



Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations, Inc.

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CCWRO Welfare News - July 2025 Edition

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Federal Basic Needs Update

by Bob Erlenbusch



Congressional August Recess: Schedule a District Meeting Now!

The House of Representatives is on August recess from July 25 - September 1 and the Senate is on August recess from August 4 - September 1.

Accountability August: Now is the time to schedule a delegation meeting with your representative to hold them accountable for their vote on the “Huge Hideous Bill”, and urge them to protect federal basic needs programs.

Summary of HR 1 - “The Huge Hideous Bill” Signed into Law

HR1, the “Huge Hideous Bill” was signed into law on July 4, 2025.

Brief summary:

- Medicaid: cuts close to \$1 trillion in federal spending: requires states to charge individuals enrolled in Medicaid expansion up to \$35 for each health care service; adds work requirements for people between ages 19 - 64 without a child 13 and under to work or volunteer at least 80 hours per month; requires states to check eligibility of people with Medicaid expansion every six months instead of annually; requires a 5-year waiting period for green card holders before applying for Medicaid; reduces Medicaid payments to states with error rates of 3%; prohibits Medicaid for being used for funding Planned Parenthood and similar organizations (Note: Planned Parenthood has sued.)
- Affordable Care Act(ACA) Subsidies: Limits premium subsidies outside of qualifying events, limits immigrant eligibility, and requires pre-enrollment verification.
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): reduces federal nutrition funding by \$186 billion between 2025 and 2024 including work requirements for beneficiaries ages 18 - 64 to work at least 80 hours per month; requires states with an error rate above 6% to contribute up to 15% of SNAP benefit costs.
- Student Loans: caps unsubsidized student loans for graduate students at \$20,500 per year and \$100,000 lifetime; caps student loans for students seeking professional degrees (medical or law school) at \$50,000 per year and \$200,000 lifetime; eliminates [graduate PLUS loans](#).
- Defense Spending: Allocates an additional \$150 billion in defense spending.
- Border Security: Increases Immigration and Customs Enforcement from \$10 billion to more than \$100 billion by 2029, creating the capacity to deport up to one million people annually; includes \$46.5 billion to build a wall on the USA-Mexico border and \$45 billion to add 100,000 new migrant detention beds;

CNN's article [“When Key Provisions in Trump’s Big Beautiful Bill Take Effect](#), is an excellent and visual analysis of the key provisions of this bill, including student loans, Medicaid, ACA, SNAP and taxes.

Additionally, several national advocacy organizations have excellent analysis of the tremendous harm of this legislation: [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#) and the [Food Research & Action Center](#).

California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and HR 1 Impact. After the recent enactment of the federal government’s “Big, Beautiful” bill, CDSS continues its mission to protect the health and well-being of all Californians.

Access was an important part of the California Health & Human Services Agency’s [webinar](#) on how the deep cuts to the safety net included in HR 1 will impact Californians. Included are segments on CalFresh, Medi-Cal and Covered California.

Food & Nutrition Service’s and Proposed SNAP Information - CCWRO’s Statement

More than 400 organizations, including CCWRO, submitted comments about the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) proposal for states to share information on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) applicants and recipients. This information included “all household group members’ names, dates of birth, Social Security numbers, residential and mailing addresses, as well as all data used to determine eligibility or ineligibility; immigration and citizenship status, education, employment and marital status.” The USDA said this order is aimed at “eliminating data silos” to combat waste, fraud and abuse.

It is important to note that while immigrants without legal status are ineligible for SNAP benefits, they can apply for any children who are U.S. citizens or that could be part of a mixed status household.

CCWRO's statement in opposition to this proposal is below:

The Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations [CCWRO] joins California Attorney General Bonta and a coalition of fourteen state attorney generals in strongly opposing the current proposal by USDA for states to turn over personal and sensitive information about millions of SNAP recipients. CCWRO believes that the USDA's unprecedented action is unnecessary, inefficient and unlawful. Once again the current administration, under the guise and illusion of "waste, fraud and abuse" is seeking to amass SNAP's huge database and use that information to arrest, detain and deport both immigrants, many in the USA legally, as well as some US citizens as the Department of Homeland Security has done with the IRS database and more recently with HHS's information on Medicaid recipients. CCWRO feels strongly that the USDA is overlooking the limits of the federal Privacy Act as well as its own rules restricting SNAP data usage to program-related purposes. We urge USDA to reject the proposal and refocus its efforts on the mission of SNAP - to reduce hunger and food insecurity in America.

