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Children's Advocacy Institute Awarded Grant to Amplify Voices of Former Foster Youth Regarding Barriers to Economic Mobility

*Schultz Family Foundation to Fund CAI's Fostering Fairness Project as part of the
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Voices for Economic Opportunity Grand Challenge*

San Diego, CA—The [Children's Advocacy Institute](#) (CAI), of the [University of San Diego School of Law](#), has been awarded a \$100,000 grant from the [Schultz Family Foundation](#) to launch Fostering Fairness, a peer-to-peer education campaign that will raise awareness of the unfair policies that impede former foster youths' attempts to attain financial stability.

"These days many of us face serious challenges, such as unemployment, housing uncertainty, and financial insecurity. For youth aging out of foster care, these challenges are nothing new," said Elisa Weichel, CAI Administrative Director/Senior Staff Attorney. "These and other obstacles are commonplace for transition age foster youth, in great part due to policies that inhibit their ability to attain self-sufficiency after leaving care. Our project, Fostering Fairness, will enable former foster youth to educate their peers about these barriers and facilitate advocacy to remove them."

Each year, around 20,000 young adults age out of foster care in the U.S.; members of this population, which includes an overrepresentation of African American youth and other youth of color, are disproportionately impacted by mental illness and have little preparation or support to become self-sufficient. "CAI has identified several unique barriers faced by this youth population, including asset caps while they are in care, the redirection of their money to the state to pay for the cost of foster care, and the lack of family support," stated CAI Executive Director Robert C. Fellmeth, Price Professor of Public Interest Law at the USD School of Law. "We believe that most Americans, if made aware of these injustices, would advocate for greater fairness and opportunity,"

As part of Fostering Fairness, CAI will join forces with youth experts with lived foster care experience to create an informative, engaging, and interactive online resource that will feature stories of former foster youth whose paths to self-sufficiency have been blocked by unfair and arbitrary laws and policies; key data points on the outcomes of former foster youth, vis-à-vis young adults with no foster care experience; an

array of practical solutions for removing these barriers and impediments; and tools that can be activated to voice support for the removal of these impediments.

The Schultz Family Foundation's grant to CAI is part of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's [Voices for Economic Opportunity Grand Challenge](#), an initiative supported by eight philanthropic organizations. The Challenge is designed to dispel misconceptions about poverty and opportunity and to replace them with the factual accounts and stories of those who experience it. With tens of millions of Americans newly unemployed due to COVID-19, and a nation plagued by racism and injustice, the need to listen to those impacted by poverty and create a shared understanding of the structural barriers to economic mobility is greater than ever. Launched in September 2019, more than 1,200 ideas were submitted, and grant recipients were chosen with input from expert reviewers. Twenty-eight organizations from 18 states and the District of Columbia will receive funding to share diverse voices and ideas that shift the national dialogue. Co-funding the project are the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Schultz Family Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Omidyar Network, Raikes Foundation, and Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation.

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About the Children's Advocacy Institute. The Children's Advocacy Institute, of the [University of San Diego School of Law](#), works to improve the health, safety, and well-being of children and youth. In addition to its academic component, CAI engages in regulatory and legislative advocacy, impact litigation, and public education in order to ensure that children's interests are represented effectively whenever and wherever government makes policy and budget decisions that will impact them. For more information, visit www.caichildlaw.org.

About Schultz Family Foundation. The Schultz Family Foundation, established by Sheri and Howard Schultz, aims to unlock America's potential, one individual and one community at a time. It is building a world where all young people are valued, engaged, and inspired in their lives and in their communities. Investing in innovative, scalable solutions, and partnerships, the foundation focuses its efforts on communities with enormous promise. Visit SchultzFamilyFoundation.org for more information.

About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Mark Suzman and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett. For further information, contact Ed Wyatt, edward.wyatt@gatesfoundation.org or media@gatesfoundation.org.