



CHILD CARE LAW CENTER

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EMERGENCY COURT ORDER SOUGHT TO PRESERVE CHILD CARE FOR THOUSANDS OF CALIFORNIA WORKING FAMILIES

*Lawsuit filed on behalf of those who depend on subsidized
child care to keep their jobs and remain self-sufficient*

OAKLAND, CA – A coalition of public interest law groups petitioned the Alameda County Superior Court late Thursday to save critical child care funding for working low-income California families, money that was cut out of the California budget by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's last-minute, line-item veto. A court hearing is set for 11:00 a.m. today in Department 31 before the Hon. Frank Roesch at the Alameda County courthouse.

The suit, filed by Parent Voices Oakland and four California mothers who have been told their child care assistance will end on Monday, asks the court to order the California Department of Education to temporarily halt the implementation of the Governor's veto, which would leave the working parents of more than 56,000 children without the critical assistance they need to keep their jobs.

"If these cuts are allowed to go into effect on Monday, thousands of California families will face not only a violation of their rights but also incalculable hardship," said Stephen Ronfeldt, the Co-Director of the Public Interest Law Project.

"These parents are the success stories who left welfare and are supporting their families," said Melissa Rodgers, the Directing Attorney of the Child Care Law Center. "The Administration's actions undermine the entire purpose of the subsidized child care system and will thrust these families back into poverty next week."

Without state child care support, known as CalWORKs Stage 3 child care, it is likely that many of these working parents will have to choose between leaving their young children unattended during the work day or quitting their jobs. The result: higher unemployment and more people forced to seek public assistance.

“For people like me, not having child care means no job, no money, basically being homeless. If I can’t go to work I can’t support my family and I’m a single mother so I I’m the sole support for my children,” said petitioner Brandie Brownlee, who received notice that she will lose her child care subsidy on Monday. “Also for me, I lose two ways because I work for a child care provider so I lose my child care as well as my job.”

“Governor Schwarzenegger’s termination of child care for 60,000 California children, with almost no advance notice, has devastated working parents and children,” said Corean Todd, a board member for Parent Voices Oakland, an advocacy group of low-income parents who rely on subsidized child care and the lead petitioner in the lawsuit. “Parents are simply unable to work if they do not have child care for their children: many will immediately lose their jobs as a result of the Governor’s action. They are being forced to choose between caring for their children and being employed and providing an income.”

The abrupt elimination of CalWORKs Stage 3 child care services is scheduled to go into effect on November 1. The lawsuit seeks an emergency order keeping the funds in place and requiring the state to assist Stage 3 parents in finding other possible sources of child care assistance.

“The Governor’s cruel cut to child care funding upends the very premise that government should support working families and encourage self-reliance,” said Catherine Lhamon, Director of Impact Litigation at Public Counsel Law Center. “We hope the Court will restore to California’s working families the capacity to meet their own subsistence needs.”

The suit was brought by the Public Interest Law Project, the Child Care Law Center, the Western Center on Law & Poverty, Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County, Public Counsel Law Center, and Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles.

The Public Interest Law Project provides crucial litigation and advocacy support to local legal services and public interest law programs throughout California. (<http://www.pilpca.org>)

The Child Care Law Center is a national nonprofit legal services organization that works to make high quality, affordable child care available to every child, every family, and every community. (<http://www.childcarelaw.org>)

The Western Center on Law & Poverty, Inc. fights for justice and system-wide change to secure housing, healthcare and a strong safety net for low-income Californians. (<http://www.wclp.org>)

Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County provides free legal services to low-income residents throughout Los Angeles County. (<http://www.nls-la.org>)

Public Counsel Law Center is the nation’s largest public interest law firm specializing in delivering pro bono legal services to low-income communities. (<http://www.publiccounsel.org>)

The Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA) is the frontline law firm for low-income people in Los Angeles. (<http://www.lafla.org>)