

February 21, 2013

Governor Jerry Brown
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814



OPPOSITION TO ELIMINATION OF FOSTER YOUTH SERVICES (line item: 6110-119-0001) AND SUPPORT FOR MEANINGFUL INCLUSION IN THE NEW FUNDING FORMULA



CWDA

The State of California has a unique responsibility to children in foster care. In removing them from their families and homes, the state assumes the responsibilities normally vested in a parent. Unlike any other population of children, the State of California is wholly responsible for their well-being and educational success. In recognition of this responsibility, and in response to the tragically poor educational outcomes of children and youth in foster care, California must prioritize these students.



THE FOSTER YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM (FYS) MUST BE PRESERVED



As documented in numerous reports, California's FYS program has improved the educational outcomes of foster children and serves as a model for other states. The COEs provide the types of educational management, advocacy, transition planning and coordination normally provided by a parent. Foster children are a marginalized, largely invisible, population of students. The loss of FYS will leave tens of thousands of California foster children without anyone assuming the role of parent and supporting their educational success.



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There are also substantial costs associated with eliminating the FYS program. State FYS funds bring California millions of dollars of otherwise unavailable federal funds by serving as a Title IV-E match. Federal laws such as the Fostering Connections Act require child welfare agencies to monitor and track the educational progress of foster children, while recent changes to FERPA further emphasize the need for education and child welfare agencies to work collaboratively to improve the educational outcomes of foster children. The costs of complying with state and federal mandates will increase if, instead of coordinating education services with one county-level education agency, agencies have to work with up to 80 school districts.



LOCAL CONTROL FUNDING FORMULAS MUST ACTUALLY BENEFIT FOSTER YOUTH

We commend the Governor for recognizing that students in foster care have unique educational needs that require school districts to provide unique educational services. To succeed in school, many children in foster care must overcome trauma suffered as a result of abuse or neglect, removal from home, placement changes, and frequent school changes which often result in gaps in academic learning.



Unfortunately for foster children, under the Governor's current budget proposal:

1. The vast majority of LEAs do not know which of their students are in foster care. Those LEAs that do, depend on the FYS program for this information, which the Governor's budget eliminates.
2. Since every foster child is categorically eligible for the FRLMP, districts will not receive a single additional penny as a result of a student being in foster care.
3. LEAs are required to track and report the educational outcomes of EL students and FRLMP students, but are not required to track and report the educational outcomes of students in foster care.





- Under existing law, LEAs are held accountable for the academic performance of EL and FRLMP students. LEAs are not held accountable for the academic performance of students in foster care.

For the reasons listed in this letter, the State should preserve California's Foster Youth Services program (6110-119-0001) and amend the local control funding formula to ensure that students in foster care are meaningfully included.

Sincerely,

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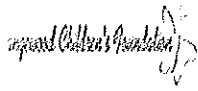
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Also including the following organizations
as well as hundreds of California voters:



Alameda County Foster Youth Alliance
Alameda County Office of Education
Butte County ILP
California Foster Families, Inc.
California Youth Connection
CASA of San Bernardino County
CASA of Santa Cruz County
CASA of San Francisco County
Children's Defense Fund
Child Welfare Directors Association of
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