

April 14, 2014

Senator Block, Chair
Senate Subcommittee on Education,
Standing Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review
State Capitol, Room 4090
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assembly Member Muratsuchi, Chair
Subcommittee on Education Finance,
Assembly Committee on Budget
State Capitol, Room 4117
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUPPORT FOR BUDGET REQUEST: Alignment of Foster Youth Services Program with the Local Control Funding Formula

Dear Senator Block and Assembly Member Muratsuchi:

We are a group of organizations invested in improving the educational outcomes of California's foster youth. We commend the Legislature for working with the Governor in 2013 to create an education finance and accountability system that supports the educational needs of students in foster care. To ensure that the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) benefits foster youth in the manner intended, it is critical that California's Foster Youth Services (FYS) program be aligned with the LCFF and funded at a level sufficient to support **all** of our State's foster youth.

The FYS program and the LCFF are currently misaligned in their definitions of "foster youth". While the LCFF definition includes all foster youth, regardless of where they are placed, the FYS definition and funding are limited to foster youth placed in traditional foster care settings.¹ This misalignment is creating confusion for school districts and county offices of education. More importantly, it means that foster youth placed with relatives are not eligible or funded to receive supports provided by FYS programs.

Studies have found that foster youth do better emotionally when placed with people they know, so over time we have placed more foster youth with relatives. Unfortunately, studies have also found the educational outcomes of foster children living with relatives to be similar to those living in non-relative foster homes, significantly worse than the general student population and worse than other at-risk student subgroups. A recent report found that California foster youth who spent most of their time living with relatives do not complete high school, enroll in community college, or persist in community college at rates any different than youth who spent most of their time living in non-relative foster

¹ See Cal. Educ. Code § 42238.01 for the LCFF definition of foster youth and § 42921 for the FYS definition of foster youth.

homes.²

In recognition of this fact, the LCFF definition includes all foster youth. **The FYS program should be aligned with the LCFF so that all foster children receive the educational supports they need, regardless of the type of foster placement in which they reside.** Aligning FYS with LCFF requires changing the FYS definition of foster youth to match the LCFF definition of foster youth and increasing FYS funding by \$13.6 million. These changes will ensure the LCFF fulfills its promise to all California's foster children, regardless of where they are placed.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. We look forward to continuing this conversation and working together to improve the educational outcomes of youth in foster care.

Sincerely,

XXXXXX

cc:

Senator Carol Lui
Senator Mark Wyland
Assembly Member Rocky J. Chávez
Assembly Member Matthew Dababneh
Assembly Member Brian Nestande
Assembly Member Philip Y. Ting
Assembly Member Nancy Skinner
Assembly Member Jeff Gorell

² Kristine Frerer, Lauren Davis Sosenko, Robin R. Henke, *At Greater Risk: California Foster Youth and the Path from High School to College*, Stuart Foundation, 2013.