



# COUNTY OF MENDOCINO

## Board of Supervisors

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May 9, 2025

The Honorable Alex Padilla  
United States Senate  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

**RE: Protect Safety Net Programs**

Dear Senator Padilla,

On behalf of the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors, I urge you to protect federal funding for essential safety net programs that serve our residents. In partnership with state and federal governments, Mendocino County administers various programs that support our community's health, stability, and future success—particularly for low-income families, children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities.

Programs such as Medicaid, SNAP, TANF, and Head Start form the backbone of our local safety net. Without continued federal investment, the consequences for our rural community would be severe: increased poverty, strained local services, job losses, and long-term harm to our local economy.

### **Preserve Medicaid (Medi-Cal), SNAP (CalFresh), and TANF (CalWORKs)**

We are particularly concerned about proposals that would significantly cut core safety net programs, including Medicaid, SNAP, and TANF. These programs serve thousands of Mendocino County residents and are critical to our public health and human services systems.

- **Medicaid (Medi-Cal)** covers 43.8% of Mendocino County residents, including children, seniors, disabled adults, and foster youth. In 2022, federal Medicaid and CHIP funding in the county reached \$481.4 million, which is vital for our health system. Any cuts to this program could result in loss of coverage for residents and service reductions or closures for local health providers.
- **SNAP (CalFresh)** is a vital tool supporting families and reducing hunger in Mendocino County, where 16,847 residents—19% of the population—depended on it in 2024. These benefits help keep food on the table and dollars circulating in local grocery stores and farmers' markets. Cutting SNAP or adding administrative burdens would jeopardize low-income families and increase pressure on county services.

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- **TANF (CalWORKs)** aids struggling families by providing direct aid, childcare, job training, and education support. Future reforms should be bipartisan, community-informed, and aimed at empowering families rather than dismantling the program.

### **Head Start: A Critical Investment in Our Children and Economy**

We are particularly alarmed by reports that the 2026 Presidential Budget proposal excludes funding for Head Start. Even if this proposal is merely exploratory, it sends an early warning that we cannot afford to ignore. Head Start programs are essential in Mendocino County—preparing our youngest learners for academic success, supporting working families, and sustaining our rural economy.

- **Local Jobs at Risk:** Head Start employs teachers and support staff throughout our county. Cutting this funding would result in job losses, reduced household income, and decreased spending in our local economy.
- **Long-Term Costs to Education and Public Services:** Decades of research demonstrate that early childhood education reduces future spending on special education, public assistance, and even the criminal justice system.
- **Barriers for Working Families:** Many families rely on Head Start for affordable childcare in Mendocino County. Without it, parents may have to leave the workforce, threatening household stability and the local labor supply.
- **A Stronger Future Workforce:** Children who attend Head Start are more likely to graduate, pursue higher education, and enter the workforce. Investing in Head Start means investing in Mendocino County's long-term economic strength and resilience.

### **Why This Matters for Rural Counties**

Cuts to any of these programs would have dangerous repercussions throughout our county—resulting in higher healthcare costs, rising poverty and hunger, job losses, and reduced economic activity. We urge you to reject any budget proposal that eliminates or reduces funding for these critical programs and to support rural communities like Mendocino County that rely on these essential programs.

We ask you to stand up for Mendocino County and the millions of Californians who depend on these programs to thrive. Thank you for your leadership and your continued partnership on behalf of rural California.

Sincerely,



John Haschak, Chair  
Mendocino County Board of Supervisors

CC: The Honorable Adam B. Schiff, Senator from California  
The Honorable Alex Padilla, Senator from California  
California State Association of Counties (CSAC)