**PRINT ON LETTERHEAD AND EMAIL TO** **SUPPORT@JBAY.ORG** **BY 6/20 AT 5pm**

**Letter must include agency logo and an original signature to be accepted.**

[DATE]

The Honorable Kevin McCarty

California State Assembly

915 L Street, Suite 110

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Assembly Bill 2508 (McCarty), CalKIDS Foster Youth Eligibility – SUPPORT AS AMENDED**

Dear Assemblymember McCarty:

On behalf of [Organization’s name], I am writing in **SUPPORT** of **Assembly Bill (AB) 2508 – CalKIDS Foster Youth Eligibility**, authored by Assemblymember Kevin McCarty.AB 2508 will expand eligibility to CalKIDS so that all foster youth in grades one through twelve will be able to receive an additional $500 in their college savings account rather than only students who are in the foster care system during the first grade receiving this payment. AB 2508 also expands marketing and reporting requirements to ensure that foster youth have access to the program and creates a process for foster youth who are erroneously excluded from the program to receive the payment.

[**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. Despite these challenges, research shows that 93% of foster youth in California want to attend college. Most foster youth face extreme poverty and have neither a financial nor emotional safety net in place. One study found that the most common reason that foster youth chose not to attend college was because of affordability and their need to work. Together, these lead to poor educational outcomes, most notably low rates of college completion: in California, only 10% of foster youth will graduate with a 2-year or 4-year degree by the age of 23 compared to 36% of their non-foster youth peers. Foster youth are some of the most vulnerable students who need additional services and programs to further their education.

CalKIDS is a California state program that helps children save for college or career training after high school. College savings accounts are one of the best, proven ways of increasing the likelihood that a student will go to college. Even with savings of less than $500, a child is 25% more likely to enroll in college and 64% more likely to graduate than a child with no savings. Children born in California on or after July 1, 2022 are awarded a CalKIDS college savings account with an initial deposit of $100. First graders who are identified as low-income receive an additional $500, and first graders who are foster youth or homeless receive an additional $500 augmentation in their account. However, approximately 46% of all foster youth enter the system after the age of 6, leaving nearly half ineligible for this additional funding.

AB 2508 will expand CalKIDS eligibility to all foster youth in first through twelfth grades so that each student will receive an additional $500 in their college savings account, thereby increasing the likelihood that foster youth have the necessary resources to reach their educational goals.

Sincerely,

Signature (letters must have an original signature to be accepted – not typed)

Full Name

Title

Organization