



AB 850: Child Welfare Worker Retention Program

Background Information

California needs comprehensive policy strategies toward recruitment and retention within the child welfare career field. Child welfare workers are amongst the lowest paid social workers while comprising nearly half of the child, family and school social workers in the State. Nearly half of the workforce is over the age of 40, and the racial/ethnic composition of children in the foster care system does not reflect that of the workforce. The industry needs more diversity and younger staff to effectively address issues in all communities.

The Problem

Exorbitant student loans are also deterrent for diversity and long-term retention. The mean salary for child welfare worker is \$45,000, and the mean student loan debt ranges from \$31,880 to \$42,149. The pressure of making ends meet with low salaries and high interest rates is causing graduates to pursue more lucrative careers. Consequently, this negatively impacts children who are experiencing abuse and neglect¹.

Research shows that national annual turnover rate is 20% in public agencies and 40% in private agencies for child welfare workers. When a child welfare worker leaves, primarily within the first three years, the State has to pay up to 30-200% of the exiting employee's annual salary for hiring and training new staff. This results in workplace experience to be concentrated at the supervisory level and instability at the base.

The Solution

AB 850 creates a scholarship and loan repayment program within the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD) for child welfare workers. Upon working five years as a child welfare worker, OSHPD will administer loan repayment for up to 50% of the remaining student loan debt accrued for individuals who have completed a bachelor's degree or master's degree in social work.

Who is the staff contact for this bill?

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¹ <http://co-invest.org/wp-content/uploads/Final-insights-14.pdf>