



California Immigrant Welfare Collaborative

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LEGISLATIVE AGENDA FOR 2006

CALIFORNIA IMMIGRANT WELFARE COLLABORATIVE (CIWC)

As home to the largest immigrant population in the country, it is critical for California to implement policies aimed at integrating immigrants into our communities, schools and businesses. Like other Californians, immigrant families need access to health care to remain productive. They must be able to rely on a safety net to support them in difficult times. To become more engaged in our society and political process, they need access to citizenship services and civic participation opportunities. Investing in California's immigrants will allow California to reap the enormous benefits of its immigrant communities whose cultural and economic contributions have helped to make California one of the largest economies in the world.

PRESERVE ACCESS TO THE SAFETY NET FOR SENIORS, PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND LOW WAGE WORKING FAMILIES— Once again, the Governor's budget targets our state's most vulnerable residents: immigrant seniors, working families and persons with disabilities. The Administration is proposing to impose fifteen years of sponsor deeming on immigrant seniors and persons with disabilities who need the **Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI)**. The Administration also proposes to cut county administrative funding for CalWORKs, which will undermine the goals of the program by denying access to services such as domestic violence and substance abuse counseling, job training, and English as a second language—which help recipients transition from CalWORKs into higher paying jobs.

ENHANCE CITIZENSHIP AND THE POSITIVE INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS IN CALIFORNIA— California's immigrants are eager to participate fully in the economic, cultural and political life of their newly adopted home. However, many immigrants lack the tools or information they need to do so. California is poised to benefit from the successful integration of immigrants by providing language acquisition, naturalization services, and other critical services to immigrants and their children and to recognize the contributions of immigrants.

- **Support AB 2060 (De La Torre) THE NEW CALIFORNIANS ACT—** In California, **2.7 million** immigrants are currently eligible to naturalize¹, but there are not enough services to assist them through this difficult and expensive process. AB 2060 would address this urgent need by providing comprehensive naturalization services coordinated through a collaborative, community-based model.² By requiring regional coordination and consistency of services, the New Californians Initiative would ensure that immigrants who are eligible to become citizens not only have access to naturalization services but also engage in a *process* toward citizenship that emphasizes increased civic engagement and skills building.
- **SUPPORT SB 1267 (CEDILLO) STATE OFFICE OF IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS—** This bill would establish the Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA) within the Community Services and Development Department. The OIA would work with organizations to ensure the success of the NSP program, create an advisory committee to serve as a liaison between the OIA and the immigrant community, and work toward ensuring the successful integration of California's immigrants. This Office also would make policy recommendations to the Legislature to

¹ Michael Fix, Jeffrey S. Passel, and Kenneth Sucher. "Trends in Naturalization", *Immigrant Families and Workers: Facts and Perspectives Brief No. 3*. Urban Institute. September 2003.

² NSP currently utilizes a similar geographic breakdown. However, service areas will be based on geographic, organizational, and demographic considerations.

address the needs of immigrant communities in California and would develop strategies to promote the contributions of immigrants in California.

EXPAND ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE AND OTHER CRITICAL SERVICES FOR LOW-INCOME IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES - Immigrants in California are concentrated in low-wage jobs that rarely offer health coverage. In recent years, job based insurance coverage in California has declined steadily.³ Public health programs are therefore instrumental in providing access to health coverage for working families throughout the state. CIWC supports legislative efforts to expand access to health coverage and other critical services for immigrants and their families.

- **SUPPORT SB 840 (KUEHL)-SINGLE PAYER**-which would ensure access to health coverage for all Californians through a state-sponsored single-payer plan.
- **SUPPORT SB 437 (ESCUTIA-CHAN) HEALTH INSURANCE FOR CALIFORNIA'S CHILDREN**-This bill would create the California Healthy Kids Program (CHKIP), which is intended to ensure that the current children's health insurance infrastructure operates in a coordinated and seamless manner. SB 437 would allow more children to have immediate access to health care by expanding "accelerated enrollment," and gateways to health coverage for children who apply for other state services such as WIC, CHDP, and the National School Lunch Program. Children who apply through these gateways will have access to health care at least until a final eligibility determination is made.
- **SUPPORT SB 1569 (KUEHL) ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIMS**-This bill would ensure that human trafficking victims in California have access to state and local services. Human trafficking victims are eligible to receive federal benefits once the federal government certifies their case. However, due to bureaucratic and other delays, human trafficking victims may be forced to wait for months before becoming certified by the U.S. Department of Human Services or the Department of Homeland Security. SB 1569 would provide critical services to immigrant survivors of trafficking, domestic violence and other serious crimes during the interim period.

ENSURING FAIR LABOR PROTECTIONS FOR HOUSEHOLD WORKERS —California's immigrant workers fuel our state's growing economy. However, because of our broken immigration system, many are forced to work in low-paying jobs with minimal labor protections. California's lowest paid workers deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

SUPPORT AB 2536 (MONTANEZ)- OVERTIME COMPENSATION FOR HOUSEHOLD WORKERS-This bill would extend overtime provisions to household workers allowing them to recover unlawfully withheld wages or unpaid overtime wages. AB 2536 would also allow workers to recover liquidated damages equal to the wages withheld, plus interest.

END BURDENSOME BARRIERS TO STATE BENEFITS PROGRAMS- Currently, over 2 million residents in California are eligible for food stamps but are not enrolled in the program. California must take important steps to eliminate barriers so that eligible families with children can enroll in the Food Stamp Program. Once enrolled, it is important to provide families the ability to secure nutritional food and meals in their neighborhoods and schools.

- **SUPPORT AB 3029 (LAIRD) FOOD STAMP SIMPLIFICATION ACT**-This bill would make several changes to the Food Stamp Program, including the repeal of the quarterly status reporting, which would be replaced with a semi-annual reporting requirement. The bill also would require DSS to seek a federal waiver to exempt recipients from the face-to-face interview for food stamp re-certification. Recipients' work schedules and lack of day care makes it difficult to attend these interviews. Finally, the bill would require DSS to create a demonstration

³E. Richard Brown and Shana Alex Lavarreda. "Job based coverage Drops for Adults and children but Public Program Boost Children's Coverage." UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, Feb 2005

project to simplify access to the food stamp program by reducing the amount of information required from applicants.

- **SUPPORT AB 2384 (LENO) HEALTHY FOOD PURCHASE PROGRAM** This bill would create the "Healthy Food Purchase" pilot program to increase the sale and purchase of fresh food and vegetables in low-income communities. This bill would allow food stamp recipients to use their food stamps to purchase fruits and vegetables in their local markets. The bill would increase access to nutritional food for food stamp recipients.
- **SUPPORT AB 1916 (GARCIA) NUTRITION FOR NEEDY KIDS, NEEDY SCHOOLS-** This bill would require schools at which 40% or more students qualify for free or reduced-price meals to offer the School Breakfast Program. The bill would also require all schools 85% or more qualify for free or reduced school lunch to eliminate school meal paperwork by implementing a federal option known as "Provision 2."

For more information about CIWC's Legislative Agenda, contact Jeannette Zanipatin, CIWC Statewide Policy Analyst, at (916) 448-6762.