February 25, 2026

The Honorable John Laird, Chair
Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Comm.
1020 O Street, Suite 8720
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel, Chair
Assembly Budget Committee
1020 O Street, Suite 8230
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Melissa Hurtado, Chair
Senate Budget Subcommittee #4
1020 O Street, Suite 6510
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Sharon Quirk-Silva, Chair
Assembly Budget Subcommittee #5
1020 O Street, Suite 4210
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Securing an Ongoing Minimum Funding Guarantee for Youth Homelessness

A statewide coalition of the 50 undersigned organizations, public agencies, and individuals led by John Burton Advocates for youth (JBAY) respectfully requests an ongoing $80 million funding guarantee for youth homelessness. Under this proposal, in years where the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) program is funded and the 10% youth set-aside provides at least $80 million, no additional funds would be required. In years where HHAP is not funded, or where the youth set-aside is not at least $80 million, an additional State General Fund investment would be required to make up the difference between 10% of the HHAP youth set-aside and $80 million.

Between 2019 and 2024, HHAP reduced youth homelessness in California by 24% overall, and unsheltered youth homelessness by 42%. While the coalition strongly supports funding HHAP at the $1 billion level consistent with the four most recent allocations, this proposal provides a critical safeguard so that this progress is not undone if overall funding is less.

Background on HHAP

HHAP was established in 2019 as part of California's response to the homelessness crisis, and since then, has served 50,431 youth. HHAP provides the state's 44 homeless Continuums of Care, 58 counties, and 13 largest cities with grant funds to implement regionally coordinated homelessness interventions, including interim and permanent housing, services and prevention. HHAP has a "youth set-aside," requiring its grantees to dedicate a minimum of 10% of their total HHAP allocation to addressing *youth* homelessness. HHAP has been funded consecutively since 2019-20, until 2025-26 when the program was not included in the state budget. Statewide, there is a network of over 85 nonprofits serving youth, providing a range of interventions authorized under HHAP.

The Problem

According to the latest homeless Point-In-Time (PIT) Count, California is home to 9,902 youth up to age 24 who are homeless, either unaccompanied or with children of their own. While the reported figure is substantial, researchers widely agree that it is a significant undercount due to the distinctive survival strategies of youth experiencing homelessness, who often rely on temporary accommodations with friends or relatives, seek shelter in concealed or unsafe environments, and intentionally avoid engagement with formal service systems.

The effects of homelessness on youth and young adults are significant, occurring during a critical stage of social and physical development. A 2024 study of youth experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles found that they were significantly more likely to report mental health conditions and substance use disorders,

in addition to physical conditions such as physical disabilities, physical illnesses, traumatic brain injuries, developmental disabilities, or HIV. Youth served by HHAP are those who "fall between the cracks," with no formal system to ensure their well-being. California offers a robust extended foster care system which research has shown reduces homelessness, as well as strong support for youth after they exit the system. Youth served by HHAP are largely not eligible for this support, either because they never had a substantiated report of abuse or neglect, or because their foster care engagement was at a younger age.

Why HHAP is the Solution

The rationale for a sustained investment in HHAP for youth is outlined below.

- **HHAP has reduced youth homelessness:** HHAP's youth set-aside policy has driven the most significant reduction in youth homelessness since it begun being consistently measured in 2015. Between 2019 and 2024, youth homelessness fell 24% statewide, from 13,019 to 9,902. This decline occurred despite overall homelessness in California increasing by 24% and youth homelessness nationwide rising by 11%. Unsheltered youth homelessness in California dropped even more sharply, by 42%, from 9,736 to 5,603. HHAP funds have also helped communities leverage their Homekey investments by providing rental subsidies and services that keep youth stably housed in these new developments.
- **HHAP ensures youth are served:** In 2024, just 3% of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's homelessness beds in California were for unaccompanied youth. The remaining 97% were for adults. By contrast, HHAP's 8%-10% youth set-aside ensured that 9% of those served in its first four rounds were youth. Its success inspired California's Homekey program to adopt an 8% youth set-

aside in round 2, raising the youth investment from .05% in round 1, to a collective 10% in rounds 2 and 3.

- **HHAP prevents chronic homelessness:** A study of chronically homeless adults compared "pathways" to homelessness and found that individuals who first experienced homelessness as a youth were the most likely to experience chronic homelessness, as compared to those who entered homelessness due to substance abuse, mental illness, housing crisis or family breakdown. Sustaining HHAP's youth funding is therefore one of the most effective long-term homelessness prevention strategies California can pursue.
- **HHAP protects youth from federal cuts**: Youth experiencing homelessness are likely to be disproportionately affected by the federal cuts currently being attempted by the Trump Administration. Proposed reductions include a significant decrease in funding to Continuums of Care CoCs and the imposition of a cap on investments in permanent affordable housing—programs that presently account for the majority of HUD CoC expenditures. If enacted, these measures would significantly constrain CoC resources, intensifying competition among providers serving adults and youth alike. In such a funding environment, newly established youth-serving programs would face heightened vulnerability and a diminished likelihood of sustaining their operations.

We appreciate the complexity of the state budget and the need to responsibly steward scarce public resources. However, we request that the Legislature sustain its long-standing commitment to children and youth in California by safeguarding the state's response to youth homelessness

Sincerely,

John Burton Advocates for Youth
Abode Services
Beyond Emancipation
Bill Wilson Center
California Alliance of Caregivers
CASA of Ventura County
Channel Islands YMCA
EA Family Services
Family Assistance Program
Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission
Hillsides
HopSkipDrive
Kamali' Foster Family Inc.
LSS of Northern California
National Center for Youth Law
New Alternatives, Inc

Orangewood Foundation
Point Source Youth
Sacramento LGBT Community Center
San Bernadino Valley College Foster Kinship Care & Education
Sanctuary of Hope
Stepping Forward LA
Sycamores
Tahoe Youth and Family services
TLC Child and Family services
Urban Street Angels
uAspire
Waking the Village
Youth for Change
22 Individuals

Cc: Members, Senate Budget Committee
Members, Assembly Budget Committee
Members, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 4
Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 5
Misa Lennox, Office of the Senate Pro Tempore
Mareva Brown, Office of the Senate Pro Tempore
Jason Sisney, Office of the Speaker of the Assembly
Katie Kolistos, Office of the Speaker of the Assembly
Kelsey Castillo, Office of the Speaker of the Assembly
Bethany Westfall, Office of Assemblymember Ward
Elizabeth Schmitt, Senate Budget Committee
Timothy Griffiths, Senate Budget Subcommittee
Nicole Vasquez, Assembly Budget Subcommittee
Genevieve Morelos, Assembly Budget Subcommittee
Chantele Denny, Senate Republican Fiscal Office
Kirk Feely, Senate Republican Fiscal Office
Joe Shinstock, Assembly Republican Fiscal Office
Brent Finkel, Assembly Republican Fiscal Office
Myles White, Office of the Governor
Tomiquia Moss, Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency
Gustavo Velasquez, Department of Housing & Community Development
Meghan Marshall, California Interagency Council on Homelessness
Justin Garrett, California State Association of Counties
Danielle Bradley, California State Association of Counties
Carlos Marquez III, County Welfare Directors Association
Andrew Cheyne, County Welfare Directors Association
Amanda Kirchner, County Welfare Directors Association
Karen Pank, Chief Probation Officers of California
Ginni Bella Navarre, Legislative Analyst's Office
Paul Steenhausen, Legislative Analyst's Office
Joe Stephenshaw, Department of Finance
Teresa Calvert, Department of Finance