Health & Human Services Proposed Redefinition of Federal Public Benefits:

On July 14, 2025, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS] issued a [notice](#) for public comment on a broadened interpretation of "Federal public benefit" under the Personal Responsibility Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). This would impact child welfare, early childhood, mental health and general health programs not previously subject to PRWORA restrictions regarding immigration status. The USDA, Department of Education and Department of Labor also issued similar statements related to redefining "Federal public benefit" in July.

The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) has issued a [summary](#) of this HHS notice. Public comments are due by midnight Eastern Standard Time on August 13.

Potential Additional Budget Reconciliation Bills

The following is from the *Tax Policy Center's* July 24, 2025 newsletter, *Daily Deduction*, regarding the possibility that the congressional tax debate may not be over:

Congressional Republicans passed the sweeping One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA). But the legislative tax debate may not be over, [reports Thomson-Reuters](#). Lawmakers could pursue another reconciliation bill or attempt a bipartisan tax package, though any follow-up effort faces long odds this year. Some provisions, such as expanded [premium tax credits](#), the Work Opportunity Tax Credit and certain retirement incentives may still be on the table. Meanwhile, questions linger about the need for technical corrections and guidance on provisions rushed through the legislative process.

Homelessness Executive Order: Involuntary Commitment & Criminalization:

On July 24, 2025, the Trump Administration issued an Executive Order (EO) [“Ending Crime and Disorder on American Streets”](#). In comparison to the [California Statewide Study of People Experiencing Homelessness](#), the EO paints a distorted narrative of people experiencing homelessness as being drug addicts and/or individuals with mental health challenges.

The EO orders the Attorney General, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, and the Secretary of Transportation to assess their discretionary grant programs to determine whether grants should be going to programs that meet eligibility criteria.

The criteria include:

- Enforcement of prohibition against open drug use,
- Enforcement of urban camping and loitering,
- Enforcement of prohibition against urban squatting,
- Enforcement and adoption of standards for people who are deemed a danger to self or others and suffers from serious mental illness or substance use, or who are living on the streets and cannot take care of themselves, through outpatient treatment or by moving them into treatment centers, and
- Enforcement of the Sex Offender Registry and Notification Act.

By directing discretionary federal grants to jurisdictions that comply with the above bullets, the EO, in essence, directs states to criminalize unhoused people and institutionalize people with mental health and substance use disorder and expands involuntary commitment.

The EO requires the Attorney General (AG) to do the following:

- Evaluate homeless people arrested for federal crimes to determine if they are sexually dangerous and certified for civil commitment;
- Make funds under the Emergency Federal Law Enforcement Assistance program available for encampment removal;
- Assess federal resources to determine whether detainees with serious mental illness are not released into the public because of a shortage in forensics beds at state and federal jails or hospitals;
- Enhance requirements that prisons and residential reentry centers under the AG's purview require in-custody housing release plans and compliance of those plans;
- Prioritize "available funding" to expand drug and mental health courts, including diversion;
- Review whether drug injection sites or safe consumption sites are in violation of federal law and bring civil or criminal actions as appropriate;

The EO directs the HHS Secretary to ensure that discretionary grants issued by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration for substance use disorder prevention, treatment, and recovery fund evidence-based programs do not fund programs such as "harm reduction" or "safe consumption" that do not achieve "adequate outcomes". Additionally, the EO directs the HHS Secretary and the HUD Secretary to end support for "housing first" to the extent permitted by law

Finally, the EO proposes to eliminate federal funding for evidence-based programs like Harm Reduction and Housing First, a framework that prioritizes access to housing above all, to the maximum extent permitted by law. It also calls for sweeping federal data collection on unhoused people and those with mental health disabilities.

A fact sheet from the White House can be found [here](#).

The [National Homelessness Law Center](#), [National Coalition for the Homeless](#), [National Health Care for the Homeless Council](#) and the [American Civil Liberties Union \(ACLU\)](#), among others, all issued scathing statements condemning this Executive Order.

In particular, the National Coalition for the Homeless stated, “As the executive order itself acknowledges, the Supreme Court has established due process protections that safeguard individuals from involuntary confinement in psychiatric hospitals. Historical attempts at mass institutionalization proved destructive to individuals’ lives and financially unsustainable for states. The original intent of deinstitutionalization in the 1970s was to accompany community re-integration with comprehensive housing and support services—a commitment that, tragically, remains underfunded and unfulfilled, both then and now.”

