

[County letterhead]

Date

Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman, Chair
Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Sub. No. 3
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Joaquin Arambula Chair
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Child Welfare Services: Support \$50 million SGF Investment in Prevention Services

Dear Chair Talamantes Eggman and Chair Arambula:

The **County of XXX [or agency]** respectfully requests your support for a \$50 million State General Fund (SGF) investment in the 2021-22 fiscal year, and \$100 million in subsequent years, to strengthen families, protect children from abuse and neglect, and prevent entries into the foster care system. This investment will enable counties to draw down up to \$50-\$100 million annual matching funds to invest in direct services and supports to help keep families together and reduce the disproportionalities faced by children and families of color in the child welfare system.

Child welfare agencies have made significant strides to improve child and family outcomes in recent years, including reducing the number of children entering foster care, increasing reunification, adoption and guardianship rates for foster children, and reducing the number of foster children in congregate care. While our efforts in recent years have shown improvements, the focus of these efforts, such as the recent Continuum of Care Reform (CCR), have been with children and families once in the foster care system. We know that more can, and must, be done to prevent child abuse and neglect by strengthening families and communities and reduce entries into foster care.

Recent federal legislation – the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 – provides states with the opportunity to invest federal funding into direct services to strengthen families and prevent entry into foster care. The Act provides federal matching funding to deliver evidence-based programs including in-home parenting skills, mental health and substance abuse to parents and pregnant and parenting foster youth. Although the Act has some limitations, overall it provides an important opportunity to leverage federal funding with other local and state funding and resources to build a full array of prevention services that are locally tailored to meet the unique needs of families and communities. Prevention efforts are critically important to reduce disparities in the child welfare system for communities of color, specifically for Black and Native American families who are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system.

FFPSA requires a 50 percent match to stand up evidence-based programs and ensure model fidelity in implementation. For any promising practices that may be more reflective of the cultural needs of our communities, states and counties must also commit to rigorous evaluation of those services. Unfortunately, counties are currently stretched-thin and unable to stand up new prevention services due to the required match requirements. The child welfare program was realigned under 2011 Realignment and this funding supports mandated activities for children, youth and families in the foster care system. There is a very limited amount of funding dedicated to direct and/or prevention-oriented services. The Family First Transition Act of 2019 provides California counties with just under \$50 million over five years to support FFPSA implementation, but this funding will be insufficient to establish prevention programs in all 58 counties in California.

Our county has taken important steps towards prevention and early intervention, and FFPSA would help our county move our prevention vision forward. *[Counties: here please add something specific for your county. For example: any prevention program you hope to implement with FFPSA and who would benefit and why you think it's important to implement this program – particularly for families disproportionately represented in CWS. If you are a IVE Waiver county mention this and indicate your need for FFPSA to continue your efforts].*

This requested investment will support county prevention efforts to keep families together through direct services and supports, in partnership with other public and private service providers. This will reduce risk of future child maltreatment, strengthen families and begin to address disparities that currently exist in the child welfare system for children, youth and families of color.

For these reasons, **XXX County** urges your support.

Sincerely,

Name
Title

cc: Members and Staff of the Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Members and Staff of the Assembly Budget Subcommittee No.1
County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA)