



## CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS

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April 2, 2014

Assemblymember Mark Stone  
California State Assembly, Chairman of the Human Services Committee  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

### Re: Assembly Bill 2382 (Bradford) - Support

Dear Chairman Stone:

The California Association of School Social Workers (CASSW) supports Assembly Bill 2382 (Bradford) which would eliminate the truancy double penalty for California's poorest families when a child fails to participate in school regularly.

Good attendance is critical to student achievement, and policies are needed to reduce the high number of students who are chronically absent. A recent Office of the Attorney General report cited poverty as a significant cause of poor school attendance. However, rather than provide additional supports to address the challenges poor children face in attending school, current law imposes a double truancy penalty on the poorest families.

California law requires that a financial penalty be exacted from families who rely on a basic needs grant through the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program when their children are not regularly attending school. This financial penalty is duplicative of the financial and penal code penalties applied to all school children and parents through the newly implemented School Attendance Review Board (SARB) process, and above and beyond the penalties assigned to children who are not poor.

Evaluations of policies in other states to link basic needs assistance to school attendance show that penalties for poor families have no positive impact on children's attendance. Poor families should not be doubly penalized for poor school attendance, increasing the likelihood of hardship and familial instability and reducing the likelihood that they will regularly attend school.

Considering the state's new Penal Code and Education Code penalties for *all* children, the CalWORKs attendance penalty is duplicative, inequitable and harmful. While retaining the requirement that children be required to attend school, AB 2382 would end the double truancy penalty for CalWORKs parents.

CASSW serves as advocates for the importance of professional social workers in schools to address the complex needs of marginalized, vulnerable, and disenfranchised children and families. The vital services that social workers provide creates a safety net for the families most impacted by the current legislation regarding CalWORKs families and school attendance. With specializations in school social work and child welfare and attendance, school social workers are active participants in efforts to improve attendance and educational outcomes for all children. Finding ways to improve the life outcomes for children from families receiving CalWORKs without double penalties is consistent with social work values of dignity and worth of all people and social justice.

For these reasons, CASSW supports AB 2382 and requests your 'Aye' vote.

Sincerely,

Tory Cox, President  
California Association of School Social Workers

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