



January 17, 2024



The Honorable Gavin Newsom
California State Governor
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814



RE: Proposed Elimination of Housing Supports for Foster Youth



Dear Governor Newsom,



The undersigned coalition of organizations are writing to express concern about two budget cuts included in your Administration's proposed 2024-25 budget that will increase homelessness among foster youth. These include \$18.8 million (General Fund, ongoing) for the Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP) Supplement and \$13.7 million (General Fund, ongoing) for the Housing Navigation and Maintenance Program.



The SILP Supplement was included in the FY 23-24 budget. It will provide a supplementary payment to foster youth placed in a SILP, based on the cost of housing in the county where they live. These young people currently receive \$1,206 monthly for all living expenses: rent, food, utilities, clothing, transportation and more. Given this low rate and escalating housing costs, 1 in 5 current foster youth in California have at least one episode of homelessness between ages 18 and 21.



The Legislature and your Administration adopted the SILP Supplement for several reasons. First, it recognized the unique responsibility that California has to youth in foster care, who were placed into foster care through no fault of their own. The Legislature and Administration also understood that experiencing homelessness as a youth or young adult increases the likelihood of being chronically homeless as an adult. Finally, the policy was adopted because it achieves the important goal of reducing homelessness among youth in foster care by leveraging federal funding.



The undersigned organizations support the foster care rate reforms underway. However, their focus is on ensuring foster children and youth in family settings receive the correct level of care, such as mental health counseling. They do not address the housing affordability crisis experienced uniquely by young people who live in a SILP and they do not address the needs of young adults in foster care living independently.





The second proposed reduction of concern is the elimination of the Housing Navigation and Maintenance Program, which pays for supportive services for 1,300 foster youth who have a federal housing voucher specifically for former foster youth. These vouchers are known as Family Unification Program (FUP) and Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) vouchers.

Prior to the creation and expansion of the Housing Navigation and Maintenance Program, these federal vouchers were underutilized in California because there was not a source of public funding to provide the required supportive services. Since the creation and expansion of the Housing Navigation and Maintenance Program, the number of vouchers has increased 54% in California, bringing \$22 million in federal investment to California annually. The effectiveness of this expansion is one key reason why homelessness among transition-age youth has decreased 16% between 2020 and 2023. If this program is eliminated, this effective state/federal partnership will come to a halt and put 1,300 youth at risk of homelessness.

We appreciate the complexity of the state budget and the need to responsibly steward scarce public resources. However, we request that your Administration sustain its long-standing commitment to children and youth in foster care by revisiting these decisions and maintaining these important state investments.

Thank you for all you have done for the children and youth of California. We look forward to ongoing dialogue about these important issues in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

- John Burton Advocates for Youth
- Alameda County of Education
- Aldea
- All Saints Church Foster Care Project
- Alliance for Children's Rights
- Allies for Every Child
- Aspiranet
- Association of Community Human Services
- Better Youth, Inc.
- Beyond Emancipation
- Bill Wilson Center
- Butterfly's Haven
- California Alliance of Caregivers
- California Alliance of Child and Family Services
- California State Association of Counties
- California Youth Connection
- Casa de Amparo



Casa Pacifica Centers for Children and Families
 Catholic Charities of Santa Clara
 Children Now
 Children's Advocacy Institute
 Children's Law Center of California
 Children's Receiving Home of Sacramento
 Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice
 Corporation for Supportive Housing
 County Welfare Directors Association of California
 Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Los Angeles
 Creative Alternatives
 Crittenton Services for Children & Families
 Doing Good Works
 Edgewood Center for Children & Families
 Encompass Community Services
 First Place for Youth
 Foster Care Counts
 Foster Greatness
 Fostering Promise
 Gather Respect Advocate Change Engage (GLIDE)
 GRACE/End Child Poverty California
 Hillside
 Hollywood NOW
 Housing Authority of the County of Contra Costa
 Just in Time for Foster Youth
 Kamali'i Foster Family Agency, Inc.
 Lens Co
 Lutheran Social Services of Northern California
 Mary's Path
 Oak Grove Sanctuary Palm Springs
 Optimist Youth Homes & Family Services
 Orange County United Way
 Orangewood Foundation
 Peacock Acres
 Public Counsel
 Reedley College
 Robles, LLC
 Safe Place for Youth
 Santa Ana Housing Authority
 Seneca Family of Agencies
 Specialty Family Foundation
 StarVista
 Stepping Forward LA
 Students Rising Above
 Sycamores
 Tha Hood Healers
 Unity Care
 Waking the Village



Walden Family Services
Wellnest
Urban Strategies Council



Cc: Members, Senate Budget Committee
Members, Assembly Budget Committee



Members, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Members, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 4



Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2
Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 5



Chris Woods, Office of the Senate Pro Tempore
Mareva Brown, Office of the Senate Pro Tempore
Jason Sisney, Office of the Speaker of the Assembly
Kelsy Castillo, Office of the Speaker of the Assembly
Jessica Bartholow, Office of Senator Skinner
Tania Dikho, Office of Assemblymember Ting



Bethany Renfree, Office of Senator Durazo
Elizabeth Schmitt, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Timothy Griffiths, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 4



Nicole Vasquez, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2
Genevieve Morelos, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 5

Stepping Forward LA



Chantelle Denny, Senate Republican Fiscal Office
Megan De Sousa, Assembly Republican Fiscal Office



Diana Boyer, County Welfare Directors Association of California
Rosie McCool, Chief Probation Officers of California



Justin Garrett, California State Association of Counties
Ginni Bella Navarre, Legislative Analyst's Office



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