



California

LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION

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CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2021–2022 REGULAR SESSION

SENATE BILL**NO. 549****Introduced by Senator Jones****February 18, 2021**

An act to add Section 10005 to the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to public social services, and declaring the urgency thereof, to take effect immediately.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 549, Jones. Social workers: essential workers.

Existing law governs the duties of social workers in a variety of areas, including foster care, health care, mental health, and substance abuse treatment.

Other existing law, the California Emergency Services Act, authorizes the Governor to proclaim a state of emergency when specified conditions of disaster or extreme peril to the safety of persons and property exist.

This bill would require social workers, if they are deemed essential workers during a state of emergency declared by the Governor, to be included in the group of essential workers who are eligible to receive the first distribution of emergency materials, as determined by the state or a local governmental entity, including, but not limited to, all materials and protective gear deemed necessary to protect their health and safety. The bill, with regard to social workers, would authorize the state or a local governmental entity to establish within the first group of essential workers eligible to receive the emergency materials, further levels of distribution for specified classifications of social workers.

This bill would declare that it is to take effect immediately as an urgency statute.

Vote: 2/3 Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. (a) The Legislature hereby declares all of the following:

- (1) Social workers provide valuable services to the state's most needy citizens.
 - (2) Because of the important services provided by social workers, they should be considered as part of the state's critical workforce.
 - (3) It is necessary to protect California's most vulnerable populations, especially during a state of emergency.
- (b) The Legislature therefore finds and declares that this act is necessary to protect the health and safety of social workers, and the adults, children, and families to whom they provide services.

SEC. 2. Section 10005 is added to the Welfare and Institutions Code, to read:

10005. (a) If social workers are deemed essential workers during a state of emergency declared by the Governor pursuant to the California Emergency Services Act (Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 8550) of Division 1 of Title 2 of the Government Code), they shall be included in the group of essential workers who are eligible to receive the first distribution of emergency materials, as determined by the state or a local governmental entity, including, but not limited to, all materials and protective gear deemed necessary to protect their health and safety.

(b) This section does not prohibit the state or a local governmental entity from including additional classifications of essential workers in the first group of workers eligible for emergency materials.

(c) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), with regard to social workers, the state or a local governmental entity may establish within the first group of essential workers eligible to receive the emergency materials, further levels of distribution for specified classifications of social workers.

SEC. 3. This act is an urgency statute necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety within the meaning of Article IV of the California Constitution and shall go into immediate effect. The facts constituting the necessity are:

In order to protect vulnerable populations, who rely on social workers for necessary services, during the ongoing crisis, as well as during a future crisis, it is necessary for this act to take effect immediately.