The ACLU added, *“Homelessness is a policy failure. Weaponizing federal funding to fuel cruel and ineffective approaches to homelessness won’t solve this crisis.”*

National Public Radio (NPR) reported on this EO with experts in the field and dived into the broader homeless problems including the lack of affordable housing and treatment, which can be listened to [here](#).

Federal Education Funding Restored

Background: In May, 2025, the Trump Administration announced a budget proposal that included a 15% cut to the federal Department of Education, with the proposed budget prioritizing diversion of funds to private schools. Additionally, over \$6 billion in previously approved federal education grants are to be withheld.

Update: On July 25, 2025, the Trump Administration announced that it would release FY 2025 funding for all of the federal education programs that it had previously withheld. The decision followed intensive advocacy efforts, two lawsuits, and pressure from Congressional Republicans, including [ten U.S. Senators](#).

The restored funding includes:

- Title I-C for migrant education (\$375 million),
- Title II-A for professional development and teacher training (\$2.2 billion),
- Title III-A for English Learner Services (\$890 million),
- Title IV-A for academic enrichment (\$1.3 billion),
- Adult education (\$629 million), and
- Adult literacy and civics education (\$86 million).

Funding for Title IV-B (21st Century Community Learning Centers) was released on July 18th.

Follow [SchoolHouse Connection](#) for updates on federal education funding.

USDA Restructuring

After months of threatening staff, USDA recently released its reorganization “plan”. This plan included:

- Moving 2,600 people or getting them to “voluntarily” quit”;
- Closing the South Building, Braddock Place, the Beltsville Agricultural Center (BARC), and the George Washington Carver Center;
- Focusing USDA at five hub locations: i) Raleigh, NC; ii) Kansas City MO; iii) Indianapolis, IN; iv) Fort Collins, CO; and v) Salt Lake City, UT.

In their words, the memo will “remain in effect until the earlier of the completion ... or the revocation of the memo.”

Translation: Confusion, inefficiency and reduction of services for the next three years.

Read the USDA Restructuring Memo [here](#).

Senate THUD Appropriations: Increases for Key HUD Programs, without Emergency Housing Voucher Funding

On July 24, 2025, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved their FY 2026 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) spending bill, which provides \$73.3 billion for HUD, an increase of \$67.8 billion provided for in the House's draft FY 2026 spending bill. However the bill does not provide additional funding to cover the cost of continuing the Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) Program, which currently serves 59,000 households who had previously experienced housing instability or homelessness.

The National Low Income Housing Coalition provides a comprehensive analysis and call to action [here](#).

State Tips on Immigration Raids: English & Spanish Know Your Rights Fact Sheets

California is offering support for communities experiencing federal immigration raids, sharing new “know your rights” resources.

The Governor's Office has released new fact sheets in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) that include tips on what to do if you witness an immigration arrest, how to recognize federal immigration agents, and answers to frequently answered questions.

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) supports [a wide variety of services](#) aimed at helping immigrants. California funds annual investments for nonprofits to provide free immigration legal services to immigrants across the state.

Legal services include access to information and application assistance for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), naturalization, affirmative immigration remedies, removal defense, and services for immigrant youth. For more detailed program information, please visit the [Program and Projects](#) webpage.

CDSS also offers [contact lists](#) to access general legal assistance, assistance specific to detainees and non-detainees in removal proceedings, and services for immigrant youth and unaccompanied undocumented minors. Additionally, resources for refugees, Special Immigrant Visa holders, and other eligible populations can be found on the [Refugee Programs Bureau webpage](#).

The State's [CA.gov website](#) provides more information for immigrant families, including details about access to public education, support for mental health, and information on how to report hate

crimes and discrimination.

California Budget & Policy Center: Update on What Comes Next in CA After the Federal Reconciliation Bill:

What comes next in California after the budget reconciliation bill?

The [California Budget & Policy Center](#) (CBPC) is going to focus their efforts on two main goals:

1. Documenting the harm of the federal budget act, particularly its impact on Californians and the state, so that advocates can continue to hold leaders accountable.
2. Pushing state leaders to prepare, respond, and mitigate harm via the state budget.

To that end, the CBPC will be coming out with an analysis early next week that will break down the key provisions of the federal budget package, focusing on cuts to Medicaid, SNAP, and other major programs and tax policies. The analysis will also include an examination of how the state budget responds to these threats, and what state leaders can and should be doing to mitigate harm. They will also take a brief look at other threats that could be coming down the line, including proposed cuts via the federal appropriations process.

