

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **APHSA Honors California Health and Human Services Secretary Kim Johnson with the Excellence Award for State Member**

**Arlington, VA — June 16, 2026:** The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) is proud to announce that Kim Johnson, Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency, has been selected as the recipient of the 2026 APHSA Excellence Award for State Member, recognizing her visionary leadership and extraordinary contributions to advancing the well-being of children, families, and communities through innovative, human-centered public service.

The APHSA Excellence Award for State Members honors outstanding individuals and agencies that have made exceptional contributions to the human services sector. Presented annually, the award recognizes exemplary innovation, creativity, and commitment to improving outcomes for children and families while advancing APHSA's vision of thriving communities built on human potential. The award was presented during the [APHSA National Human Services Summit](#), held June 14–17, 2026, in Arlington, Virginia.

For more than 25 years, Secretary Johnson has championed policies and practices that strengthen opportunity, promote well-being, and center the voices and experiences of the people served by human services systems. Her leadership is grounded in the belief that lasting change happens when communities, families, and individuals are engaged as partners in designing solutions that meet their needs and aspirations.

Appointed by Governor Gavin Newsom as Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency in 2024, Johnson previously served as Director of the California Department of Social Services, where she guided critical programs and services during the COVID-19 pandemic and advanced initiatives that strengthened economic security, housing stability, and family well-being for millions of Californians. Her career has spanned community-based organizations and government service at the local, state, and national levels, informed by both professional expertise and lived experience.

A respected leader within APHSA and across the nation, Johnson serves as Vice Chair of the APHSA Leadership Council, helping advance shared learning, collaboration, and innovation among human services leaders. Her commitment to partnership and continuous improvement reflects her belief that lasting transformation is achieved when systems are designed with—and not just for—the people they serve.

“I am deeply honored to receive this recognition from APHSA, and I accept it on behalf of the incredible Californians—families, communities, and dedicated public servants—whose resilience and partnership make this work possible. Lasting change doesn't happen to people; it happens with them. I am grateful to APHSA for championing that vision alongside human services leaders across the country,” shared Secretary Kim Johnson.

In California, Johnson oversees one of the nation's largest and most complex health and human services systems. Under her leadership, California has advanced transformative initiatives across the human services continuum, including welfare-to-work modernization, housing and homelessness interventions, child welfare reform, food security improvements, behavioral health transformation, and expanded access to early learning and care.

Johnson's work is distinguished by her focus on human-centered design, collaboration, and continuous improvement. She led implementation of the California CalWORKs Outcomes and Accountability Review (Cal OAR), a data-informed framework that strengthens outcomes and elevates family voice in service delivery. She also oversaw innovative housing and homelessness initiatives, including Project Roomkey during the COVID-19 pandemic and the expansion of integrated housing programs that connect Californians to coordinated health and social supports.

Her leadership has also helped reshape California's child welfare system through a kin-first approach that strengthens families and reduces unnecessary system involvement, while advancing significant investments in behavioral health, food security, and early childhood programs. These efforts have improved stability and opportunity for children and families across the state while serving as a model for jurisdictions nationwide.

The APHSA Excellence Award for State Members recognizes leaders who move beyond traditional service delivery to create lasting change through innovation, community partnership, and a steadfast commitment to human potential. Through her transformative leadership and unwavering dedication to children, families, and communities, Secretary Kim Johnson exemplifies the spirit and purpose of this award.

APHSA congratulates Secretary Johnson on this well-deserved recognition and thanks her for her extraordinary contributions to strengthening human services systems and improving outcomes for people across California and the nation.

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### **About APHSA**

The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) supports leaders from state, county,



and city human services agencies to advance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities nationwide. As the premier bipartisan membership association for public human services, they work with their members to generate pragmatic solutions grounded in lived experience. Visit [aphsa.org](https://aphsa.org) to learn more.

**Media Contact:**

Jessica Garon

Director, Communications

American Public Human Services Association (APHSA)

[jgaron@aphsa.org](mailto:jgaron@aphsa.org)

202-866-0535

