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August 19, 2016

Senator Holly J. Mitchell  
California State Senate  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Senate Bill 23 (Mitchell) – Support**

Dear Senator Mitchell:

On behalf of the California Women's Law Center (CWLC), I am writing in support of SB 23, which would repeal the Maximum Family Grant (MFG) rule in the California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKS) program.

State law prevents parents receiving assistance through the CalWORKs program from receiving a grant for a child born to the household while the household is receiving aid. This is known as the MFG rule. Without the MFG rule, the amount most households would receive in additional benefits for the newborn child is \$128 a month, hardly enough to pay for the child's basic needs. Yet without it, these children face increased risk of homelessness and other hardships associated with extreme poverty. The MFG rule has not achieved its intended purpose of reducing birthrates among poor women but forces women to make desperate decisions that endanger the health and safety of themselves and their children.

State law allows for a few exemptions to the MFG rule. These include when a child is conceived as a result of incest or rape or from a failure of certain contraceptives. Mothers whose infants are subject to the MFG rule are forced to decide between disclosing personal and confidential medical information or going without a basic need grant for their child. While it is appropriate for a caseworker to be trained at offering support should a rape or incest be reported, it is abhorrent for government to force a victim to do so under duress of enduring deeper poverty.

Since its founding in 1989, CWLC has worked to break down barriers and advance the potential of women and girls through transformative litigation, policy advocacy, and education.

The California Women's Law Center strongly supports SB 23, which will prevent the harmful health and human development consequences of denying services to infants and restore reproductive privacy to CalWORKs families.

Sincerely,



Betsy Butler  
Executive Director