February 13, 2024

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
California State Governor
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Proposed Elimination of Housing Supports for Foster Youth

Dear Governor Newsom,

The undersigned coalition of organizations, public agencies, and young adults are writing to express concern about two budget cuts included in your Administration’s proposed 2024-25 budget that will increase homelessness among foster youth. These include $18.8 million (General Fund, ongoing) for the Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP) Supplement and $13.7 million (General Fund, ongoing) for the Housing Navigation and Maintenance Program.

The SILP Supplement was included in the FY 23-24 budget. It will provide a supplementary payment to foster youth placed in a SILP, based on the cost of housing in the county where they live. These young people currently receive $1,206 monthly for all living expenses: rent, food, utilities, clothing, transportation and more. Given this low rate and escalating housing costs, 1 in 5 current foster youth in California have at least one episode of homelessness between ages 18 and 21.

The Legislature and your Administration adopted the SILP Supplement for several reasons. First, it recognized the unique responsibility that California has to youth in foster care, who were placed into foster care through no fault of their own. The Legislature and Administration also understood that experiencing homelessness as a youth or young adult increases the likelihood of being chronically homeless as an adult. Finally, the policy was adopted because it achieves the important goal of reducing homelessness among youth in foster care by leveraging federal funding.

The undersigned organizations support the foster care rate reforms underway. However, their focus is on ensuring foster children and youth in family settings receive the correct level of care, such as mental health counseling. They do not address the housing affordability crisis experienced uniquely by young people who live in a SILP and they do not address the needs of young adults in foster care living independently.
The second proposed reduction of concern is the elimination of the Housing Navigation and Maintenance Program, which pays for supportive services for 1,300 foster youth who have a federal housing voucher specifically for former foster youth. These vouchers are known as Family Unification Program (FUP) and Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) vouchers.

Prior to the creation and expansion of the Housing Navigation and Maintenance Program, these federal vouchers were underutilized in California because there was not a source of public funding to provide the required supportive services. Since the creation and expansion of the Housing Navigation and Maintenance Program, the number of vouchers has increased 54% in California, bringing $22 million in federal investment to California annually. The effectiveness of this expansion is one key reason why homelessness among transition-age youth has decreased 16% between 2020 and 2023. If this program is eliminated, this effective state/federal partnership will come to a halt and put 1,300 youth at risk of homelessness.

We appreciate the complexity of the state budget and the need to responsibly steward scarce public resources. However, we request that your Administration sustain its long-standing commitment to children and youth in foster care by revisiting these decisions and maintaining these important state investments.

Thank you for all you have done for the children and youth of California. We look forward to ongoing dialogue about these important issues in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

John Burton Advocates for Youth
Abode Services
Alameda County Office of Education
Aldea
All Saints Church Foster Care Project
Alliance for Children’s Rights
Allies for Every Child
Alternative Family Services
Aspiranet
Association of Community Human Services
Better Youth, Inc.
Beyond Emancipation
Bill Wilson Center
Butterfly’s Haven
California Alliance of Caregivers
California Alliance of Child and Family Services
California State Association of Counties
California Youth Connection
Casa de Amparo
Casa Pacifica Centers for Children and Families
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara
Child Advocates of Silicon Valley
Children Now
Children’s Advocacy Institute
Children’s Law Center of California
Children’s Receiving Home of Sacramento
City Without Orphans
Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice
Corporation for Supportive Housing
County Welfare Directors Association of California
Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Los Angeles
Creative Alternatives
Crittenton Services for Children & Families
Cty Housing
David and Margaret Child and Family Services
Doing Good Works
EA Family Services
Edgewood Center for Children & Families
El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency
Encompass Community Services
First Place for Youth
Foster Care Counts
Foster Greatness
Fostering Promise
Fresh Lifelines for Youth
Gather Respect Advocate Change Engage (GLIDE)
Generation Up
GRACE/End Child Poverty California
Heritage Group Homes, Inc.
Hillsides
Hollywood NOW
Housing Authority of the County of Contra Costa
iFoster
Irvine Valley College Guardian Scholars Program
Just in Time for Foster Youth
Kamali’i Foster Family Agency, Inc.
Lens Co
Los Angeles County
Lutheran Social Services of Northern California
Make it Happen for Yolo County
Mary’s Path
Mesa
Monterey County Children and Family Services Agency
New Alternatives
Northern California College Promise Coalition
Oak Grove Sanctuary Palm Springs
Optimist Youth Homes & Family Services
Orange County United Way
Orangewood Foundation
Peacock Acres
Progress Foundation
Public Counsel
Reedley College
The Rightway Foundation
Robles, LLC
Sacramento County Executive Office
Safe Place for Youth
San Benito County Health and Human Services Agency
San Bernardino County Administrator's Office
Sanctuary of Hope LA
Santa Ana Housing Authority
A Sense of Home
Seneca Family of Agencies
Silegra
Specialty Family Foundation
St. Andrew's Residential Programs for Youth
StarVista
Stepping Forward LA
Students Rising Above
Sycamores
Tha Hood Healers
TLC Child and Family Services
Unity Care
Waking the Village
Walden Family Services
Wellnest
Whole Person Learning
Urban Health, Inc.
Urban Strategies Council
Youth and Family Programs

And 102 youth and young adults who have experienced foster care in California:

