

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 was county-administered and 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:

- ▶ Repairs to maintain heating/cooling systems or generators to mitigate the impact of climate change
- ▶ House repairs to prevent unsafe or unhealthful conditions
- ▶ Repair or replacement of essential appliances like refrigerators or stoves
- ▶ Replacement of clothing and essential furniture lost through catastrophe
- ▶ Certain moving expenses such as security deposits due to eviction 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 2025-2026 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, replacement of essential appliances like refrigerators or stoves, and more.

The Special Circumstances Program Is Essential

California's over 1 million SSI recipients have unexpected one-time emergency expenses for which it is nearly impossible to save up money for given the low grant levels that are only at 94% of the federal poverty line for an individual and due to the asset limit test for SSI.

SSI recipients could use SCP for a variety of reasons, including for moving costs to help prevent homelessness, to maintain heating/cooling systems or generators to mitigate the impact of climate change, and to maintain safe and operating stoves and refrigerators to allow SSI recipients to prepare their own food, keep medication cool, save money and maximize CalFresh dollars.

“We are the individuals unable to save even a few dollars monthly. If we have an emergency we have no funds to use for the emergency... We suffer. We suffer in silence. We are the individuals in poor health too. Unfortunately in our society money is the answer to live in modest comfort. ...we living on SSI just want to exist minus month to month worry. If those that decide what we live on monthly/yearly could walk in our shoes for a day they might understand our dismal fate.”

—California SSI/SSP recipient

