



April 25, 2017

To: The Honorable Richard Pan
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3

Honorable Members
Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3

From: Frank J. Mecca, Executive Director

**RE: PUBLIC HEALTH NURSES FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER
CARE – SUPPORT SEIU REQUEST**

The County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) supports the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) request for \$3,844,883 General Fund for additional public health nurses in the Health Care Program for Children in Foster Care (HCPCFC). By leveraging a 75 percent federal match, this budget request would bring in an additional \$11,534,651 additional federal funds to ensure foster children receive appropriate health and mental health care, and only receive psychotropic medications that are medically necessary.

Youth in foster care have higher rates of serious health, emotional, behavioral, and developmental conditions than their peers. To address these needs, HCPCFC incorporates public health nurses into regular health care for foster youth. These public health nurses advocate for the health care needs of youth in foster care, provide medical case planning and care coordination, and assist foster parents in obtaining timely health and mental health assessments and care, among other duties. In 2015, the Legislature increased the role of the public health nurse to include monitoring the administration of psychotropic medications to foster youth.

Unfortunately, in many counties, HCPCFC public health nurses are stretched thin with high caseloads and increasing responsibilities. The recommended caseload for public health nurses is 200 foster youth per nurse, but at least 17 counties maintain a higher average caseload. As a result, youth in foster care may not always receive the highest quality health care advocacy on their behalf. Youth receiving psychotropic medications, for example, need close oversight of their medications and health care to make sure they are not being over-prescribed psychotropic medications, which can result in serious and sometimes fatal health consequences. Public health nurses are a critical support to social work staff and caregivers in coordinating access to health, mental health and dental care services for foster youth.

The fiscal analysis prepared by SEIU shows that HCPCFC currently does not have sufficient funding to meet the needs of the foster youth they serve. This request provides the funding necessary to ensure every foster child in California is served by a public health nurse under the adequate caseload ratio of 200 to 1. By leveraging an enhanced federal match rate of 75 percent, the state would fund an additional 96 public health nurses for the price of 24---three additional nurses for each nurse the state funds.

With adequate funding for HCPCFC, public health nurses will be able to ensure that youth in foster care have access to appropriate health care, receive the treatment they need, and are receiving only the medications that are medically necessary.

For these reasons, we urge your support to increase funding for public health nurses in HCPCFC.

- cc: Jennifer Troia, Office of the President Pro Tem
- Marjorie Swartz, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore
- Craig Cornett, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore
- Theresa Pena, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 3
- Scott Ogus, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 3
- Kirk Feely, Senate Republican Fiscal Office
- Anthony Archie, Senate Republican Fiscal Office
- Luan Huynh, Office of Senator Holly Mitchell
- Bernadette Lawrence, Office of Senator Richard Pan
- Mark Newton, Legislative Analysts' Office
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- Michael Wilkening, Health and Human Services Agency
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- Jennifer Kent, Department of Health Care Services
- Carol Gallegos, Department of Health Care Services
- Will Lightbourne, California Department of Social Services
- Robert Smith, California Department of Social Services
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- Kristen Shelton, HHS, Department of Finance
- Adam Dorsey, HHS, Department of Finance
- Jay Kapoor, HHS, Department of Finance
- DeAnn Baker, California Association of Counties
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