



**CWDA**  
Advancing Human Services  
for the Welfare of All Californians

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February 28, 2020

The Honorable Eloise Gómez Reyes  
Chair, Assembly Human Services Committee  
State Capitol, Room 2175  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assembly Member Reyes:

## **RE: AB 1979 (FRIEDMAN) AS INTRODUCED JANUARY 23, 2020 – CO-SPONSOR**

The County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) is pleased to be a CO-SPONSOR of Assembly Member Friedman's AB 1979. This bill would ensure that California's Extended Foster Care Program (EFC) has capacity and supports to enable participants to live independently in safe housing.

CWDA was a co-sponsor of AB 12 (Bass and Beall, Statutes of 2010), which created the EFC that enables youth to remain in care until they turn 21. Several living arrangements are allowed under AB 12, including a "supported independent living placement," or SILP, which may include an apartment, dormitory room, or other approved placement. Participants are eligible for a monthly stipend as a part of the program.

In the nearly 10 years since the implementation of EFC, tens of thousands of non-minor dependents under the age of 21 have opted in to receive independent living skills, job training, education and housing assistance through the program. These vital supports are increasing participants' rates of high school and college graduation, while reducing their odds of homelessness, unemployment and entering the legal justice system. A 2014 CalYouth study by Chapin Hall showed that young adults in the EFC were overwhelmingly confident they would have a more stable adulthood by participating in the program than if they were required to leave foster care at age 18.

Although the benefits of participating in EFC are clear, a more recent CalYouth study showed that a third of young adults reported they experienced homelessness while actively enrolled in the program. Though they receive a SILP stipend, participants in the program struggle to compete in the rental market and suffer from a lack of affordable housing options. Of course, this is an issue that affects our entire state, and the degree of homelessness and lack of affordable housing statewide was not anticipated when AB 12 was enacted. Additionally, social workers with extensive caseloads lack the time to adequately assist all participants in navigating this market. Housing instability is therefore a significant obstacle for non-minor dependents and prevents them from achieving greater success through EFC participation.

AB 1979 addresses this housing emergency by requiring that counties examine their ability to meet non-minor dependents' emergency housing needs. This bill would also include a transitional living setting approved by a county within the definition of a SILP. As a result, counties would have greater discretion to provide young adults with alternative housing options that meet health and safety requirements. Counties would be required to hold placements in these transitional settings for non-minor dependents who leave for up to 14 days

and are expected to return, giving them added protection from housing instability while maintaining their independence.

These changes will help to reduce homelessness and housing instability for these young adults, while promoting educational achievement, employment, and improved outcomes for former foster youth.

For these reasons, CWDA is pleased to be a CO-SPONSOR of AB 1979, along with the Alliance for Children's Rights, Children Now, the Children's Law Center of California, First Place for Youth and GRACE.

Sincerely,



Cathy Senderling-McDonald | Deputy Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Lauren Friedman  
Honorable Members, Assembly Human Services Committee  
Kelsy Castillo, Consultant, Assembly Human Services Committee  
Cyndi Hillery, Assembly Republican Consultant  
Tam Ma, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom  
Robert Smith, California Department of Social Services  
Justin Garrett, California State Association of Counties  
County Caucus