PRINT ON LETTERHEAD AND EMAIL TO SUPPORT@JBAY.ORG

[DATE]

The Honorable Angelique V. Ashby
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 7320
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Senate Bill 307 (Ashby, McGuire), Fostering Futures – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Ashby:

On behalf of [Organization's name], I am writing in **SUPPORT** of **Senate Bill (SB) 307 – Fostering Futures**, jointly authored by Senate Majority Leader McGuire. SB 307 will ensure foster youth have a pathway to debt free college by allowing foster youth enrolled in an associate's degree, transfer pathway, or career technical education certificate program at a community college or a four-year program at a CSU or UC to have 100% of their unmet need covered.

[**OPTIONAL**: include a paragraph about your organization's specific knowledge of need for this bill]

Children and youth enter foster care due to serious abuse and neglect. This trauma is often compounded by the instability they experience while in foster care, through placement and school changes. Together, these lead to poor educational outcomes, most notably low rates of college completion: in California, just 10% of foster youth obtain a two-year or four-year degree by the age of 23 compared to 36% of their non-foster youth peers. However, a recent study found that foster youth who receive a Chafee Education and Training Voucher are **twice as likely** to graduate as those who did not.

Recognizing the college affordability crisis impacts college students more broadly, the state revamped the Middle Class Scholarship (MCS) in 2021 to become the first state financial aid program for which award amounts are linked to students unmet need, including non-tuition costs such as housing, food, and transportation. The MCS, while a major step towards addressing equity gaps in college access, falls short on serving the needs of foster youth. The MCS requires students to contribute towards the cost of attendance through work or savings. For many foster youth, who have neither an emotional or financial safety net in place, successfully balancing a full-time course load and part time work is not possible.

While the vision of the MCS is to one day enable all Californians to access debt-free higher education by covering student's unmet need, the shortfalls of the program leave foster youth with an additional funding gap that continues to make higher education extremely inaccessible to these youth. SB 307 seeks to fill the gaps of need through the MCS by establishing the Fostering Futures program within the existing MCS program to do the following for foster youth:

- Expand eligibility for the MCS program to foster youth enrolled in an associate's degree, transfer pathway, or career technical education certificate program at a community college –

the current MCS program only applies to UC's and CSU's, or a bachelor's degree program at some community colleges;

- Remove the student contribution requirement towards the cost of attendance for UC's, CSU's, and community college associate's degrees, transfer, or certificate programs; and
- Cover 100% of remaining unmet need after other federal, state, and institutional aid is applied for UC's, CSU's, and community college associate's degrees or certificate programs.

Completion of a four-year degree, while a major milestone, does not mark the end of a foster youth scholar's journey, but rather a new beginning. SB 307 serves to both increase the likelihood that foster youth can reach their educational goals and also better prepare them to enter the next stage of their lives, whether that involves pursuing an advanced degree or entering directly into their chosen career path, by providing the opportunity to begin their next chapter debt-free from higher education.

It is for these reasons, [Name of Organization] is pleased to **SUPPORT** SB 307.

Sincerely,
Signature (letters must have a signature to be accepted)

Full Name
Title
Organization