



March 21, 2018

To: The Honorable Dr. Richard Pan
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3

Honorable Members
Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3

From: Justin Garrett, Legislative Representative, CSAC
Frank J. Mecca, Executive Director, CWDA
Salena Pryor, Governmental Affairs Advocate, SEIU California

RE: CHILD WELFARE SERVICES – CONTINUUM OF CARE
REFORM

On behalf of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) California, we respectfully request your support to provide \$54.8 million State General Funds in 2018-19 to address county workload associated with the implementation of the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) effort. Specifically, this funding is necessary to fund implementation activities required of county social workers to clear long backlogs in the Resource Family Approval (RFA) process, support these caregivers through the Level of Care rate setting process, and support individual child and youth assessments to promote positive outcomes.

AB 403 (Statutes of 2015) enacted significant changes in the child welfare program known as CCR, intended to reduce the use of congregate care and improve outcomes for foster youth. The CCR effort is designed to increase trauma-informed services and supports available to foster youth within in-home settings, and tailor these services to the unique needs of foster youth through child and family teaming. CCR includes several components designed to produce comprehensive changes, and counties are diligently working to implement these multi-pronged systemic changes. However, as with any large-scale effort, implementation challenges can arise, as they have with the Resource Family Approval process. And county staff have new workload demands which were unanticipated when AB 403 was originally passed yet are critical to CCR's success. This workload is described below.

Resource Family Approval: We are requesting \$8 million State General Funds (\$11 million total funds) in one-time funding to clear the backlog in RFA applications that has accumulated since counties began implementing the RFA process in January 1, 2017. All families who desire to provide home-based care to foster children are required to complete the RFA process, including relatives and non-related extended family members. The families complete steps including pre-approval training to enhance their capacity to care for foster children. Unfortunately, counties have experienced significant delays due in part to implementing a new process concurrently with many other changes under CCR. As a result, approvals are taking longer than expected, and in some counties, are taking several months to complete. RFA requirements were just recently streamlined by the State Department of Social Services (DSS) in February 2018, and this will help expedite the process in the future. However, counties need immediate assistance to clear the backlog of applications that have built up since January 2017.

Level of Care Assessments: We are requesting \$8.8 million State General Funds (\$12.5 million total funds) for new county workload associated with Level of Care assessments. CCR changed the foster care rate-setting system from one solely based on the child's age to a tiered rate system based on the individual needs of foster youth as determined by a new Level of Care (LOC) protocol. The LOC protocol, a tool developed by DSS, is used by county child welfare social work staff to determine the rate that will be paid to resource families to meet the unique care needs of foster youth. This new LOC rate-setting process went into effect on March 1, 2018 for foster children entering care and placed with a Foster Family Agency. Phase II is expected to implement on May 1st. The funding request of \$8.8 million would be for the 2018-19 State Budget Year.

Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) Assessments: We are requesting \$38 million State General Funds (\$53 million total funds) for new county workload to implement an assessment tool as required by DSS. The CANS assessment aligns with the CCR work and will serve as the required mental health screening tool for all foster youth in care. CANS is designed to support placement decisions and care coordination through the Child and Family Team process and provides support to child welfare social workers for case planning. The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) recently selected the CANS tool as part of the statutorily-required Performance Outcomes System to measure outcomes for all children receiving specialty mental health services. DSS chose the CANS and requires alignment with the DHCS implementation, which is scheduled to begin on July 1st and will be phased in for all counties effective January 1, 2019.

Workload support will ensure all foster children and youth receive a trauma-informed mental health screening and assessment of their strengths and needs that will allow Child and Family Teams, including child welfare social workers, mental health clinicians, care providers and others, to link the youth and family to the necessary services and supports that will lead to improved outcomes for youth. The CANS data will also provide data for state and county leaders to assess provider performance and tailor services to meet youth's needs.

County staff continue to work diligently to implement the multi-pronged approach of CCR. Individualized, comprehensive assessments, and availability of loving resource families, are both critical to this effort. We therefore respectfully request your support for this budget request. In addition, we believe other CCR-related

budget requests merit your consideration.

Thank you for your consideration and if you have any questions please contact Frank J. Mecca, CWDA, (916) 443-1749 or fmecca@cwda.org.

cc: Chris Woods, Office of the President Pro Tempore
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