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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Governor Signs SB 617 into Law, Expanding Worker Protections in Mass Layoffs

OAKLAND, CA, October 3, 2025. This week, Governor Gavin Newsom signed Senate Bill 617 (SB 617) into law, expanding and strengthening California's Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act to better protect workers facing mass layoffs, terminations, or relocations.

This legislation originated with the Alameda County Social Services Agency (ACSSA), demonstrating how local innovation can drive statewide policy change. Under the WARN Act, certain employers are required to issue WARN letters to notify stakeholders - including affected workers and local workforce development boards (LWDBs) - of impending mass layoffs at least 60 days in advance. In early 2025, the Alameda County Workforce Development Board (ACWDB), a department within ACSSA, identified recurring gaps in WARN letters that hindered timely engagement with employers and the coordination of critical services for displaced workers and introduced a proposal to mitigate the issue.

ACSSA brought the proposal to the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, who recognized the importance of addressing the problem and agreed to co-sponsor legislation with Senator Jesse Arreguín's office. That collaboration led to the introduction of SB 617 in February 2025. Today, that local effort culminated in the Governor's signature - marking a significant step forward in strengthening support for California's workforce.

Key Provisions of SB 617

Under SB 617, employers must specify whether they will coordinate rapid response services with a Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) or another entity. Rapid response services provide timely information and access to resources - such as unemployment benefits, job training, and career counseling - to help workers navigate the impacts of layoffs or business closures. WARN notices must include:

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- A description of LWDB rapid response services
- Correct and functioning contact information for both the LWDB and employer
- CalFresh resources, including the statewide helpline and website

If an employer partners with an LWDB or another entity, services must be arranged within 30 days of the notice.

With these provisions, workers impacted by layoffs will have clearer information, stronger safeguards, and faster access to critical resources.

“SB 617 is proof that local problem-solving can ripple outward to statewide impact,” said Andrea Ford, Agency Director. “This law ensures that in a difficult economic moment, workers and their families are not left in the dark but supported with timely, coordinated services.”