



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

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May 31, 2016

To: The Honorable Philip Ting  
Chair, Budget Conference Committee

Honorable Members, Budget Conference Committee

From: Frank J. Mecca, Executive Director

**RE: ITEM #5180: EMERGENCY CHILD CARE FOR FOSTER CHILDREN – ADOPT ASSEMBLY VERSION**

The County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) urges the Budget Conference Committee to adopt the Assembly version which would provide \$11 million in 2016-17 and \$22 million in out-years for emergency child care services for abused and neglected children across the state.

Both federal and state law confer first priority for subsidized child care services to children who are abused, neglected and at risk of abuse and neglect. Although most resource families eventually get access to state subsidized child care, they can rarely access that child care at the moment a foster child is placed into their homes. This is due to a “timing gap” where it can take weeks or sometimes months to secure a spot for subsidized child care due to lengthy waiting lists. To remedy this timing issue, this proposal would establish the Emergency Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children to provide immediate child care for resource families upon placement of a foster child into their care, as well as for parenting foster youth. This program would allow resource families to receive time-limited assistance, for up to six months, between the moment of placement until the resource family can access subsidized child care.

County child welfare agencies rely on the commitment of countless resource families to provide children with safe and loving homes during their times of crisis, yet many of these families cite lack of timely child care access as a barrier to opening their homes, and hearts to foster children. This hardship is especially felt by relative caregivers, who step in with little notice, taking in sibling groups while often juggling multiple responsibilities of work and caregiving. Very few resource families can afford to pay for child care out-of-pocket while waiting for subsidies to begin. This undermines counties’ ability to recruit and retain resource families and ultimately, serves as a detriment to achieving positive outcomes for foster children.

The ability to provide emergency child care is therefore critical as the State embarks on the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) effort pursuant to AB 403 (Statutes of 2015). This landmark legislation requires that counties reduce the use of congregate care settings and provide children with the supports and services they need in home-based settings, and to achieve federally-required outcomes of increased safety, permanency and well-being. Timely access at the critical moment of a child's placement into foster care ensures that resource families are supported, and provides a high quality, enriching support to the foster child. This promotes improved outcomes for foster children and will help California achieve its desired goals under CCR.

For these reasons, we urge the Budget Conference Committee to adopt the Assembly version. Thank you for your consideration.

cc: Gail Gronert, Office of the Assembly Speaker  
Chris Woods, Office of the Assembly Speaker  
Nicole Vazquez, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1  
Cyndi Hillery, Assembly Republican Fiscal  
Jennifer Troia, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore  
Craig Cornett, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore  
Theresa Pena, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3  
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Will Lightbourne, Department of Social Services  
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