**Please Place on your organization’s letterhead (if applicable) and** **email to** **jennifer.swenson@asm.ca.gov** **and cc** **klewis@hrdowden.com****;** **skniffen@ChildrenNow.org****;** **isabella.gonzalez-porter@asm.ca.gov****; a.kuncz@kids-alliance.org**

[DATE]

The Honorable Lorena Gonzalez

Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee

State Capitol, Room 2114

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SUPPORT for AB 1164 (Thurmond) – Emergency Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children**

Dear Assemblymember Gonzalez,

[Your name or name of organization you are a part of] is pleased to support AB 1164 (Thurmond), as proposed to be amended, which would help to immediately stabilize vulnerable children in the most appropriate placement, and provide them with a bridge to long-term, high quality early education programs.

[insert organization’s background and/or any specific stories or cases to emphasize the need for this bill]

County child welfare agencies rely on the commitment of countless resource families to provide children, who have been abused and neglected, with safe and loving homes. Unfortunately, many willing resource parents cannot provide homes for foster children because they lack access to child care. Although foster children are eligible for state child care subsidies, one of the main barriers to accessing child care is a “timing gap.” When children are removed, they are in crisis and prospective resource parents – often relatives – instantly need to access child care in order to care for their new family member and keep their jobs. Yet, child care programs typically operate at full capacity, with short enrollment windows, that rarely align with a child’s placement into foster care. This makes it nearly impossible for caregivers who work to take in young children. This proposal addresses this “timing gap” so that children can be promptly placed and stabilized with loving relatives or with the right resource family.

AB 1164 - the Emergency Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children would provide:

1. An emergency child care voucher for resource families who need child care in order to take in foster children as well as for parenting foster youth;
2. Child Care Navigators to provide the resource family with enhanced support in navigating the state’s complex child care system and transitioning into long-term, high quality early education programs; and,
3. Training for child care providers caring for our youngest abused and neglected children on trauma-informed care.

The success of the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) depends on increased recruitment, retention and support of resource families. Many counties continue to struggle with declines in the available number of caregivers, in part due to positive outcomes as children exit to adoption and guardianship, and difficulty in recruiting working families. In Los Angeles County alone, state-licensed homes have declined by over half, from more than 8,000 in 2005 to fewer than 4,000 in 2015. The child welfare system cannot succeed in its mission to provide loving foster homes for our most vulnerable children unless this barrier to recruiting caregivers is addressed. In addition, we know that, for all the benefits that high quality child care has for young children, the impact can be far more dramatic for children who have experienced the trauma of abuse, neglect and removal from their homes.

For the reasons above, [Your name or name of organization you are a part of] urges your support for this important legislation, AB 1164.

Sincerely,

[INSERT Your Full Name]
[INSERT Your Title (if applicable)]

cc: Assembly Member Tony Thurmond