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August 4, 2026

Honorable William J. Pendergast III
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Solano Superior Court
600 Union Ave
Fairfield CA 94533

REGARDING: County Board of Supervisors response to FY2025/26 Civil Grand Jury Report, "Solano County's Response to Theft of Health and Social Services Benefits."

Dear Honorable Judge Pendergast III,

The Solano County Board of Supervisors, under Penal Code sections §933 and §933.05, is responding to the following findings and recommendations contained in the FY2025/26 Civil Grand Jury Report entitled "Solano County's Response to Theft of Health and Social Services Benefits."

Civil Grand Jury Finding 1:

Although skimming has decreased, it remains to be seen whether or how long it will take criminal organizations to figure out how to bypass chip readers.

Board of Supervisors (Board) Response to Finding 1:

The Board agrees with the finding. While the implementation of chip-enabled Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards has significantly reduced skimming incidents, the Board recognizes that payment security technology continues to evolve alongside increasingly sophisticated criminal activity. Continued monitoring of emerging fraud trends and collaboration among local, state, and federal partners will remain important to protecting public assistance benefits and ensuring the integrity of these programs.

Civil Grand Jury Recommendation 1A:

Health and Social Service (H&SS) continue monitoring data trends and continue collaborating with Federal and State agencies to monitor criminal efforts underway to defeat the chip technology.

Board Response to Recommendation 1A:

The recommendation has been implemented. Solano County Health and Social Services already monitors EBT skimming trends, collects and analyzes program data, and collaborates with federal, state, and local law enforcement and partner agencies to identify emerging fraud patterns and support investigative efforts. The County will continue these ongoing monitoring and collaboration efforts to help safeguard public assistance benefits as payment technologies and criminal tactics evolve.

Civil Grand Jury Recommendation 1B:

In collaboration with other H&SS agencies throughout the State, lobby federal and state governments to improve cybersecurity protections for EBT cards.

Board Response to Recommendation 1B:

The recommendation has not yet been implemented but is planned for future action. This delay is due to limited data collection within our mandated statewide system (CalSAWS) and theft report requirements, which are set by the California Department of Social Services. Solano County advocates for ongoing efforts to enhance EBT system security and prevent benefit theft. Through legislative advocacy, the County will keep monitoring state and federal proposals, supporting initiatives- when data permits- that bolster cybersecurity for EBT cards in partnership with H&SS and statewide organizations like the California State Association of Counties (CSAC). The implementation timeline will be continuous.

Civil Grand Jury Finding 2:

Reported data does not clarify discrepancies such as size of household, number of thefts per report, number of benefits, etc., which leads to possible underreporting of theft.

Board Response to Finding 2:

The Board agrees with the finding. The Board recognizes that the available reporting data does not capture all contextual factors that may affect interpretation of EBT theft trends, including household size, multiple theft incidents associated with a single report, and benefit amounts. As noted in the Civil Grand Jury report, certain reporting parameters are established by the California Department of Social Services, which limits the level of detail reflected in County reporting. Nevertheless, enhancing available data, where feasible, can improve analysis and inform program administration and policy decisions.

Civil Grand Jury Recommendation 2:

By July 1, 2027, HSS fine-tune report methodology to include factors which influence fluctuating numbers.

Board Response to Recommendation 2:

The recommendation has not yet been implemented but is planned for future execution when feasible, based on the data provided by the State. The Board supports improving reporting efforts, where possible, to offer more context on EBT theft trends and enhance data usefulness. Despite some limitations in the State's current reporting approach, H&SS will seek opportunities to refine its methodology to include additional contextual information, in line with State requirements and system capabilities. The intended implementation date is on or before July 1, 2027, as recommended by the Civil Grand Jury.

Civil Grand Jury Finding 3:

Call Center waiting time has improved since the height of skimming complaints in 2023-2024.

Board Response to Finding 3:

The Board agrees with the finding. The Board recognizes that H&SS has made meaningful improvements to Call Center operations since the peak of EBT skimming in 2023 and 2024. As noted in the Civil Grand Jury report, the significant decline in skimming claims, coupled with streamlined business processes, has contributed to shorter wait times and improved customer service for individuals reporting stolen benefits.

Civil Grand Jury Recommendation 3:

Continue to improve Call Center hold times. Adopt process improvement management.

Board Response to Recommendation 3:

The recommendation has been implemented. H&SS has implemented process improvements that have significantly reduced call center wait times following the peak in EBT skimming-related calls. The Department continually evaluates its business processes and service delivery to identify opportunities for further improvement and will continue monitoring call center performance to maintain and enhance timely customer service.

Civil Grand Jury Finding 4:

Reimbursement processing time has improved to comply with the 10-day requirement.

Board Response to Finding 4:

The Board agrees with the finding. The Board recognizes that Health and Social Services has improved its reimbursement processing procedures and is meeting the State-mandated timeframe for replacing eligible stolen EBT benefits. These improvements help ensure timely assistance to eligible recipients while maintaining appropriate administrative controls and program integrity.

Civil Grand Jury Recommendation 4:

Maintain the current level of compliance.

Board Response to Recommendation 4:

The recommendation has been implemented. H&SS currently complies with the State-mandated timeframe for processing eligible EBT benefit replacement claims. The Department will continue to monitor its reimbursement processes and maintain compliance with applicable State requirements while providing timely assistance to eligible recipients.

Civil Grand Jury Finding 5:

The Department has provided public outreach to educate benefits recipients on how to protect their EBT cards from skimming, enhancing protection against theft.

Board Response to Finding 5:

The Board agrees with the finding. The Board recognizes that H&SS has taken proactive steps to educate EBT recipients on methods to protect their benefits from skimming and other forms of fraud. These outreach efforts, including providing information on safeguarding personal identification numbers (PINs), replacing compromised cards, utilizing available account security features, and raising awareness of emerging fraud schemes, help reduce the risk of benefit theft and support program integrity.

Civil Grand Jury Recommendation 5A:

Continue to provide and update educational outreach efforts as new skimming technologies emerge.

Board Response to Recommendation 5A:

The recommendation has been implemented. H&SS currently provides ongoing public education and outreach to EBT recipients regarding benefit theft prevention and available security measures. The Department will continue to update educational materials and outreach efforts, as appropriate, to reflect emerging fraud trends, new technologies, and guidance issued by the California Department of Social Services and other partner agencies.

Civil Grand Jury Recommendation 5B:

Encourage clients to use direct deposit for cash benefits.

Board Response to Recommendation 5B:

The recommendation has been implemented. H&SS informs eligible clients of available benefit delivery options, including direct deposit for cash assistance programs where authorized. The Department will continue to educate clients on the availability and potential security benefits of direct deposit as an alternative to EBT cards for eligible cash benefits, while recognizing that clients retain the ability to choose the benefit delivery method that best meets their individual needs.

On behalf of the Solano County Board of Supervisors, thank you to the Solano County Civil Grand Jury for its review of the County's response to EBT benefit theft and for its thoughtful findings and recommendations. The Board appreciates the Grand Jury's interest in strengthening public services and protecting vulnerable residents who rely on these critical assistance programs. We value your recommendations and remain committed to supporting ongoing efforts to safeguard public benefits, enhance program integrity, and continuously improve services for the residents of Solano County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Monica Brown". The signature is written in a dark grey or black ink.

Monica Brown
District 2 Supervisor
Chair, Solano County Board of Supervisors

cc: Cheryl Clower, Administrative Assistant, Solano County Civil Grand Jury
Emery Cowan, Director, Solano County Health and Social Services