



May 23, 2016

The Honorable Tony Thurmond, Chair  
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1



Honorable Members  
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1  
State Capitol Building, Room 6026  
Sacramento, CA 95814



**RE: SUPPORT TO CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES TO SERVE CHILD VICTIMS OF COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSEC)**

Dear Chairman Thurmond and Members:



Our broad coalition of agencies and organizations urges your support to provide \$19.7 million General Funds to expand services provided to child victims of commercial sexual exploitation through California's child welfare services programs. This funding is needed to meet new federal and state mandates that require the child protective services system to identify and serve this unique population.

**CHILDREN NOW**



The commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is a national and statewide epidemic that deserves our highest attention. Various studies have pointed to the fact that many CSEC victims have had prior involvement with CWS, and some have been recruited while being in the foster care system. In addition, three of the top ten highest trafficking areas in the nation are right here in California: San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego metropolitan areas. In many respects, these victims are like other children that counties serve in the child welfare services system, but also have unique needs due to their experiences of extreme trauma and abuse that cannot be fully met with current resources.



We greatly appreciated the Legislature's investment of \$14 million into the CSEC Program in the 2014-15 State Budget. During the first year of ramp up, a total of \$5 million was allocated, with a portion dedicated for training of social workers, probation officers, group home staff, family-based foster care providers and youth, and the remainder provided to counties to begin developing local multi-disciplinary response protocols. Last year, the full \$14 million was allocated to counties, of which \$3.25 million was redirected to meet the new mandates of the federal Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (P.L. 113-183), which requires that child welfare agencies develop procedures and protocols for finding runaway youth and screening to determine if youth are victims of commercial sexual exploitation. The remaining \$10.75 million was allocated to counties opting into the CSEC State Program: eighteen counties received grants for continued development of their local CSEC protocols, and twenty-two counties received funding to implement local protocols, in coordination with local law enforcement, probation agencies, public health, behavioral health, and community-based organizations serving youth.



The investment of \$14 million included a clarification in state law (SB 855, Statutes of 2014) that child victims of commercial sexual exploitation must come under the protection of the child welfare system. This was followed by federal law (P.L. 113-183) that requires child welfare agencies implement locally-established protocols, provide case management and secure other services and supports to meet unique needs of CSEC youth, beginning September 2016. Data indicates that counties served over 400 victims of commercial sexual exploitation between July 2015 and September 2015 and anticipate serving over 800 in this fiscal year. However, the need is likely far greater, given the prevalence of commercial sexual exploitation in California and the fact that counties and community partners are just beginning to identify CSEC youth as a result of efforts to increase awareness through education and implementation of local screening tools.

Additional funding is needed to ensure that all counties and their community partners can implement local protocols and meet both federal and state mandates. We know from local experience that CSEC victims need intensive services and support to protect them from further victimization and help them overcome severe physical and emotional abuse. These victims require immediate assistance to keep them safe from their perpetrators, including emergency housing and supplies, and case coordination across service providers to assist in their recovery. Successful interventions requires specialized training and close collaboration across public and private agencies and service providers, led by child welfare agencies.

For these reasons, we support the request for \$19.7 million in additional funding to serve CSEC victims, of which \$3.5 million would be utilized for federally-mandated training, and \$16.2 million will provide direct services to CSEC victims.

We thank you for your attention to this important matter on behalf of child victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

Sincerely,

Frank J. Mecca, Executive Director  
County Welfare Directors Association of CA

Stephanie Richard, Policy/Legal Services Dir.  
Coalition to Abolish Slavery

Carroll Schroeder, Executive Director  
California Alliance of Child and Family Services

Amy Lemley, Policy Director  
John Burton Foundation for Children without Homes

Farrah McDaid-Ting, Senior Legislative Rep.  
California State Association of Counties

Liberty Sanchez, Legislative Representative  
LIUNA Local 777 and 792

Kyle Sporleder, Director of Policy  
California Youth Connection

Claire Lipschultz, Esq., State Policy Advocate  
National Council of Jewish Women

John J. Bauters, Policy Director  
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Tia Orr, Senior Government Advocate  
Service Employees Union International (SEIU)

Leslie Heimov, Executive Director  
Children's Law Center of California

Stacey Katz, Executive Director  
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Susanna Kniffen, Associate Director,  
Child Welfare Policy, Children NOW

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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  
Will Lightbourne, Department of Social Services  
Robert Smith, Department of Social Services  
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