

State Schools Chief Jack O'Connell Calls on Governor to be Honest with Families about the Lack of Support for Child Care Services

SACRAMENTO — State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell today called on Governor Schwarzenegger to tell the truth to working families who are impacted by his veto of the CalWORKS Stage 3 program.

“The California Department of Education (CDE) has been inundated with calls this past week from panicked families who have just learned that they no longer have access to needed child care services due to the Governor’s veto of the CalWORKS Stage 3 program,” said O'Connell. “These families tell us they were referred to CDE by Governor Schwarzenegger’s staff who told them that there are other child care programs with available funding that can help them right away. The Governor’s staff is giving these families false hope by saying that there are other services available to help them now. The governor and his staff know full well that thousands of California children are already on waiting lists for these scarce child care services. The elimination of CalWORKS Stage 3 child care for working families just added tens of thousands of new names to the waiting lists. Offering parents false hope that alternative state-funded child care options are readily available to them is cruel and shameless.”

While there are other state and federally supported child care programs in California, the need far outweighs capacity. Last month there were more than 187,000 children on the waiting list for child care services. An additional 54,000 names will now be added to that list with the elimination of the CalWORKS Stage 3 program, a statewide increase of 30 percent.

The governor eliminated the CalWORKS Stage 3 Child Care Program using his blue pencil to veto \$256 million when he signed the budget last week. The effective program was developed to help working-poor families that have been off of welfare for two years so parents could go to work. The veto of funding for CalWORKS Stage 3 will terminate in just two weeks the needed child care services for more than 54,000 children currently in the program, along with the approximately 1,500 children a month who will be exhausting their child care eligibility in Stage 2, and will no longer be able to transition into Stage 3 child care services.

“This veto undermines the efforts of working families, primarily single parents with one or two children, to become and remain self-sufficient, said O'Connell. “It is a heartless attack on working parents with children, who are trying to do the right thing to support their families.”

“In Sacramento County alone, the CalWORKS funding cut will eliminate child care for more than 2,800 children,” said Donna Sneeringer, Public Affairs Manager with Child Action, Inc., a large child care agency in Sacramento County. “We have more than 4,000 children waiting for care on our waiting list. The governor’s veto will add another 2,800 children to our county's waiting list. That is an increase of over 70 percent. These families are crying out to the Governor for help”

“The governor showed a complete disregard for California’s working families when he eliminated CalWORKS Stage 3, said O'Connell. “I fear these

families will find themselves with nowhere to go and will have to quit the jobs they worked so hard to attain. With California experiencing a 12% unemployment rate, this was clearly the wrong cut and the wrong time.”