Upcoming analysis may be found at CBPC's website and please consider sharing widely when it is released.

Additionally, [please join CBPC on August 7th at 12 PM for a federal budget update](#) for friends, partners, advocates, and all who are interested in understanding how the federal and state budget will impact Californians, and what we and state leaders can do to protect communities. CCWRO is grateful to the CBPC for their excellent work in helping the community understand what is happening in the public benefits landscape, responding to the harmful actions, and calling on elected officials to take necessary steps to continue to protect vulnerable Californians from basic needs cuts

**2025 CalSAWS Annual Conference & JPA Member
Representatives Meeting.**

San Diego June 26-27, 2025

by Heather Willoughby



I attended the [Annual CalSAWS Conference](#), in part, to be in community with other advocates who are focused on improving technology and access to public benefits. Since starting this work at CCWRO, the majority of my interactions with public benefits

stakeholders have been virtual, so it was exciting to have the opportunity to meet stakeholders face-to-face.

Two plenary sessions at the conference were particularly impactful. In one plenary, Julia Erdkamp, CalSAWS Executive Director, outlined CalSAWS' top four objectives:

- Enhance self service access
- Streamline Administrative Processes
- Enhance User Experience and Support
- Enhance Reporting, Analytics, and Client Communication Capabilities for Greater Flexibility and Insights

Better transparency and accountability for addressing issues were highlighted in both the director's musically infectious video explaining the upcoming transition from CalSAWS Enhancement Requests (CERs) to Business Case Requests (BCRs), and plenary focusing on the Collaboration Model Redesign.

My main takeaways were that the new BCR process will involve a dedicated form, a guided submission timeline, prioritization based on input from the Project Steering Committee (PSC), and research within dedicated workgroups of stakeholders, including advocate input. For a more detailed report back from the conference from a seasoned advocate, please see California Association of Food Banks' Jennifer Tracy's highlights on page 8 of [CAFB's July newsletter](#). *The Collaboration Model* plenary spotli

ghted how much intention went into developing the stakeholder engagement experience for the new BCR process. It was great to see and hear about the wonderful work that Jennifer has been doing to elevate advocate input.

It was also great to get some facetime with Ryan Gillette, the Chief Data Officer and Deputy Director over the Research, Automation, and Data Division (RADD) from DSS,

to have a free flowing conversation regarding student data issues in CalSAWS/BenefitsCal. The conversation with Ryan shed some light on the intersectionality of the issues different CBO's and advocates are having.

I was alerted to another student issue in the *Cracking the Code: Return Mail* breakout session. The volume of returned mail from dorms for students on public benefits has a burdensome and costly effect on counties with large colleges. Counties have to pay for mail return service and often times students on school breaks or who have graduated do not have their mail forwarded. This is an issue I feel we should be coordinating with other basic needs advocates in higher education spaces to help address; and if others know more about this issue please connect with me via my email: Heather.Willoughby@ccwro.org

Attending the conference was illuminating and educational, and the technical aspect of things was sometimes overwhelming, so I am so thankful for our coalition partners for facilitating introductions, clarifying abbreviations/acronyms and elevating timely issues.

Mark your calendars for next year's conference at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco on June 24 - 26th, 2026

AB 79: Codifying California's Commitment to Bridging Barriers for Students Accessing Public Benefits

By Heather Willoughby



Food, housing, mental health, and financial support are foundational to educational success. The *Public Social Services: Benefits for Students* bill ([AB 79](#)) by Assemblymember Joaquin Arambula will strengthen the basic needs safety net for students by facilitating better communication between basic needs coordinator/staff liaison at higher education institutions and county welfare offices. It does so through training and an ongoing stakeholder workgroup to receive input from basic needs coordinator/liaisons to county welfare offices, with the end goal of increasing student awareness of programs like CalFresh, CalWORKs, and MediCal. AB 79 also formalizes oversight and accountability by requiring a report to the Legislature on or before May 1, 2027, and every three years thereafter that would contain findings, recommendations, trends, best practices, and services offered by CDSS and available to students in higher education.

AB 79 has received bipartisan support and has been on the “consent” calendar – meaning the author of the bill may waive presentation and debate of the bill as deemed not necessary – in both the human service and education hearings committees. AB 79 is currently queued for the Senate Appropriations Committee and then a Senate floor vote on its pathway to the governor's desk.

