



September 9, 2009

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The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Child Welfare Services Funding

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

On behalf of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), I am writing to urge you to restore the \$80 million budget cut to Child Welfare Services. The loss of this funding severely impairs counties' ability to care for children that have been removed from their homes, and greatly diminishes efforts to detect, investigate, and prevent other children from abuse and neglect.

My colleagues across the state are currently finalizing county budgets for 2009-10, making tough local choices that may include reductions in Child Welfare services and personnel. In order for counties to continue funding mandated programs, they will be forced to make difficult decisions that may result in cuts to child abuse prevention programs. Such programs may include home visitation and family resource centers, which are proven to reduce instances of child abuse and neglect by up to 75%. These cuts will expose more children to harm and increase instances of abuse and neglect at a time when caseloads are already dramatically increasing due to additional family stresses.

Furthermore, counties continue to struggle with the consequences of eight years of underfunding in the Child Welfare system. The state has frozen its contribution to Child Welfare operations costs – including social worker costs – resulting in \$660 million in underfunding by the state's own estimate. The additional \$80 million cut will result in the loss of \$44 million in federal matching funds – for a total reduction of \$124 million.

The veto also turns back the clock on significant reforms and improvements achieved by local agencies in recent years, including partnerships with philanthropy to improve services and efforts to focus local resources in areas with the greatest need for improvement. These investments are now threatened and undermine the progress made to more effectively serve children and families.

Children who have suffered abuse and neglect have the fewest voices to speak for them and are among society's most vulnerable. They did not ask to be removed from their homes and placed into foster care. These children are the state's responsibility, and counties are proud to play a role in protecting and caring for them



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and their families. But the state must uphold its responsibility in this partnership to care for abused and neglected children.

Counties ask you to retain your commitment to California's most vulnerable children and youth and to restore \$80 million for Child Welfare Services. Thank you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Wyatt". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Gary Wyatt
Imperial County Supervisor
CSAC President

cc: Members, California State Legislature
Jennifer Kent, Legislative Deputy, Office of the Governor
Mike Genest, Director, Department of Finance
S. Kim Belshé, Secretary, California Health and Human Services Agency
John Wagner, Director, California Department of Social Services