

COUNTY OF EL DORADO

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June 11, 2024

The Honorable Mike McGuire
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for District 1

The Honorable Brian Dahle
California State Senator for District 1

The Honorable Joe Patterson
California State Assembly Member
for District 5

**RE: 2024-25 Joint Legislative Budget Proposal: Preserve Round 6 HHAP
Funding, Public Health Infrastructure, and Human Services Funding**

Dear Honorable California State Senators and Assembly Members,

El Dorado County writes to express support for the \$1 billion appropriation for Round 6 of the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) program in the Joint Legislative Budget Plan for the 2024-25 state budget, and to express gratitude for the rejection of numerous proposed cuts to public health infrastructure and human services programs including CalWORKs, child welfare, and adult protective services. We appreciate the Legislature understanding how vital this funding is for county administered programs and services that vulnerable Californians rely on every day.

El Dorado County understands the difficult decisions State Leadership is facing during these uncertain times. We are committed to solutions to address the budget problem in the best interests of California's vulnerable populations and to preserve core services. El Dorado County believes that budget priorities should begin with the protection of services that fundamentally protect the most vulnerable members of our communities and preserve the quality of life for all Californians, as the Joint Legislative Budget Plan does by funding Round 6 of the HHAP program and rejecting cuts to critical social safety net programs.

Maintain Investments in Homelessness Programs

El Dorado County strongly supports the inclusion of \$1 billion in the 2024-25 state budget for the HHAP program and urges the Legislature to maintain this investment throughout final state budget negotiations. Now is not the time to pull back on the commitment to these programs, but rather to maintain and strengthen our investments.

Failure to provide ongoing funding or funding for Round 6 of the HHAP program will have devastating impacts on local homelessness response efforts. Counties will be forced to reduce services, housing, and support for thousands of clients who are utilizing services and rental support to stay housed. The HHAP program that the Legislature previously funded at unprecedented levels is successfully transitioning individuals into permanent housing. However, the inflow into homelessness continues to outpace our collective efforts and progress can only be accelerated by providing necessary funding to maintain and strengthen these investments.

El Dorado County has made significant progress on investing in homelessness response efforts with a 60-bed temporary Navigation Center that serves as an emergency shelter and was opened in February 2023, among other housing & homelessness services. The Navigation Center has served over 164 persons, including 58 females and 106 males. The primary goal within the shelter is to transition participants to permanent housing. Shelter participants receive access to supportive services including physical and behavioral health, job readiness and income stabilization, document readiness, case management, and other supports as they work towards the goal of permanent housing. With over \$6 million in HHAP funding for FY 2024-25, future funding is critical to maintain the investments El Dorado County has made towards reducing homelessness in our community. Future funding will assist the County in the construction of a permanent Navigation Center and transitional housing options that are currently unavailable.

Safeguard Public Health Infrastructure

El Dorado County strongly supports the Legislature's rejection of the May Revision cuts that impact Public Health Infrastructure funding. During the Covid Pandemic, El Dorado County, along with the State of California, became aware of the importance in developing a Public Health staffing structure able to meet the demands of future emerging infectious diseases. Cuts to this funding would undo some of the work that counties have done to better prepare for future pandemics.

El Dorado County has not only been able to fund Infectious Disease programs like the immunization program, but also other Public Health programs such as Maternal Child and Adolescent Health, California Children's Services for children with complex medical needs, and the Health Care Program for Children in Foster Care with state Public Health funding.

Preserve Safety Net Programs

El Dorado County strongly supports the Legislature's rejection of the May Revision cuts that impact core safety net services. Individuals and families are at risk of falling further into poverty if these funding reductions and program eliminations are enacted. The proposed cuts to CalWORKs, child welfare, adult protective services, and other human services programs will have detrimental impacts to the services that vulnerable Californians rely on every day. Unfortunately, these cuts will exacerbate challenges counties are facing to operate programs, hire and retain staff, and meet required mandates for enrolling individuals and providing access to services. El Dorado County urges you to not balance the budget on the backs of the most vulnerable Californians, but instead preserve the state's safety net.

El Dorado County had approximately 730 households receiving CalWORKs benefits in December 2023 which is a 6.9% increase from 683 households in December 2022. Adult Protective Services continues to grow at the rate of 10.5% annually and investigated 1,904 referrals in Fiscal Year 2022-23 with 2,053 projected referrals for Fiscal Year 2023-24. There was a 9% increase in child welfare referrals in 2023 from 2022 in El Dorado County. While the substantiation of referrals is at 6% of referrals, down from 8% in 2022, the increase in referrals creates an increase in workload to investigate the referrals. It would be counterintuitive to make cuts to these programs when the need for them and the workload for our employees is increasing.

El Dorado County appreciates the continued engagement to strengthen state and local relationships, and to realize the opportunities to safeguard fiscal resources to best support the people we collectively serve. Should you have any questions regarding the information outlined in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully,

Wendy Thomas, Chair
El Dorado County Board of Supervisors