

REVIVE THE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES PROGRAM

Revive the Special Circumstances Program: Appropriate \$10 Million to Support Vulnerable Populations Facing Emergencies

Special Circumstances was a fund provided by the State of California that could be accessed by recipients of Supplementary Security Income (SSI), In- Home Supportive Services (IHSS), or the Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI) to provide financial assistance in a one-time lump sum beyond the applicant's usual assistance check. Applicants could receive assistance for losses due to a catastrophe or to maintain safe and healthful housing (called "non-recurring special needs"), especially those that could result in hunger or homelessness including but not limited to:

- » House repairs necessary to prevent unsafe or unhealthful housing
- » Repair or replacement of essential appliances like refrigerators or stoves
- » Replacement of clothing and essential furniture lost through catastrophe
- » Certain moving expenses made necessary due to eviction (if not the fault of the recipient) or due to unsafe/unhealthful housing

What is the History of the Special Circumstances Program?

- » In 1973, Assembly Bill 134 established the Special Circumstances Program (SCP). The program is described in Welfare and Institutions Code 12550.
- » In 1992, due to an economic recession in California, SCP was suspended.
- » It was reinstated with the Governor's Budget Act of 1998, allocating \$8.3 million for the program (\$3.3 million for administrative costs and \$5.0 million for services costs).
- » Funds were exhausted in 2002 and the program has been suspended ever since.

Our Request to Meet Community Need:

Appropriate \$10 million ongoing funding in 2024-2025 to revive the Special Circumstances program as a 5-year, time limited program. The program would provide financial assistance in a one-time lump sum to SSI, IHSS, and CAPI recipients to pay for moving costs, house repairs, and replacement of essential appliances like refrigerators or stoves.

The Special Circumstances Program is Essential

- » California's over 1 million SSI recipients have unexpected one-time emergency expenses for which they are not allowed to save up money due to the asset limits test of SSI.
- » During this housing emergency, SSI recipients could be able to use SCP for moving costs and to maintain heating/cooling systems. It is far cheaper to keep someone housed than to pay for expenses related to bringing someone off the streets.
- » Maintaining safe and operating stoves and refrigerators allows SSI recipients to prepare their own food, save money and maximize CalFresh dollars.

Supporting anti-poverty measures for SSI recipients in California is a key component to ensuring the state's low-income older adults and people with disabilities remain healthy and can thrive. Not having to worry about how they will pay for emergencies will enable them to focus on other needs and equip them for navigating other challenges of living in such a high-cost state. California must remain committed to ensuring that SSI/SSP recipients do not struggle with the toxic stress of poverty and have the economic security to be able to live in safe environments throughout their lives.



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