipients have more time and transportation to access age-appropriate vaccinations for their children, before their CalWORKs benefits are garnished. According to the Department of Social Services (DSS), efforts are already underway to accomplish this using the CAIR 2 statewide vaccine registry, the Good Cause Immunization Form, and free transportation through Medi-Cal. Therefore this bill is unnecessary and would be a waste of the CA General Fund, and if passed without a conscious/religious belief exemption to vaccination could halt all federal funding for CalWORKs, negatively impacting many more than those this bill intends to help.

CalWORKs funding from the TANF Block Grant is likely to be halted if no conscious/religious exemption is included.

Currently, a CalWORKs recipient can prevent benefits' garnishment by filing an affidavit that the vaccinations are contrary to the applicant's or recipient's beliefs. However, a non-fiscal, policy only amendment was made by the Assembly Appropriations Committee to remove the personal beliefs exemption option. HHS Office of Civil Rights created a department of Conscience and Religious Freedom in January 2018, to ensure all entities receiving HHS funding (including from their subsidiaries) do not discriminate on conscious or religious grounds or their HHS funding will be removed. In this case if CalWORKs requires vaccine documentation it cannot discriminate on conscious or religious grounds and therefore must include an option for a conscious and religious exemption to the vaccine requirements. Warning letters have been sent to other states that violate this federal requirement.

Medi-Cal transportation coverage makes this bill unnecessary.

Most CalWORKs recipients' children are covered by Medi-Cal which will pay for transportation to a doctor, making the requested transportation funding in this bill unnecessary.

CA General Fund budget for CalWORKs will increase indeterminately.

Data showing how many CalWORKs recipients currently file an affidavit claiming personal or religious beliefs to exempt them from the vaccination requirement is not available. Therefore the increase in CalWORKs recipients being sanctioned due to the removal of such is unidentified and the full fiscal impact of this bill is unknown.

Compliance with the vaccination requirement would not prevent garnishment for many recipients, making the intent vs. outcome of this bill questionable.

DSS has shared with us that for many of the ~4000 CalWORKs recipients who have their benefits garnished monthly because of vaccination requirement non-compliance each month, there are other non-compliance issues pending and so vaccine compliance would not remove another garnishment.

The current Good Cause Immunization Request Form renders this bill unnecessary.

The Immunization Good Cause Request Form currently allows ALL CalWORKs applicants to extend the time they have to furnish proof of their children's vaccination, thereby preventing their CalWORKs benefits from being garnished, making the extension of time to provide vaccination records in this bill pointless.



**A VOICE FOR CHOICE
ADVOCACY**

A Voice for Choice Advocacy requests you oppose this bill unless amended because it is unnecessary, redundant and the fiscal impact is unclear and could be extremely detrimental.

If passed out of the Senate Appropriations Committee, the bill should be amended

- To allow CalWORKs applicants to submit an affidavit that the vaccinations are contrary to the applicant's or recipient's conscientious or religious beliefs, so that all federal CalWORKs funding is not terminated; and/or
- To become a study bill so that the actual reasons for non-compliance to the vaccine requirements and the current number of personal belief exemptions filed are understood and the true fiscal impact of this bill can be determined.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Christina Hildebrand

Christina Hildebrand

President, A Voice for Choice Advocacy, Inc.

christina@avoiceforchoiceadvocacy.org

Giving issues a voice, A Voice for Choice Advocacy advocates for people's rights to be fully informed about the composition, quality, and short- and long-term health effects of all products that go into people's bodies, such as food, water, air, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics.