Dear Senator Skinner and Assembly Member Ting:

The organizations below respectfully request your support for an augmentation of $50 million General Fund (GF) in FY 2021-22, and $100 million on-going, to build locally driven services and supports for children, youth and families at risk of entering foster care. The goal of this effort is to keep families safely together and prevent the need for entries into the foster care system whenever possible. This investment would leverage federal Title IV-E funding to support counties' work with communities of color to strengthen families that are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system, in order to address and reduce known inequities and disparities in the system.

Recent historic legislation - the federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) of 2018 - provides a $1 match for every $1 invested for evidence-based prevention services in the areas of mental health, substance abuse, in-home parenting skills, and kinship navigator programs. Our organizations see FFPSA as the catalyst to enable California to begin shifting towards a child welfare system that looks first to strengthen families and communities through a broad array of culturally relevant prevention services developed and delivered in partnership with local communities.

Historically, California counties have relied upon a very limited and inadequate pool of federal funds to deliver direct services to children, youth and families served by child welfare. These funds have largely been focused on youth and families to help families reunify after a removal. Until recently, seven counties participated in a Title IV-E demonstration waiver for flexible funding, but the authority for this waiver has expired, leaving counties with few options for providing direct services intended to support families to safely stay together and prevent entry into the foster care system.

Disparities and disproportionality in the child welfare system that have persisted for years have been amplified and made worse with the stressors caused by the pandemic, which has negatively and disproportionately impacted communities of color. Statewide data indicates that between July 2019 and June 2020, 51.3% of children who entered foster care were reunified with their families, suggesting that if high quality services could have been provided prior to removal, the need for foster care could potentially have been averted for some families. FFPSA provides the opportunity for counties to build services and tangible supports needed by families and in turn, begin to invest in a broader prevention continuum in collaboration with their local communities.

In order to begin this critical work, we respectfully request your support for $50 million GF in FY 2021-22 (which leverages up to $50 million in additional federal funding), and $100 million GF on an on-going basis, to be invested in the following ways:

- **$45 million GF ($95 million ongoing)** for direct services and supports to children, youth and families including mental health, substance abuse, in-home parenting skills, and kinship navigator programs as well as tangible supports for families. Services may also be provided to pregnant and parenting foster youth. This proposal requires collaborations with community-based organizations and coordination of services available through other state and local programs. The exact array of available services, and family engagement strategies, would be locally driven through a robust community-based planning process.
- **$4 million GF (initial and on-going)** for state infrastructure necessary to meet federal FFPSA requirements including evaluation, reporting, and supporting model fidelity.
$1 million GF (initial and on-going) for training to build the knowledge and skills for community-based service providers and county staff to deliver evidence-based, culturally informed and promising practices.

This investment will support early prevention efforts to prevent removals from the home, keeping families together with services, reducing the risk of future maltreatment, and promoting the safety and well-being of the child within their family unit. It is important that the state provide the critical funding necessary to begin building out these prevention services to move the child welfare system further in the direction of supporting families in need and reducing known disparities in the system with a particular focus on communities overrepresented in the system today.

For all these reasons, we urge your support for this request.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned Organizations

Advokids                                Families Forward Learning Center
Alliance for Children's Rights          Family Care Network
Association of Community Human Service  First 5 Association of California
    Agencies                             First 5 California
California Alliance of Caregivers       First 5 Ventura County
California Alliance of Child and Family  Foster Care Counts
    Services                             FRC Alliance San Francisco for Families
California Children's Trust             Friends of the Children - Los Angeles
California Family Resource Association  GRACE End Child Poverty Institute
California State Association of Counties  (CSAC)  Helpline Youth Counseling
California Youth Connection             Hillsides
CASA of Santa Cruz County               Hispanic Foundation of Silicon Valley
Casa Pacifica Centers for Children and  Humboldt Network of Family Resource Centers
    Families                             John Burton Advocates for Youth
Child Abuse Prevention Council of Contra  Journey House
    Costa County                          LA Best Babies Network
Child Abuse Prevention Council of San  National Foster Youth Institute
    Joaquin County                        National Health Law Program
Children Now                            Parents Anonymous
Children's Advocacy Institute           Peace4Kids
Children's Bureau                        Prevention Partnership International
Children's Law Center of California     Public Counsel
City and County of San Francisco, Human  SEIU-CA
    Services Agency
Community Education Partnerships        Seneca Family of Agencies
COPE Family Center                      Strategies TA
County of Los Angeles                   The Child Abuse Prevention Center
County of Monterey, Department of Social  The RightWay Foundation
    Services                             Time for Change Foundation
County of Sacramento                    Urban Counties Caucus
County of Santa Barbara                 Vilda
County of Santa Cruz, Human Services    Vista Del Mar Child and Family Services
    Department                            VOICES
County Welfare Directors Association of  Wayfinder Family Services
    California                           WestCoast Children's Clinic
East Bay Children's Law Offices         WOW Explorations
Edgewood Center for Children and Families
EntreNous Youth Empowerment Services, Inc.