DATE, 2016

Assembly Member Philip Ting, Chair

Budget Conference Committee

State Capitol, Room 3123

Sacramento, CA 95814

Senator Mark Leno, Vice-Chair

Budget Conference Committee

State Capitol, Room 5100

Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assembly Member Ting and Senator Leno:

**Re: Item # 5180 Child Care for Foster Children – ADOPT ASSEMBLY VERSION**

[Organization Name] urges the Budget Conference Committee to adopt the Assembly version which would provide $11 million in 2016-17 and $22 million in out-years to increase access to early care and education services for abused and neglected children across the state.

County child welfare agencies rely on the commitment of countless resource families to provide children with safe and loving homes during their times of crisis. Unfortunately, many willing resource parents cannot provide homes for foster children because they lack access to child care. The barrier to child care is a result of the “timing gap.” When children are removed, they are in crisis, and prospective resource parents – often relatives – instantly need to access child care. Unfortunately, child care programs typically operate at full capacity. They sign up children during short enrollment windows that rarely align with a child’s placement into foster care, making it impossible for caregivers who work to take in young children. This proposal, known as the “bridge” child care program, addresses this problem so that children can be promptly placed and stabilized with loving relatives or in other loving homes.

The Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children would provide an emergency child care voucher for resource families with foster children, as well as for parenting foster youth. This program would help to immediately stabilize vulnerable children and provide them with a bridge to long-term, high quality early education programs.

The success of the Continuum of Care Reform depends on increased recruitment and support of resource families. Unfortunately, some counties have experienced a significant decline in the number of available foster 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 even more dramatic for children who have experienced the trauma of abuse, neglect and removal from their homes.

[Organization Name] agrees that this proposal is very important and I urge the Budget Conference Committee to adopt the Assembly version.

Sincerely,

Insert name, title, and organization here.

CC: Budget Conferees –

 Senator Patricia Bates (916) 651-4936

Assembly Member Richard Bloom (916) 319-2150

Assembly Member Lorena Gonzalez (916) 319-2180

Senator Loni Hancock (916) 651-4909

Senator Ricardo Lara (916) 651-4933

Senator Jim Nielsen (916) 651-4904

Assembly Member Jay Obernolte (916) 319-2133

Assembly Member Kristin Olsen (916) 319-2112

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Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon (916) 319-2163