

February 13, 2017

The Honorable Richard Pan, Chair
Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Sub. No. 3
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Joaquin Arambula, Chair
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Emergency Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children - SUPPORT

Dear Senator Pan and Assembly Member Arambula:

The organizations below support the Emergency Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children, a \$31 million budget proposal to increase access to early care and education services for abused and neglected children across the State. This program would help to immediately stabilize vulnerable children in the most appropriate placement, and provide them with a bridge to long-term, high quality early education programs.

County child welfare agencies rely on the commitment of countless resource families to provide children who have been abused and neglected with safe and loving homes. Unfortunately, many willing resource parents cannot provide homes for foster children because they lack access to child care. Although foster children are eligible for state child care subsidies, one of the main barriers to accessing child care is a “timing gap.” When children are removed, they are in crisis and prospective resource parents – often relatives – instantly need to access child care in order to care for their new family member and keep their jobs. Yet, child care programs typically operate at full capacity, with short enrollment windows that rarely align with a child’s placement into foster care. This makes it nearly impossible for caregivers who work to take in young children. This proposal addresses this “timing gap” so that children can be promptly placed and stabilized with loving relatives or with the right resource family.

The Emergency Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children would provide:

- 1) An emergency child care voucher for resource families who need child care in order to take in foster children as well as for parenting foster youth;
- 2) Child Care Navigators to provide the resource family with enhanced support in navigating the state’s complex child care system and transitioning into long-term, high quality early education programs; and,
- 3) Training for child care providers caring for our youngest abused and neglected children on trauma-informed care.

The success of the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) depends on increased recruitment, retention and support of resource families. Many counties continue to struggle with declines in the available number of caregivers, in part due to positive outcomes as children exit to adoption and guardianship, and difficulty in recruiting working families. In Los Angeles County alone, state-licensed homes have declined by over half, from more than 8,000 in 2005 to fewer than 4,000 in 2015. The child welfare system cannot succeed in its mission to provide loving foster homes for our most vulnerable children unless this barrier to recruiting caregivers is addressed. In addition, we know that, for all the benefits that high quality child care has for young children, the impact can be far more dramatic for children who have experienced the trauma of abuse, neglect and removal from their homes.

We believe that this program is critically important and we strongly support this budget request. We are looking forward to working with you and urge you to adopt this modest investment.

Sincerely,

Advancement Project
Advokids
Alliance for Children's Rights
California Alliance of Caregivers
California Alliance of Child and Family Services
California Alternative Payment Program Association
Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles
Children Now
Children's Advocacy Institute
County Welfare Directors Association of California
Families Now

First Place for Youth
Hillsides
John Burton Advocates for Youth
Legal Advocates for Children and Youth
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Los Angeles County
Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services
National Association of Social Workers
Public Counsel
USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work
Voices
Youth Law Center

cc: Members and Staff of the Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3 on Health and Human Services
Members and Staff of the Assembly Budget Subcommittee No.1 on Health and Human Services

