



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

August 17, 2026

PRESIDENT

Eric Lucan

5TH DISTRICT

VICE PRESIDENT

Stephanie Moulton-Peters

3RD DISTRICT

2ND VICE PRESIDENT

Brian Colbert

2ND DISTRICT

Mary Sackett

1ST DISTRICT

Dennis Rodoni

4TH DISTRICT

Derek Johnson

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

CLERK OF THE BOARD

Carla Kacmar

ASSISTANT CLERK OF THE BOARD

Marin County Civic Center

3501 Civic Center Drive

Suite 329

San Rafael, CA 94903

415 473 7331 T

415 473 3645 F

415 473 6172 TTY

MarinCounty.gov/board

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel, Chair
Assembly Committee on Budget Review
1021 O Street, Suite 8230
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Dr. Corey Jackson, Chair
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2
1021 O Street, Room 6120
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable John Laird, Chair
Senate Committee on Budget & Fiscal Review
1021 O Street, Suite 8720
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Caroline Menjivar, Chair
Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
1021 O Street, Suite 6630
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Request to protect child safety by delaying CWS-CARES system launch & enhancing accountability measures

Dear Chairs Gabriel, Laird, Jackson, and Menjivar:

On behalf of the Marin County Board of Supervisors, I respectfully request a six-to-eight-month delay of the State's launch of the Child Welfare Services-California Automated Response and Engagement System (CWS-CARES), enhanced Project accountability measures, and increased legislative oversight of the Project through adoption of County Welfare Directors Association-proposed Trailer Bill Language and budget bill language. The unacceptable child safety and operational risks associated with the Project's planned schedule cannot reasonably be mitigated before the currently planned October 26, 2026 go-live date. The CWS-CARES system remains incomplete, with critical functionality, testing, and county readiness activities still underway approximately three months before the planned go-live date. **Moving forward with the planned October 26, 2026, launch date is no longer acceptable to county child welfare agencies and our county social workers who rely upon this automated system to protect vulnerable children from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.**

Based on ongoing testing by county frontline workers in the CWS-CARES Production Simulation (Prod Sim) environment, we have identified significant and concerning gaps and issues with system functionality, some of which were reported during prior Extended User System Testing (EUST) periods, and that remain unresolved with less than three months before go-live. Releasing an incomplete system to our frontline county social workers jeopardizes the integrity of California's child welfare practice and infrastructure and **poses a high risk of probable system failures and data gaps that may result in uninvestigated reports of abuse or neglect, severe trauma related to unnecessary removals, placement disruptions, serious injury, or a child fatality.** The defects, design flaws, and incomplete functionality, coupled with data conversion concerns and inadequate time for counties to test, train, and prepare (including for any planned work arounds), poses significant risk to county operations, puts undue hardship on county staff, and poses significant risks to worker safety,

privacy and security of case records, placement timeliness and instability for foster children, and foremost, child health and safety. We continue to see data issues in CARES, including that information is not transferring from the legacy system, CWS/CMS to CARES consistently and accurately across all child case records, including impacts on children currently in foster care. The State has indicated that future data conversions between CWS/CMS and CWS-CARES will have higher accuracy rates; however, the next planned data exchange won't occur until late-September. There is a significant concern that there will not be enough time to validate data fully to ensure there are no gaps. Staff also need to trust that the information they see is accurate when working with families and making case decisions. Testing has shown active cases as closed when they should still be open.

Marin has a smaller workforce than other local counties, meaning the system roll-out as planned could create a significant coverage issue. It is a challenge to ensure all staff can complete and understand the new functionalities in CARES, while completing their essential day-to-day work. There are concerns regarding staff permissions – the system by which permissions are set up in CARES is different from CWS/CMS, staff need to have the right access based on their roles. If the permissions are not set up correctly before go-live, staff may not be able to access the information or functions they need to do their work.

Therefore, County of Marin respectfully requests urgent legislative intervention to delay the CWS-CARES planned go-live date of October 26, 2026, by at least six months and no more than eight months, and to codify enhanced Project accountability measures that must be achieved prior to launch.

Launching an unfinished system directly endangers California's foster children, places an unbearable administrative burden on our social workers, and passes destabilizing liability and risk onto counties. We request that you adopt this critical budget action to protect California's most vulnerable families and communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Eric Lucan, President
Marin County Board of Supervisors

CC: Marin County Board of Supervisors
Senator Mike McGuire
Assemblymember Damon Connolly
Members and Staff of the Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Members and Staff of the Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2
Staff of Senate Committee on Budget & Fiscal Review
Staff of Assembly Committee on Budget
County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA)