

Welfare Recipients Protest Proposed Cuts

Karen Massie Last updated 21 months ago
Posted: 1/12/2009



SACRAMENTO, CA - Children from around California who joined their parents at the State Capitol on Monday brought several dozen pairs of shoes with them.

"We won't have enough money for shoes if you cut CalWorks," yelled one protester.

"I feel you're cutting money that kids need," said Jenesis Hayes. She came to the protest with her brothers, ages 15 and 12, and her mother, Felicia Hayes.

"I didn't have any compassion for people on welfare before because I didn't know anything about it," Felicia Hayes said. "But I understand it now after going through it myself."

Hayes said a divorce forced her on to welfare rolls. The welfare-to-work program known as CalWorks helps pay for her food, housing and college.

"I should be done with my degree in a couple of years but only through CalWorks," Hayes said. "Only through CalWorks have I been able to make it. I get

\$863 plus food stamps."

She said if her benefits are cut she can't turn to her ex-husband for help. "I need this money because he lost his job and can't help with child support and spousal support," Hayes said.

Hayes is not alone, according to Diana Spatz with **Lifetime** (Low-income Families' Empowerment Through Education).

"The governor's proposed budget cuts will put kids on the streets and lead to homelessness," said Spatz. "This is penny-wise and pound foolish. In the long run, foster care is significantly more expensive than keeping families together using CalWorks."

After demonstrating on the capitol steps, protesters took their cause to the governor's office.

"The governor is aware of the impact proposed budget cuts will have on people," said Aaron McLear, Schwarzenegger's press secretary. "The fact is, we have a \$42 billion deficit that gets worse every single day. So we're just running out of good options."

Spatz eagerly accepted when McLear asked if she and some of the protesters wanted to meet with a member of the governor's staff.

The discussion lasted about 45 minutes. When Spatz emerged, she said, "Our message to the governor was don't target children. Don't cut benefits for low-income children. They're the ones with the most to lose and the least to give."

