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COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

June 13, 2018

The Honorable Salud Carbajal
 U.S. House of Representatives
 Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Carbajal:

I am writing on behalf of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors in support of legislation to reauthorize the TANF program that includes the restoration and enhancement of state and county flexibility to tailor work and support services that move families into self-sufficiency based on their unique needs.

TANF was founded on the idea that states should have the flexibility to design their programs suited to their unique populations in order to help families transition from assistance to self-sufficiency. However, the last reauthorization of TANF, as part of the Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) of 2005, was heavily weighted toward Federal oversight and penalties instead of state flexibility, a change that was unwarranted given the progress states made in reducing the welfare rolls after TANF was implemented.

In California, counties administer and provide county financial support for TANF, known as CalWORKS, with oversight from the State. As such, Santa Barbara County supports a more balanced approach between federal oversight and state flexibility to enhance its ability to achieve more successful outcomes through the program. This includes criteria that measure its effectiveness by utilizing more outcome-based measures, and that restore and enhance the flexibility to tailor work and support services to local needs. In particular, the County supports the reversal of the damaging changes to the Work Participation Rates (WPR) formula and definition of "work" implemented by DRA.

It is encouraging that the House Ways and Means Committee has drafted legislation that would reauthorize TANF for five years and eliminate the WPR. However, H.R. 5861 would only provide level funding over those five years with the result of continuing the erosion of the program that amounts to about a 30 percent decrease of the block grant in real terms since 1996. Although the bill would increase funding for child care, it does not include child care as a core TANF component. And, the legislation would impose new

eligibility restrictions, limiting TANF to families with incomes below 200 percent of the poverty line.

TANF Reauthorization offers an opportunity to change the current one-size fits all Federal rules that penalize states and counties. As Congress moves forward with TANF reauthorization legislation, please support efforts that would increase funding for the program, provide increased flexibility for states and counties, and incentives gauged toward effective measures of welfare program success.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Don Gilchrest". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Don Gilchrest
Washington Representative

DWG: awg