February 20, 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 Competes

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
Everychild Foundation
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 160 youth and young adults who have experienced foster care in California:

Roslyn Acosta, San Diego County
Sebastian Acosta, Santa Clara County
Ngozi Alumona, Los Angeles County
Laura Alvarez, Fresno County
Yazmin Alvarez Bernabe, Fresno County
Sarah Anderson, Merced County
Marlenne Arellano, Orange County

Desiree Armstrong, Los Angeles County
Shauneace Arrington, Los Angeles County
Victoria Ashley, Yolo County
Kassandra Bahena, Los Angeles County
Maria Baldovinos, San Bernardino County
Grace Banks, Los Angeles County
Daniel Barragan, Sutter County
Esmeralda Barrera, Los Angeles County
Daniel Bisuano, Riverside County
Naseer Brown, Orange County
Freya Brown, Merced County
Tashianna Brown, San Bernardino County
Azula Burke, Los Angeles County
Ana Betina Bustillo, Sonoma County
Richard Butcher, San Francisco County
Laura Caballero, San Bernardino County
Iziko Calderon, Los Angeles County
Ashlee Campbell, San Diego County
Yontae Capers-Stinson, Placer County
Jesse Cardenas, Sacramento County
Katherine Carpenter, Merced County
Mariah Carrera, Los Angeles County
Brenda Castillo, Los Angeles County
Mariah Chavez, Sonoma County
Artem Chebnev, Los Angeles County
Alex Chiang, Contra Costa County
Kelly Clamens, San Bernardino County
Christina Cole, Sacramento County
Mariah Corder, Los Angeles County
River Covey, Merced County
Elijah Crane, Los Angeles County
Christina Crimi, San Bernardino County
Travis Crown, Los Angeles County
Andrea Cruz, Los Angeles County
Vanessa Cruz Plascencia, Los Angeles County
Rashanda Dauphine, Los Angeles County
Kalila Davis, San Francisco County
Jessica Demartini, Riverside County
Sherbert Diaz, Los Angeles County
Destiny Dominguez, Contra Costa County
Michelle Doupe, Los Angeles County
Marcelo Elliott-Lopez, Sonoma County
Richard Espinoza, Sacramento County
Jasmine Espinoza, Butte County
Emily Estrada, Los Angeles County
Luis Flores, San Diego County
Kayla Fuerte, Orange County
Destiny Galvan, Los Angeles County

Leila Gilkerson, Los Angeles County
Violet Gonzales, Los Angeles County
Natalie Goodliffe, Los Angeles County
Kayla Gordon, Los Angeles County
Carissa Guillen-Neria, Los Angeles County
Monica Guss, Merced County
Selena Gutierrez, Los Angeles County
Whimzi Ha, Butte County
Yvonne Hampton, San Bernardino County
Isiaah Haro, Orange County
Joachim Hausser, Orange County
Tajanea Hayes, Sonoma County
Vicclaudiana Hernandez, San Diego County
Karina Hernandez, Los Angeles County
Ashley Holly, Butte County
Tyrese Holt, Sacramento County
Yuki Huang, Los Angeles County
Lisa Huggins, Sonoma County
Juleian Isaiah, Orange County
Rozan Jaara, Santa Clara County
Naomi Jimenez, San Bernardino County
Adriana Johnson, Los Angeles County
Faith Johnson, Los Angeles County
Katherine Jones, Los Angeles County
Dakota Kaiser, Los Angeles County
Dennis Kelley, Contra Costa County
Jason Koster, San Francisco County
Hailey Koster, Contra Costa County
Zarah Latifi, Los Angeles County
Carolina Llerenas, Los Angeles County
Juliana Lopez, Yolo County
Luzvianeth Lopez, Butte County
Navya Mackey, Butte County
Jeffrey Madrid, San Diego County
Melissa Martel, Los Angeles County
Alina Medina, Shasta County
Maybelline Mejia, Orange County
Jade Mendez, Los Angeles County
Emilia Mendoza, Los Angeles County
Ari Metztli, Los Angeles County
Angelyn Meza, Butte County
Quincy Monroe, Los Angeles County
Joelynn Montelongo, Yolo County
Jaimeyana Morris, Los Angeles County
Brian Morrissette, Los Angeles County
Nataly Munoz, Solano County
Nataly Munoz, Sacramento County
Ilynne Nava, San Joaquin County

Maria Olaiz, Orange County
Aamiyah Orozco, Orange County
Victoria Ortiz, Orange County
Joseph Osborn, Alameda County
Deyanira Paulino, Orange County
Axel Pecero, Orange County
Keegan Pederson
Caitlin Peterson, San Joaquin County
Rosalinda Pina, Orange County
Angel Ponce, Sacramento County
Wednesday Pope, Yolo County
Cherise Pratti, Orange County
Sarah Prince, Orange County
Charles Prowse, Orange County
Seth Putnam, Orange County
Isela Ramirez, Orange County
Sasha Randolph, Orange County
Raylene Raya, Orange County
Pika Ritz, Orange County
Elizabeth Robinson, Orange County
Aahloni Robinson, Orange County
Tamary Robinson, Orange County
Maria Rocha, Orange County
Kevin Rodriguez, Orange County
Francisco Romero, Orange County
Leonardo Romero, Orange County
Dianna Romero, Orange County
Nathalie Romero, San Diego County
Janet Sandoval, Orange County
Jazmine Sapenter-Coulter, Orange County
Isbella Saylors, Orange County
Jacob Seibert, Orange County
Nathaniel Serros, Orange County
Blake Shimabukuro, Orange County
Chaely Sieh, Solano County
Sara Smith, Alameda County
Jenessa Smith, Orange County
Anthony Solomon, Orange County
Ana Sosa
Kadie Staggs, Orange County
Lauren Stanton Horsey, Orange County
Joel Swazo, Orange County
Talya Thompson, Orange County
Ari Tippett, Orange County
Ashley Vargas, El Dorado County
Christiana Walton, Los Angeles County
Aleecyah Ward, Los Angeles County
Keairah Washington, Madera County

Deandre Waters, Kern County
Amari Weatherby, San Joaquin County
Lania Whiteside, Madera County
Emanuel Williams, Kern County
Alyx Wilson, Sacramento County
Tyler Zeno, Los Angeles County

Cc: Members, Senate Budget Committee
Members, Assembly Budget Committee
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Members, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 4
Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2
Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 5
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Mareva Brown, Office of the Senate Pro Tempore
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Ginni Bella Navarre, Legislative Analyst's Office
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