Ngozi Alumona, San Diego County
Laura Alvarez, Santa Clara County
Marleen Arellano, Los Angeles County
Desiree Armstrong, Fresno County
Maria Baldovinos, Fresno County
Grace Banks, Merced County
Daniel Barragan, Orange County
Daniel Bisuano, Los Angeles County
Naseer Brown, Los Angeles County
Richard Butcher, Yolo County
Iziko Calderon, Los Angeles County
Ashlee Campbell, San Bernardino County
Yontae Capers-Stinson, Los Angeles County
Katherine Carpenter, Sutter County
Artem Chebnev, Los Angeles County
Kelly Clamens, Riverside County
River Covey, Orange County
Elijah Crane, Merced County
Christina Crimi, San Bernardino County
Travis Crown, Los Angeles County
Vanessa Cruz Plascencia, Sonoma County
Rashanda Dauphine, San Francisco County
Jessica Demartini, San Bernardino County
Sherbert Diaz, Los Angeles County
Destiny Dominguez, San Diego County
Michelle Doupe, Placer County
Marcelo Elliott-Lopez, Sacramento County
Richard Espinoza, Merced County
Emily Estrada, Los Angeles County
Destiny Galvan, Los Angeles County
Violet Gonzales, Sonoma County
Natalie Goodliffe, Los Angeles County
Kayla Gordon, Contra Costa County
Carissa Guillen-Neria, San Bernardino County
Monica Guss, Sacramento County
Whimzi Ha, Los Angeles County
Isaiah Haro, Merced County
Joachim Hauss, Los Angeles County
Tajanea Hayes, San Bernardino County
Vicclaudiana Hernandez, Los Angeles County
Karina Hernandez, Los Angeles County
Ashley Holly, Los Angeles County
Tyrese Holt, Los Angeles County
Yuki Huang, San Francisco County
Rozan Jaara, Riverside County
Naomi Jimenez, Los Angeles County
Adriana Johnson, Contra Costa County
Faith Johnson, Los Angeles County
Dakota Kaiser, Sonoma County
Dennis Kelley, Sacramento County
Zarah Latifi, Butte County
Carolina Llerenas, Los Angeles County
Juliana Lopez, San Diego County
Luzvianeth Lopez, Orange County
Navya Mackey, Los Angeles County
Jeffrey Madrid, Los Angeles County
Melissa Martel, Los Angeles County
Maybelline Mejia, Los Angeles County
Jade Mendez, Los Angeles County
Ari Metztl, Los Angeles County
Angelyn Meza, Merced County
Quincy Monroe, Los Angeles County
Joelynn Montelongo, Butte County
Ilynne Nava, San Bernardino County
Maria Olaiz, Orange County
Aamiyah Orozco, Orange County
Victoria Ortiz, Sonoma County
Deyanira Paulino, San Diego County
Axel Pecero, Los Angeles County
Keegan Pederson, Butte County
Caitlin Peterson, Sacramento County
Cherise Pratti, Los Angeles County
Charles Prowse, Sonoma County
Isela Ramírez, Orange County
Sasha Randolph, Santa Clara County
Raylene Raya, San Bernardino County
Pika Ritz, Los Angeles County
Elizabeth Robinson, Los Angeles County
Aahloní Robinson, Los Angeles County
Maria Rocha, Los Angeles County
Francisco Romero, Contra Costa County
Leonardo Romero, San Francisco County
Dianna Romero, Contra Costa County
Nathalie Romero, Los Angeles County
Janet Sandoval, Los Angeles County
Jazmine Sapenter-Coulter, Yolo County
Jacob Seibert, Butte County
Sara Smith, Butte County
Jenessa Smith, San Diego County
Ana Sosa, Los Angeles County
Kadie Staggs, Shasta County
Lauren Stanton Horsey, Orange County
Joel Swazo, Los Angeles County
Talya Thompson, Los Angeles County
Ari Tippett, Los Angeles County
Aleecyah Ward, Butte County
Keairah Washington, Los Angeles County
Deandre Waters, Yolo County
Amari Weatherby, Los Angeles County
Lania Whiteside, Los Angeles County
Emanuel Williams, Solano County
Tyler Zeno, Sacramento County
Cc: Members, Senate Budget Committee
Members, Assembly Budget Committee
Members, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Members, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 4
Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2
Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 5
Chris Woods, Office of the Senate Pro Tempore
Mareva Brown, Office of the Senate Pro Tempore
Jason Sisney, Office of the Speaker of the Assembly
Kelsy Castillo, Office of the Speaker of the Assembly
Jessica Bartholow, Office of Senator Skinner
Tania Dikho, Office of Assemblymember Ting
Bethany Renfree, Office of Senator Durazo
Elizabeth Schmitt, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Timothy Griffiths, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 4
Nicole Vasquez, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2
Genevieve Morelos, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 5
Chantelle Denny, Senate Republican Fiscal Office
Megan De Sousa, Assembly Republican Fiscal Office
Diana Boyer, County Welfare Directors Association of California
Rosie McCool, Chief Probation Officers of California
Justin Garrett, California State Association of Counties
Ginni Bella Navarre, Legislative Analyst’s Office
Lourdes Morales, Legislative Analyst’s Office
Angela Short, Legislative Analyst’s Office
Dr. Mark Ghaly, Health & Human Services Agency
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Angie Schwartz, Department of Social Services
Jennifer Troia, Department of Social Services
Sasha Kergan, Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency
Gustavo Velasquez, Dept. of Housing & Community Development
Jennifer Seeger, Department of Housing & Community Development
Pedro Galvao, Department of Housing & Community Development
Joe Stephenshaw, Department of Finance
Gayle Miller, Department of Finance
Kris Cook, Department of Finance
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Chris Hill, Department of Finance
Andrew March, Department of Finance
Blair Huxman, Department of Finance