

**Introduced by Senator Jones**February 18, 2021

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An act to add Section 10005 to the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to public social services, and declaring the urgency thereof, to take effect immediately.

## LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 549, as introduced, Jones. Social workers: essential workers.

Existing law governs the duties of social workers in a variety of areas, including foster care, health care, mental health, and substance abuse treatment.

Other existing law, the California Emergency Services Act, authorizes the Governor to proclaim a state of emergency when specified conditions of disaster or extreme peril to the safety of persons and property exist.

This bill would require social workers, if they are deemed essential workers during a state of emergency declared by the Governor, to be included in the top tier of essential workers who are eligible to receive emergency materials, including, but not limited to, personal protective equipment, medicines, and any and all other health and safety equipment and gear necessary to fulfill their critical work.

This bill would declare that it is to take effect immediately as an urgency statute.

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Vote:  $\frac{2}{3}$ . Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no.  
State-mandated local program: no.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. (a) The Legislature hereby declares all of the  
2 following:

3 (1) Social workers provide valuable services to the state’s most  
4 needy citizens.

5 (2) Because of the important services provided by social  
6 workers, they should be considered as part of the state’s critical  
7 workforce.

8 (3) It is necessary to protect California’s most vulnerable  
9 populations, especially during a state of emergency.

10 (b) The Legislature therefore finds and declares that this act is  
11 necessary to protect the health and safety of social workers, and  
12 the adults, children, and families to whom they provide services.

13 SEC. 2. Section 10005 is added to the Welfare and Institutions  
14 Code, to read:

15 10005. If social workers are deemed essential workers during  
16 a state of emergency declared by the Governor pursuant to the  
17 California Emergency Services Act (Chapter 7 (commencing with  
18 Section 8550) of Division 1 of Title 2 of the Government Code),  
19 they shall be included in the top tier of essential workers who are  
20 eligible to receive emergency materials, including, but not limited  
21 to, personal protective equipment, medicines, and any and all other  
22 health and safety equipment and gear necessary to fulfill their  
23 critical work.

24 SEC. 3. This act is an urgency statute necessary for the  
25 immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety within  
26 the meaning of Article IV of the California Constitution and shall  
27 go into immediate effect. The facts constituting the necessity are:

28 In order to protect vulnerable populations, who rely on social  
29 workers for necessary services, during the ongoing crisis, as well  
30 as during a future crisis, it is necessary for this act to take effect  
31 immediately.