**PRINT ON LETTERHEAD, SIGN, AND E-MAIL TO**

**SUPPORT@JBAY.ORG** **BY THURSDAY, MAY 30TH AT 5:00 PM**

[Insert today’s date here]

The Honorable Josh Newman

Chair, Senate Education Committee

1021 O Street, Room 6740

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Support for AB 2137 (Quirk-Silva) as Amended**

Dear Chair Newman,

[Your organization’s name] is pleased to supportAB 2137, authored by Assemblymember Sharon Quirk-Silva, to ensure youth in foster care and those experiencing homelessness have access to critical educational support and services. AB 2137 accomplishes this through three common-sense provisions that leverage existing funding to increase direct support for students, reduce gaps in financial aid application completion, and streamline communication and collaboration.

[Optional - paragraph about your organization]

Research shows that California’s roughly 225,000 K-12 students experiencing homelessness and over 46,000 students in foster care encounter significant challenges graduating from high school and enrolling in higher education. These challenges often include school mobility, chronic absenteeism and higher rates of exclusionary discipline practices than their peers. Statewide data from the 2021-22 academic year indicate that only 61.4% of foster youth and 72.9% of homeless youth successfully complete high school within four years compared to 87% of the general student population and 84.5% of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. These concerning data have long-lasting implications for these students. Just 10.8% of foster youth complete a 2- or 4-year degree by age 23 as compared to 36% of their peers. Among 18- to 25-year-old youth experiencing homelessness, the likelihood of completing any college credits is half that of other students. AB 2137 seeks to improve the educational experiences of these student groups and ultimately improve high school graduation and postsecondary education matriculation rates.

AB 2137 includes three provisions to accomplish its goals. First, AB 2137 expands the ability of Foster Youth Services Coordinating Programs (FYSCPs), located in each County Office of Education, to provide direct student support. By removing the requirement for LEAs to certify in writing that they cannot provide these services before allowing FYSCPs to move forward, AB 2137 allows programs to more easily provide the intensive support they are uniquely qualified and positioned to provide.

Secondly, this bill requires LEAs to provide a copy of financial aid “opt-out forms” to the FYSCP for students in foster care. Under existing law, FYSCPs are responsible for coordinating the completion of financial aid applications for high school seniors in foster care, however they do not know which students in foster care have been opted out from completing these important applications. By allowing FYSCPs to access this information, program staff can provide tailored interventions and personalized support to ensure youth are aware of financial aid and postsecondary options, and that FYSCPs comply with existing statutory requirements.

Lastly, AB 2137 requires LEAs to consider the needs of students in foster care and those experiencing homelessness by requiring consultation with foster and homeless student liaisons during the development of the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). For LEAs that identify less than 10% of low-income students as homeless, this bill would require that a description of the steps taken to ensure adequate identification of homeless students be included in the LCAP.

AB 2137 builds on current regulations to streamline existing services for K-12 students in foster care and those experiencing homelessness. This legislation ensures educational professionals working with these students have the information and tools they need to provide the best support possible. AB 2137 is an important step towards California’s vision of educational equity, and for these reasons, [your organization’s name] is proud to support this bill. We respectfully request your vote in support.

Sincerely,

[Insert your name and signature here - letters will not be accepted without an actual signature. Please note that typed signatures will be rejected by the advocacy portal]