



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

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July 5, 2016

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
United States Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

**Re: The Family First Prevention Services Act of 2016 (S. 3065; H.R. 5456) –
Support Amendments by State of California and State of New York**

Dear Senators:

The County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) is proud of its multi-year effort to work with the state and child advocates to launch landmark reforms to serve vulnerable children and their families. We also acknowledge the vision and tireless work of Senate Finance Committee Chairman Hatch and Ranking Member Wyden to draft the bipartisan *Family First Prevention Services Act of 2016*. Our state and counties share with the Senate Finance Committee the commitment to act in the child's best interest. And, it is important to note, most of the measure's provisions do indeed help us further that goal.

Unfortunately, portions of the bill are of significant concern to California's county human services agencies. Specifically, the bill as currently drafted would significantly and negatively affect the implementation of our landmark Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) to reduce the use of congregate care; eliminate provisions we have in place to help foster youth ages 16-18 with transitional housing; and impede our prevention services work with kin families to help children reunify with their families. Our counties have a tremendous financial and policy stake in this area, given that counties administer child protection services and respond to more than 500,000 of reports of abuse and neglect annually. Counties also rely on Title IV-E funds to support a significant percentage of the foster care system, and counties finance nearly the entire non-federal share of the foster care program with local funds, with very little state share.

We have worked very closely with your staff and the Senate Finance Committee to address these concerns and others raised by advocates in California. CWDA believes that now is the best time to resolve these issues legislatively rather than through a possible future bill and regulatory guidance. That is why we have worked diligently with the California State Department of Social Services (DSS) to draft the proposed amendments you received under separate cover on July 1, 2016. We unequivocally support those amendments, formally

offered by DSS and the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, and urge you to work with the Committee to ensure that they are adopted.

We will continue to work collaboratively in California and with our federal partners to improve the lives of our children. If you have questions about our positions, please have your staff contact Tom Joseph, Director of CWDA's Washington Office at 202.898.1446 or tj@wafed.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank Mecca". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Frank Mecca | Executive Director

cc: Will Lightbourne, California Department of Social Services