The Children’s Advocates’ Roundtable met on Thursday, April 26, 2012. We were happy to welcome a number of speakers on issues of importance to children’s advocates around the state.

Our first speaker addressed the importance of the “Schools and Local Public Safety Protection Act of 2012." The act would raise income taxes on the highest earners by 3% and would raise the sales tax by 1/4%. This initiative would help balance California's budget - it is essential that this succeeds in November to avoid additional devastating cuts to our most critical programs.

What Children’s Advocates can do:

1. **Learn about the issue:**
	1. You can learn more about the issue from this website <http://www.protectschoolsandpublicsafety.com/>. (Ed, does Gail want us to refrain from using her name anywhere, or did that just apply to the email we distributed)
2. **Support the issue, should it make it to the ballot in November:**
	1. The petitions to put this measure on the ballot in November were due by Friday, April 27, 2012. However, should this issue make it to the ballot in November, it will need your support. Check back to the website above to see who you can contact and how you can help.

The Roundtable then welcomed Eileen Cubanski of the California Welfare Director’s Association, Amy Lemley of the John Burton Foundation, and Angie Schwartz of the Alliance for Children’s Rights. The three experts in the area of child welfare spoke about California’s Child Welfare budget realignment and the enormous impact it will have on California’s children in the years to come. They also presented recommendations they and other children’s advocates from around the state have drafted to mitigate the harm realignment will cause for children’s programs and services.

What Children’s Advocates can do:

1. **Learn about the issue:**
	1. Read the realignment bill here: <http://1.usa.gov/IFpDhT>
	2. If you would like background information on California’s Child Welfare Budget Realignment, you can view a webinar called “Child Welfare Realignment: Just the Facts” at <http://www.cafosteringconnections.org/past.html> (find it under January 25, 2012)
2. **Speak out in Sacramento**
	1. You can find the documents outlining the recommendations drafted by Children’s advocates around California on the Children’s Advocates’ Roundtable website. <http://www.caichildlaw.org/roundtable.htm>
	2. Let your state senators and representatives know how realignment will impact the children you represent.
	3. You can find a sample support letter for SB 1432 here: <http://adobe.ly/K4xdSV> SB 1432 would serve as a counterbalance to the incentive, created by realignment, to decrease child welfare caseloads regardless of the level of child maltreatment.
3. **Educate the Public and County Officials:**
	1. It will be very important, given the nature of the changes that will come with realignment, for children’s advocates around the state to engage their county supervisors and others in the county to educate them about the needs of the children in the county to ensure that vital programs are not cut.

Lastly, we welcomed Megan Baier and Toby Ewing from Senator Lois Wolk’s office to discuss some exciting bills and projects on which their office is working, the goal of which is to help improve the child welfare system in California and give foster youth a voice in that process.

One bill, SB1279 would equip the state to monitor and report outcomes for children and youth served by the Child Welfare system. The goal of the bill is to ensure that state agencies have valid and reliable information on child welfare outcomes that can be used to improve the quality of public programs for children and their families.

The office is also working to develop a way in which social media tools can be utilized to give foster youth a voice to speak out about the quality of different programs and services available to them.

What Children’s Advocates can do:

1. **Learn more about the projects in which Senator Wolk’s office is engaged.**
	1. You can visit the Senator’s website here: <http://sd05.senate.ca.gov/>
	2. You can also find information about the bills and projects discussed at the Roundtable meeting at the Children’s Advocates’ Roundtable website here: <http://www.caichildlaw.org/roundtable.htm>
2. **Support AB 1279**
	1. You can write a support letter or contact Megan at Senator Wolk’s office for more information: Megan Baier – Phone:916-651-4005 or Email: megan.baier@sen.ca.gov

We would like to thank all of the speakers who took time to share their expertise with us at April’s Children’s Advocates’ Roundtable. We would also like to thank everyone who participated in person or on the phone. Have a lovely spring, and we hope to see you at our next meeting!