



An investment that works.

February 21, 2024

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
California State Governor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel  
California Assembly Budget Chair  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Toks Omishakin  
Transportation Secretary  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner  
California Senate Budget Chair  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Gavin Newsom, Secretary Toks Omishakin, Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel, and Senator Nancy Skinner:

The Back 2 Work (B2W) program, an innovative partnership with Butte County Office of Education and California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), has been operating a high-impact employment initiative since 2009 that targets individuals that are experiencing homelessness, justice impacted, opportunity youth, and veterans – providing them with work skills and incomes so that they can stabilize their lives and interrupt what can otherwise become costly cycles of joblessness, homelessness, and incarceration.

**We strongly encourage your support in the 2024-2025 State budget for the B2W funding from the Clean California Initiative.**

Each year, Caltrans funds the B2W program which has grown to annually employ 5,500 individuals in 40 counties. Motivated individuals who have experienced homelessness or incarceration are cleaning California’s highways – a benefit to everyone, while earning an income and gaining valuable work experience, and accessing support for their economic mobility.

Over the last three years, the B2W program has received critical funding to expand the program from the Clean California Initiative totaling \$50 million annually. With the current state budget crisis, we want to ensure that this funding is reappropriated to continue to fuel this innovative partnership that California can take pride in, helping to break the cycle of homelessness, incarceration, and poverty. The program also contributes to California’s goals of a more equitable economy by enabling people who are often on the sidelines of the economy to participate and contribute. Operated by Butte County Office of Education, which provides all safety training and ensures all job quality and labor standards are met, contractors that are employment social enterprises (ESEs) and nonprofit organizations employ thousands of individuals in transitional jobs with supervised work crews that beautify California highways for Caltrans, while they gain valuable work experience. While the litter abatement program itself offers transitional jobs, this immediate employment directly leads to other permanent opportunities including full-time employment at Caltrans and a wide variety of other industries, and participation in other education and certified training programs.

[redf.org](http://redf.org)

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For about \$9,000 per person, California interrupts cycles of incarceration and/or homelessness by helping individuals start earning an income. From a taxpayer perspective it now costs us over \$106,000 to incarcerate one individual for a year<sup>1</sup>. And a UCSF study<sup>2</sup> that interviewed thousands of homeless Californians notes that not only were about half seeking employment, but that the State alone spends roughly \$42,000<sup>3</sup> per year per person to address homelessness (and local jurisdictions likely double that).

A member of the work crew operated by the Center for Employment Opportunities highlights that: "Having a paycheck every day keeps me moving. It provides daily income for much needed expenses like transportation, food, clothing, and hygiene. It also keeps me out of trouble by not having to resort to anything illegal just to survive. This work opportunity has helped me reach my goals and I'm looking forward to a successful future." Manual Castillo CCI Crew 7- Los Angeles

Please join us in supporting one of California's highest impact initiatives that enables individuals to earn and contribute to the beauty and economic health of the Golden State, so that they can leave behind homelessness and incarceration, increase their incomes, and gain valuable work experience and skills leading to more security and stability for individuals, their families and their communities.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.lao.ca.gov/PolicyAreas/CJ/6\\_cj\\_inmatecost](https://www.lao.ca.gov/PolicyAreas/CJ/6_cj_inmatecost)

<sup>2</sup> <https://homelessness.ucsf.edu/our-impact/studies/california-statewide-study-people-experiencing-homelessness>

<sup>3</sup> <https://calmatters.org/commentary/2023/07/something-clearly-off-homelessness-spending/>



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