

August 28, 2002

The Honorable Gray Davis
Governor
State Capitol, 1st Floor
Sacramento, Ca 95814

Re: Support of SB 1677 (Alpert) – Education Surrogates for Foster Children

Dear Governor Davis:

YOUR ORGANIZATION supports SB 1677, which amends existing statutes to better meet the educational needs of children in foster care.

Children in foster care typically do not have anyone. They have been removed from their homes due to abuse and neglect. Unfortunately, the foster care system sometimes continues to lengthen the trauma and abuse. The Little Hoover Commission has noted that when children are moved from one placement to another, it is not uncommon for children to wait 3 to 6 months before the receiving school received the education and health records necessary for the child to enroll in school. During this time, the child is not allowed to attend school. Similarly, a report by the University of California at Berkeley states that whereas 65% of foster children have special needs less than half are likely receiving appropriate education and supportive services.

SB 1677, double-joined with AB 886 (now chaptered), provides much-needed reform. SB 1677 requires the court to appoint a responsible adult to represent the needs of a child when parental or legal guardian rights have been terminated. This ensures that someone is always looking out for the interests of the child. Secondly, SB 1677 requires local education agencies to appoint a surrogate parent when no responsible adult is identified. This is particularly crucial for children that do not have a caring foster parent, family friend or relative caretaker that can represent their needs.

California will undergo a comprehensive evaluation of children's well-being, outcomes and system factors by the federal government. The first review is in September of 2004 and the second is in 2007. Failure to comply with seven specific outcomes measuring children's well-being (i.e. education, adoptions) and seven specific systemic factors may result in the loss of federal funds (i.e. Title IV-E of the federal Social Security Act). SB 1677 would improve educational outcomes for foster children.

On behalf of all foster children, please sign SB 1677.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME
YOUR POSITION