The California Association of Food Banks (CAFB), Center for Healthy Communities (CHC), Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organization (CCWRO), Michelson Center for Public Policy, and UAspire are all co-sponsors. AB 79 builds upon the intent of [AB 1326](#) (Arambula, Ch. 570,

Statutes of 2021), which established county based higher education liaisons to help facilitate better outcomes and utilization of public benefits for students.

AB 79 addresses the issues identified in the legislative report for [AB 1326](#) by creating better pathways for sharing best practices and successful approaches to enrolling students in benefit programs across California. Coordinating 58 counties with 149 public colleges in California is a significant feat being undertaken by the Center for Healthy Communities (CHC) in partnership with the County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA), California Department of Social Services (CDSS), California State University (CSU), University of California (UC), and California Community Colleges (CCC). The implementation of AB 1326 has been challenging from both administrative and budgetary perspectives.

I have been following AB 1326 since it was passed in hopes that it would clear up some issues I had as a student and later as a staff serving students in the UC system. While in a session about supporting parenting students at the California Higher Education Basic Needs Alliance (CHEBNA) Summit in January of 2024, I brought up how badly I needed the local county higher education liaison to respond to my emails. Sana Jaffery, then legislative aide and now legislative director for Assemblymember Dr. Arambula, announced that the member already had a bill – [AB 2150](#) (Arambula/Silva) – in the works to address the issue. While AB 2150 was held in the Assembly Committee for Appropriations, AB 79 continues the bill's legislative intent.

Torina Craig, the Alameda county higher education liaison, was also in that session. It was so important to hear her perspective about navigating the complex nature of intertwined state, federal and county policies, as well as campus specific policies. She mentioned that there was minimal interaction between the higher education liaisons and that the positions were left up to the counties to interpret and implement as they saw fit.

Undergraduate student researcher from UC Berkeley, Kimberly Salazar, found two main takeaways when examining the experiences of CalWORKs student-parents at 4-year universities:

1. Caseworker discretion impacts benefit utilization of academic supportive services for student-parents. Student-parents are going without the necessary academic supportive services that they are entitled to because caseworkers do not connect them to, nor administer, the proper supportive services.
2. Inaccessible caseworkers and archaic/complex mechanisms of submitting required CalWORKs documentations are associated with psychological costs and benefit discontinuances.

Very little has changed for CalWORKs students since Kimberly wrote to me in May of 2023 to answer questions I had about the implementation of both AB 1326 and [SB 1232](#) (Glazer, Ch. 366, Statutes of 2020). In spite of upgrades to the CalSAWS/BenefitsCal online portal, documentation

uploads continue to be an issue. Student experience still seems to be driven by whether they get a worker who is up to date on current policy and training, particularly about exemptions and ancillary services for students.

The lack of support for student parents in the CalWORKs program is harmful, counter-productive, and alarming at times. For example, in a May 16, 2025, meeting with SPARC students from the Community College CalWORKs Association, some students mentioned that they have been dissuaded from transferring to a 4-year school by their county workers. This is alarming as [higher education is one of the best pathways out of poverty](#) and to self-sufficiency.

These and related issues highlighted by the AB 1326 report makes clear that the [All County Letter \(ACL\) 22-48 \(June 10, 2022\)](#) and [All County Information Notice \(ACIN\) No. I-85-22 \(January 12, 2023\)](#), are not achieving success for students eligible for MediCal and CalWORKs (although they are having some success with CalFresh students). It is clear that additional coordination and facilitation needs to be had to address these training and utilization gaps.

The onus of improvement to public benefits access doesn't just lie with the counties. The 4-year universities are going to need to appoint staff dedicated to CalWORKs, similar to the CalWORKs Association, already established in the California Community College system. And all three higher education systems should appoint dedicated MediCal staff to help students determine if they should accept university based health insurance or MediCal, and identify, determine, and facilitate intercounty transfers if needed.

When economic and moral imperatives align, helping students meet basic needs is a matter of justice and good policy. With the swiftly changing federal landscape including changes that have been proposed from HR 1 and new guidance and interpretations, communication is more vital than ever before. If passed, AB 79 will help students, colleges and counties navigate the changes.

CCWRO is an IOLTA funded support center serving IOLTA legal services programs in California offering the following services: Litigation, Co-Counseling, Fair Hearing, Representation, Consultation, Informational Services, Research Services, In-Depth Consultation and Welfare Training. Programs Covered: CalWORK including Welfare-to-Work (WtW), CalFresh, Medi-Cal, (In Home Supportive Services) IHSS, (Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants) CAPI, Child Care, General Assistance & Refugee/Immigrant Eligibility.

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