**Importance of the Back 2 Work (B2W) Program**

* B2W, funded by Caltrans and operated by BCOE, is a workforce initiative targeting individuals overcoming systemic employment barriers, including homelessness, incarceration, and opportunity youth.
* The Butte County Office of Education and B2W oversee safety training and ensures job quality and labor standards for employment social enterprises (ESEs) and nonprofit contractors.
	+ ESEs are transformative businesses that are not only creating jobs but are also building an inclusive economy by hiring individuals who face systemic barriers to employment.
	+ ESE and nonprofit subcontractors provide jobs to thousands, offering supervised crews that enhance California highways for Caltrans while workers gain valuable experience.
* Since 2009, B2W has positively impacted jobs, livelihoods, and futures for marginalized populations, creating opportunities for economic mobility and stability.
* B2W creates stable jobs leading to permanent employment opportunities, including at Caltrans and various industries.
* It motivates employees to pursue further training and contribute to their families and communities.
* B2W invests $9,000 per person annually in training and employment opportunities. In contrast, [CA taxpayers pay over $133,000 per person who is incarcerated](https://www.lao.ca.gov/PolicyAreas/CJ/6_cj_inmatecost) and [$42,000 on homelessness services.](https://calmatters.org/commentary/2023/07/something-clearly-off-homelessness-spending/)

**Accomplishments**

* B2W employees cleaned highways, collected over 8.9 million bags of litter, and contributed to California's economy by earning an income and paying taxes.
* B2W has employed 22,095 people since 2009.
* With Clean California Initiative (CCI) funding, B2W quickly ramped up to expand to 139 crews across 40 counties, employing over 6,000 individuals.

**Challenges**

* Despite the Governor’s $80 million annual commitment for B2W within the Caltrans Special People Program (SPP), we are seriously concerned about what could happen at the community level if that commitment shifts with an increasingly challenging budget climate.
* B2W crews could be downsized, leaving at-risk individuals unemployed and without the program’s critical wraparound services.

**Advocacy for Continued Investment**

* We support a $80 million annual commitment for B2W within the Caltrans Division of Maintenance (SPP) budget.
* We support the $25 million budget allocation to the Clean California Program’s Community Cleanup and Employment Pathways Grant, understanding that it would encourage local government collaboration with ESEs.
* If B2W funding is at risk, we suggest redirecting these funds to maintain the program's impactful work.