

CALIFORNIA IMMIGRANT WELFARE COLLABORATIVE
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Governor Davis Issues May Revision to State Budget FAILS TO CONTINUE CFAP AND CAPI FOR POST-AUG. 22, 1996, ENTRANTS

Although the May revision to his proposed state budget contains provisions continuing low-cost health insurance coverage for qualified immigrant children, Governor Gray Davis chose not to extend eligibility for two critical state-funded support programs to certain groups of immigrants. By contrast, budget committees from both houses of the legislature, as well as the entire Assembly, have approved proposals enacting such extensions. But many immigrants' rights advocates worry that persons who entered the United States after the federal welfare law passed will lose cash and nutrition assistance benefits later this fall—unless the governor can be persuaded not to disagree with the legislature on these issues.

What follows is a summary of the May revision's budget proposals for the three major state-funded programs affecting immigrants, as well as an update of the status of those programs as budget negotiations between the governor and legislative leaders move into their final stages.

Healthy Families. California's State Children's Health Insurance Program, Healthy Families provides affordable health care coverage to children in low-income families. The May revision proposes \$59.2 million to fund the program, including provisions to cover qualified immigrant children who entered the U.S. on or after Aug. 22, 1996, the enactment date of the federal act that overhauled federal welfare law. However, it is not clear whether the governor intends to cover such immigrant children indefinitely or only for another year. Both the Assembly and Senate budget committees have voted to delete the current 12-month limit on coverage.

Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI). The state CAPI program provides cash assistance to otherwise eligible immigrants who, due to the 1996 federal welfare law, cannot receive federal Supplemental Security Income. The program is slated for funding at \$57 million. However, the governor's revised budget does *not* contain provisions extending CAPI eligibility for most qualified post-Aug. 22, 1996, entrants beyond Sept. 30, 2000. The Assembly and Senate budget committees have deleted the Sept. 30 termination date.

California Food Assistance Program (CFAP). CFAP was initially implemented to provide nutrition assistance to otherwise eligible immigrants present in the U.S. prior to Aug. 22, 1996, but who were rendered ineligible for federal food stamps by the 1996 federal welfare law. The governor's May revision calls for \$46.2 million in funding to provide benefits to those individuals. How-

ever, as with CAPI, the revised budget does *not* continue to provide benefits to most qualified post-Aug. 22, 1996, entrants beyond Sept. 30, 2000. The Assembly and Senate budget committees have deleted the Sept. 30 termination date.

The May revision also allocates \$37.8 million to fund Healthy Families outreach activities and \$300 million to create an English language literacy program to serve students in kindergarten

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IMMIGRANT DAY 2000: EMERGING VOICES, BUILDING A STRONG CALIFORNIA

Immigrants Call on Legislators to Use State Surplus to Fund Health Care, Basic Assistance Programs

Over 650 immigrant community members and advocates converged on Sacramento on May 9, 2000, to urge Governor Gray Davis and state legislators to use some of the state's \$13 billion surplus to fund health care and other support programs for immigrants. Having traveled on buses that departed from several cities throughout the state, participants in Immigrant Day 2000 also worked to highlight the economic contributions and emerging political voice of immigrants in California.

"Immigrants are contributing to every facet of California's booming economy—from the high-tech workers in Silicon Valley to the farmworkers, janitors, garment workers, and other low-wage workers throughout this state," observed Rini Chakraborty, policy analyst with the California Immigrant Welfare Collaborative. "Yet many immigrant workers and families are struggling to provide health care for their children, put food on the table for their families, and care for vulnerable family members—despite a \$13 billion state surplus."

As with previous Immigrant Days, this year's event led off with a press conference and featured a noontime rally that took place near the steps of the capitol building. Immigrant commu-

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• CIWC brochure details likely impact of cuts (p. 2)

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through 12th grade. On the legislative side, both the Senate and Assembly budget committees have approved the \$7 million included in the governor's budget for naturalization assistance services and decided to defund the state National Guard's border enforcement activities.

The Senate budget committee has also allocated \$2 million to establish a centralized translation bank to help state agencies comply with the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act, likely

in response to a report issued last November 1999 by the State Auditor's office (see "State Audit Findings: CA Not Meeting the Needs of Limited English-Proficient Residents," CALIFORNIA UPDATE, Dec. 29, 1999, p. 1). However, because the Assembly budget committee did not include funding for this project, the issue will be resolved by a budget conference committee.

