



Supporting caregivers, protecting children
stepupforkin.org

Contact: Constance Farrell
Communications Director
c.farrell@kids-alliance.org
213.368-6010 ex. 151
209.765.7855 (cell)

Coalition Members



CHILDREN NOW



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GOVERNOR BROWN HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO STOP CALIFORNIA'S PRACTICE OF PLACING KINSHIP FOSTER CHILDREN INTO POVERTY

Additional child welfare dollars in the governor's May budget revise could pull California out of the dark ages in its treatment of kinship foster children

LOS ANGELES (March 24, 2014) – On Wednesday, April 9, members of the Step Up Coalition and relative foster parents will testify before the Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Health and Human Services in a session focused on child welfare. Step Up – a campaign dedicated to changing California's practice of inequitably supporting foster children placed with relatives – will urge Assembly members to step up for California's kinship foster children and call on Governor Jerry Brown to increase child welfare funding in his May budget revise.

California is the only state in the country that refuses to ever provide state foster care benefits to children placed with relatives despite the fact that relative foster placements are legally prioritized. More than 21,000 California foster children live with a relative. Many are supported at just 38% of poverty because they are ineligible for federal foster care funding due to antiquated eligibility rules and, as a result, receive CalWORKs benefits at \$369/month. Federally ineligible children placed in the home of a non-relative receive \$820/month.

"The system is set up where a more traditional foster family is paid a different rate than what I am," said Donita [XXXX], a relative caregiver. "The fact that they want to pay me less because I'm doing it out of love is difficult for me and I don't understand why someone else's time, care, patience, nurturing and love is worth more than mine." Learn more about Donita and other caregivers firsthand in [this Step Up video](#).

Under this practice, children with special needs suffer the most, and the state pays for it down the road. Children placed in a non-relative foster home are eligible for specialized foster care rates to meet their unique needs. In a relative home, these needs go unmet, which jeopardizes placement stability. Failed relative placements often lead to group homes, which on average costs the state \$102,348/year. The relative caregiver receives just \$4,428/year to care for that same child.

(more)

“Relatives are the backbone of our child welfare system. Without them, California’s foster care system would crumble,” said Angie Schwartz, policy director at the Alliance for Children’s Rights, a Step Up Coalition member. “It’s time to level the playing field so that all of the children the state is charged with protecting have the benefits, supports and services they need to succeed.”

###

Step Up is a campaign dedicated to ensuring that foster children placed with relatives receive the benefits, supports and services they need to thrive. Relatives step up for our state’s foster children every day. It’s time for California to step up for them. For more information or to join the Step Up coalition, visit stepupforkin.org.

The **Alliance for Children’s Rights** protects the rights of impoverished, abused and neglected children and youth. By providing free legal services and advocacy, the Alliance ensures children have safe, stable homes, healthcare and the education they need to thrive. For more information, visit kids-alliance.org.