

# Judge orders child care subsidies continue <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Lagos, Marisa

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## EXCERPTS

Thousands of poor California families who rely on state subsidies to pay for child care will have a few more weeks of help after an Alameda County judge agreed Friday to postpone budget cuts to the welfare program.

In a ruling issued Friday, Judge Wynne Carvill determined that the state did not do a good enough job telling recipients about options when it informed them last month that the subsidies were being terminated. He ordered the Department of Education to keep paying for the program until the court takes up the issue on Nov. 23.

Advocates for the families filed suit against the state last month, after Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger used his line-item veto power to eliminate the \$256 million annual subsidy, known as CalWORKS stage 3. The governor vetoed the allocation when he signed the budget last month to increase the state's reserve fund.

The state subsidies are offered to families who were previously on cash assistance but are now working or in school and only need help paying for child care. The average annual income for a family that benefits from the child care subsidy is \$24,000 a year.

The program was set to expire on Nov. 1, but Carvill put the expiration on hold - and then extended the delay again this week.

At issue is whether the state has an obligation to help recipients of the subsidy identify other publicly funded child care options.

In his 18-page ruling, Carvill told the state that the program cannot be terminated until families are screened - and potentially cleared to receive - other child care services.

Carvill wrote that the plaintiffs, advocates for the families, clearly demonstrated that the program's elimination would have a "devastating impact" on the 56,000 children and their parents who rely on the subsidies.

Advocates had argued that the programs' elimination could result in some people having to quit their jobs, and possibly go back on welfare, costing the state more; they also said it would hurt the small businesses that provide child care around the state. Carvill cited these "collateral costs" in his ruling.

Democratic lawmakers, who slammed the governor's veto as short-sighted and cruel, praised Friday's ruling. So did Jack O'Connell, the state's superintendent of public instruction, who oversees the Department of Education. In a written statement, O'Connell said the department will comply with the order, which he called a "small reprieve" for "poor working families."

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-reprinted from the San Francisco Chronicle

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