The governor issued his May revision on May 15, 2000. The full legislature is due to vote soon on a budget that will, absent intervention by the governor, adopt the legislative committees' decisions.

Immigrant Day 2000 (continued from page 1)

nity members who traveled from cities as nearby as East Palo Alto, Fresno, and San Jose, and as distant as Los Angeles and San Diego, also participated in visits with their state representatives, marking for many their entrée into the political process.

Unlike previous years' events, Immigrant Day 2000 broadened its focus to encompass issues important to immigrants that go beyond eligibility for public benefits. Participants expressed concern about proposals that may restrict immigrants' access to driver's licenses, as well as those relating to higher educational opportunities and the provision of linguistically appropriate access to government services.

Immigrant Day participants also urged state policymakers to extend the availability of state-funded benefits—health insurance and cash and nutrition assistance—to low-income immigrants who are ineligible for certain federally funded versions of such programs. Specifically, their efforts focused on two Assembly bills whose passage would extend eligibility beyond termination dates that, depending on the program, may take effect as early as this fall.

Sponsored by Assemblyperson Carole Migden, A.B. 2415 addresses eligibility for Healthy Families, California's low-cost health insurance program for children in low-income families. If passed, A.B. 2415 will allow qualified immigrant children to enroll in the program regardless of the date on which they entered the U.S. Under current law, children who entered the country on or after Aug. 22, 1996—when the federal welfare law was passed—and who enroll in the program by June 30, 2000, will lose Healthy Families eligibility after only 12 months of coverage.

A.B. 2417 would maintain eligibility for both the California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) and Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI), which were enacted by the state to provide nutrition and cash assistance to immigrants rendered ineligible for federal food stamps and Supplemental Security Income. Introduced by Assemblyperson Marco Antonio Firebaugh, A.B. 2417 will, if passed, extend CFAP and CAPI eligibility beyond Sept. 30, 2000, for persons who entered the U.S. on or after Aug. 22, 1996.

Immigrant Day 2000 also highlighted the demographic changes that are rapidly transforming California into a state in which minority populations will soon comprise the majority. Results of Census 2000, demographers predict, will confirm such projections. Immigrant Day planners urged the state to enact policies that acknowledge the significant contributions immigrants have made to the economic boom California currently enjoys.

"It's time to build a new, more inclusive California," said Den-

Brochure Details Likely Impact of Possible Benefits Cuts

A booklet published by the California Immigrant Welfare Collaborative details the likely impact that the prospective termination of three state-funded benefit programs will have on immigrant families who entered the United States after the federal welfare law was enacted in 1996. "Portraits of Californians . . . Who Will Lose Their Health Care, Food Stamps, and Basic Assistance Unless Our State Acts Now" tells the stories of several immigrant individuals and families whose well-being will be compromised should the state decline to maintain benefits eligibility for them and other similarly situated persons.

The brochure recounts the stories of immigrants at risk, including those of:

- Ms. Garcia, an immigrant from Colombia and a victim of domestic violence. She and her three U.S. citizen children face the likelihood of going hungry due to possible cuts in the California Food Assistance Program.
- The Ramoses, recent immigrants from Mexico who work in low-wage jobs that do not provide medical insurance. Although the Ramos children are currently covered by the Healthy Families program, two of them have serious eye defects requiring continuous care. However, as persons who immigrated after the federal welfare law was enacted, they currently qualify for only one year of coverage.
- Father Dang, a 77-year-old Catholic priest who immigrated to the U.S. from Vietnam in 1997. His advanced age and infirmity prevent him from continuing his ministry. He lives alone in a rented apartment, has no family, and should he lose his benefits under the Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants, he will surely become homeless.

Beginning June 12, 2000, the booklet may be downloaded from CIWC's web site at www.nilc.org/ciwc/ciwcindex.htm.

nis Kao, policy coordinator with the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, and one of the event's key planners. "California is rapidly changing and it's time that anti-immigrant policies change as well."

Endorsed by more than 100 organizations in California that assist low-income individuals, Immigrant Day 2000 drew delegations of immigrant community members from throughout the state. The event was organized by the California Immigrant Welfare Collaborative.