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Honorable Blanca Rubio  
Chair, California Assembly Human Services Committee  
California State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Support SB 982 (Mitchell) – Childhood Poverty CalWORKs Grant Level**

Dear Chairperson Rubio,

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) supports SB 982, which will endeavor to end extreme poverty for children in the CalWORKs program.

CFPA is a statewide policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food. As an anti-hunger advocacy organization, we recognize the innate connectedness of hunger and poverty. We seek policy solutions that not only ensure Californians have access to the food they need to sustain healthy lives, but also those that address the root cause of hunger – poverty.

Growing up in extreme poverty impairs children's ability to learn, develop and thrive. Decades of research reveal the negative impacts of poverty on children's health, educational achievement, and adult success. Children in deep poverty suffer the worst outcomes. Deep poverty causes toxic stress that harms brain development and early functioning, disrupting a child's ability to succeed in school and in life. Even a short amount of time spent in deep poverty can derail a child emotionally, psychologically, physically, and educationally for a much longer time period.

Chronically unmet basic needs experienced by children living in deep poverty not only impact their health and well being, but also their future potential. Children who live in deep poverty are less likely to graduate high school, more likely to have poor health as children and as adults, and more likely to become involved in the criminal justice system. Deep poverty damages the chance that a child will ever escape poverty and fuels an intergenerational cycle of poverty. Children who are born in deep poverty are three times as likely to be deeply poor at age 40 than children not born in deep poverty.

The California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program provides basic needs cash aid and services to low-income families with children to alleviate the impact of poverty on children and help parents overcome barriers to employment. The CalWORKs program serves 1.1 million individuals in California, 80 percent children. Yet, the level of support provided to CalWORKs families is insufficient to meet basic needs and lift all of these children out of deep poverty. The current maximum grant for a family of three is \$714 or 41 percent of FPL. However, most families receive less than the maximum grant: the average CalWORKs grant for a family of three is \$556 per month, or 33 percent of FPL.

SB 982 will endeavor to end deep poverty in the CalWORKs program. By doing so, this bill will protect children from the worst harms of chronically unmet basic needs and better enable the CalWORKs program to achieve its goals. CFPA supports SB 982 and respectfully requests your “Aye” vote.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elyse Homel Vitale". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elyse Homel Vitale, MPH  
Senior Advocate  
California Food Policy Advocates

CC: Alan Moore, Office of Senator Holly J. Mitchell (Author)  
Michele Stillwell-Parvensky, Children’s Defense Fund - California  
Jessica Bartholow, Western Center on Law and Poverty