

U.S. News > Advocates urge greater funding for human needs programs in California

Advocates urge greater funding for human needs programs in California



by: **MARILYN BECHTEL**

may 21 2015

tags: **California, national, U.S., politics**

[Print](#) | [Email to a Friend](#)



Restoring and increasing funds for California's human needs programs tops the agenda of many legislators and public policy advocates as this year's budget negotiations move into their final weeks.

But though revenues have grown by nearly \$6.7 billion since January, when Governor Jerry Brown first issued his 2015-2016 **budget proposals**, the

governor continued to hold to his historically cautious approach to human needs spending in the revised proposals he issued May 14.

Brown's new budget calls for \$115.3 billion in general fund spending, just slightly higher than the \$113.3 billion he proposed in January.

"Another recession is on the way, we just don't know when," Brown said in presenting his May Revision. "That's why this budget locks billions into the Rainy Day Fund and pays down debt."

At the same time, the governor pointed out, the budget "spends more than ever on schools and creates a new tax credit to help California's poor."

Almost all the new revenue will go to a voter-approved constitutional funding guarantee for K-12 education, and to the "Rainy Day" fund approved by voters last November. (California's per pupil funding of public education is

still lower than most other states.)

In a new initiative to aid the state's poorest residents, Brown proposed a state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to complement the federal EITC. Brown said some two million extremely poor Californians, with incomes less than \$6,580 for individuals and \$13,870 for families with three or more dependents, would benefit.

State Senate President Pro Tem Kevin De León, D-Los Angeles, said the EITC is "an important anti-poverty tool" but "no substitute for a good-paying job." Calling child care and higher education "important investments" in the state's future, De León said, "We can and will do more to ensure our budget reflects these priorities."

Reflecting the ongoing struggle by advocates and lawmakers to restore funds repeatedly slashed from human needs programs in recent years, the San Francisco-based Child Care Law Center said the current economic recovery "follows a period during which California lost over one-third of its child care and development system," and now the state provides child care and early education opportunities to about 90,000 fewer children than in 2007 - the year before the financial crisis struck.

"Notwithstanding unexpectedly high revenues, the May Revise maintains funding for California's child care and early education systems at dangerously low levels," the Center **said in a statement**.

The Center, which works to help economically struggling families access quality child care, is calling for increased funding for early childhood education programs, child care needed by working families transitioning from CalWORKS welfare programs, and training for child care providers.

While praising the May Revise for including MediCal (state Medicaid) funding for immigrants with deferred action status, the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network (CPEHN) said the governor's call to "lock funds away" in a rainy day fund "won't help Medi-Cal recipients who are struggling to find a doctor because of low reimbursement rates ... or those on CalWORKS whose benefits were cut so severely that they remain in deep poverty."

The Health Access Coalition of nearly 60 organizations called on the legislature "to craft a budget that includes investments needed to reduce barriers to coverage, increase access for Medi-Cal patients, and cover the remaining uninsured."

Both CPEHN and Health Access highlighted legislation introduced late last year by state Senator Ricardo Lara, D-Bell Gardens, to extend health coverage to all Californians regardless of **immigration status**, Lara said Gov. Brown's new proposed budget "begins to address the lack of access to health care for undocumented Californians, but it does not go far enough," and urged continuing work to pass SB 4, the Health for All Act.

Lara said Brown's proposal of \$5 million to help undocumented Californians apply for deferred action status is in line with legislation he has introduced to help immigrants **gain legal status**.

But, he said, the governor's budget "falls short of what is necessary to adequately help over a million eligible immigrants further integrate into the fabric of our communities and economy."

While crediting Brown with helping move the state toward financial stability, the Courage Campaign's Dr. Paul Song said the nine million Californians "still struggling to make ends meet" need Brown "to make even bolder investments in California, like restoring the devastating cuts to the Health and Human Services budget and funding programs that welcome immigrants out of the shadows." Calling Brown's budget "a step in the right direction," Song added, "There is still more to do, and Courage Campaign's one million members will continue to push Gov. Brown to get it done.

Photo: Immigrant rights advocates say Gov. Brown's proposal of \$5 million to help undocumented Californians apply for deferred action status, while a step in the right direction, falls short of what it really will take to enable full integration into the community of more than a million eligible immigrants. | Marilyn Bechtel/PW



Except where otherwise noted, content on www.peoplesworld.org is licensed under a **Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License**

Legal