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June 10, 2015

The Honorable Mark Leno, Chair
Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review
State Capitol Building, Room 5100
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Child Welfare Services: Relative and Foster Parent Recruitment, Retention, and Support Funding

Dear Senator Leno:

The California State Association of Counties (CSAC) is pleased to support the joint Conference Committee's compromise to increase funding for relative and foster parent recruitment, retention and support by $25 million General Fund (GF).

These funds would provide direct support to foster children placed with relative caregivers and foster parents, increase placements in family-based settings consistent with the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) goals, and most importantly, improve child outcomes for safety, permanency and well-being.

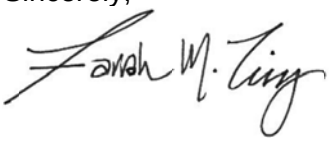
Relative caregivers and licensed foster parents are a key component of the county child welfare system and often have better success at providing a supportive environment and helping the child or children – especially sibling groups – maintain connections with their families and communities. Children placed with relatives have better educational, mental health and social outcomes and are less likely to suffer repeat maltreatment.

Achieving the goal of the CCR – to improve outcomes for children who come into the foster care system and ensure that services and supports are available to children in the most family-like setting – requires investment in a robust infrastructure of supports and services to relatives and foster families. While the Administration's CCR proposal acknowledges this by recommending an increase to foster parent recruitment, retention and support funding, the funding is still not adequate to do so. Currently, only $4.2 million ($2.6 million GF) is available statewide for relative caregiver and county licensed foster parent support. This lack of resources have proven to significantly contribute to caregiver turnover, which leads to multiple placement disruptions, increased placements to group homes and a decreased likelihood of adoption or guardianship with a permanent family.

The $25 million GF augmentation will allow counties to implement many promising and effective strategies to recruit and retain loving families and ultimately improve child outcomes. This proposal will also support continued implementation of the Resource Family Approval process authorized by AB 340 (Chapter 464, Statutes of 2007) – a key strategy in the CCR effort to create a unified, family friendly and child-centered caregiver approval process in family-based settings. The first phase of implementation began in five counties in 2013 and current law will expand this process statewide to all counties in 2017.

Counties wish to thank the Conference Committee for including the $25 million augmentation. We look forward to working with you to support our foster parents and relative caregivers as they care for the state's foster children. If you have additional questions about this request, I can be reached at fmcdaid@counties.org or (916) 650-8110. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Farrah McDaid Ting
Legislative Representative

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review
The Honorable Kevin De Leon, President Pro Tempore, California State Senate
The Honorable Bob Huff, Minority Leader, California State Senate
Jennifer Troia, Office of President Pro Tempore De Leon
Samantha Lui, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee, Subcommittee 3
Chantele Denny, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Donna Campbell, Office of the Governor
Michael Wilkening, Health and Human Services Agency
Keely Bosler, Capitol Office, Department of Finance
Matt Paulin, HHS, Department of Finance
Jay Kapoor, HHS, Department of Finance
Mark Newton, Legislative Analyst's Office
Ryan Woolsey, Legislative Analyst's Office
Will Lightbourne, California Department of Social Services
Todd Bland, California Department of Social Services
Patricia Houston, Department of Social Services
Frank Mecca, Executive Director, County Welfare Directors Association