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**Children's Advocacy Institute**



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March 17, 2010

Assemblymember Julie Brownley  
Chair, Assembly Education Committee  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 942849  
Sacramento, CA 94249-0041  
Fax: (916) 319-2141

**Sent Via Facsimile**

**RE: Support for AB 1933 (Brownley) – Enabling Educational and Social Continuity for Foster Youth**

Dear Assemblymember Brownley:

The Children's Advocacy Institute is pleased to write in strong support of Assembly Bill 1933, which ensures that foster youth will be allowed to remain at their school of origin for the duration of the court's jurisdiction, including as they move school levels.

CAI is an academic center and statewide law firm advancing the interests of California's children. Based at the University of San Diego, CAI has trained law students in the practice of child advocacy for the last 20 years. CAI is particularly familiar with the operations of the state's juvenile dependency courts. We have operated a clinic representing abused or neglected children before the court for the last fifteen years. For the last three years, we have operated the state's major training program teaching new attorneys (representing children, parents and the state) who are entering into dependency court practice. Professor Fellmeth of CAI is the author of *Child Rights and Remedies* (Fellmeth, Second Edition, Clarity Press, 2006).

For foster youth, the transience of out-of-home placement means that school may be the one place where they can develop positive, lasting relationships and legitimately depend on adult consistency. Unfortunately, frequent changes in residential placement lead to frequent changes in school placement; it is estimated that California's foster youth attend an average of nine different schools by age 18.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kathleen Kelly, *The Education Crisis for Children in the California Juvenile Court System*, 27 Hastings Const. L.Q. 757, 757-73 (2000).

This instability inflicts often-irreparable harm on a foster child's social, emotional, and academic development. Every time a child is moved to a new school, he or she loses between four to six months of educational attainment,<sup>2</sup> and, due to frequent mid-year moves, the ability to attain full credit for graduation requirements. School placement changes also disrupt critical opportunities to form nurturing attachments and rob displaced foster youth of the developmental support of familiar friends and mentors. The law currently provides for school stability for the duration of each individual school year or longer, if it is in the child's best interest. Unfortunately, existing law does not ensure that youth will be allowed to attend school with their peers as they progress through school levels; it has also been read by some as limiting a foster youth's ability to stay at a school only until the end of the academic school year, even if it is in their best interest to stay longer. AB 1933 will resolve these issues and bring California law in line with the federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, which provides that youth should have the right to remain indefinitely in their school of origin despite any subsequent changes in residential placement.

Thank you again for authoring AB 1933.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Howard", written in a cursive style.

Ed Howard  
CAI Senior Policy Advocate

CC: Senator Carol Liu, via Facsimile (916-324-7543)  
Senate Education Committee

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<sup>2</sup> Homes for the Homeless and The Institute for Children and Poverty, *Homeless in America: A Children's Story—Part One* (New York, NY: 1999).