

February 9, 2021

The Honorable Joaquin Arambula
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #1
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 5155
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee #3
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 4052
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: \$729,000 (General Fund) Healthy Futures for Foster Youth - SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Arambula and Senator Talamantes Eggman,

The undersigned organizations are writing to request your support for a budget proposal of \$729,000 General Fund (GF) to establish an Early Infant Supplement for expectant foster youth three months before the birth of their child.

Receipt of a prenatal income supplement is shown to reduce the negative maternal and child health outcomes of low birth weight and preterm birth while also increasing positive outcomes, including breastfeeding initiation.¹ The effectiveness of this approach is one reason why California's CalWORKS program provides a monthly prenatal income supplement of \$47, starting in the fourth month of pregnancy.

Unfortunately, young people in foster care are not eligible for this benefit and the foster care system does not provide a prenatal income supplement. This group of young expectant parents face greater hurdles in preparing for birth than their peers. A 2019 report found that 20.7% of 17-year-olds in foster care in California who gave birth did not receive any prenatal care; 42.7% of their pregnancies ended in stillbirths or miscarriage.²

In 2018, Los Angeles County took steps to improve birth outcomes among expectant youth in foster care by establishing the Early Infant Supplement, which provides \$415 to expectant foster youth starting in their seventh month of pregnancy. To date, the Early Infant Supplement has been provided to 358 expectant foster youth. A formal evaluation has not been conducted, but county officials note an increase in prenatal care, access to parenting education, and improved preparation for the birth and the child including immediate needs and supplies including diapers, formula, clothing, blankets, cribs and more.

The current budget proposal would build on the approach taken by Los Angeles County by establishing a prenatal income supplement for all expectant parents in foster care in California, available three months prior to the birth of their child. The statewide Early Infant Supplement would be equivalent to the current Infant Supplement of \$900 per month and made available to custodial parents in foster care. According to data provided by the California Department of Social Services, this would assist approximately 270 youth annually.

California can do more to improve the health of youth in foster care and their children and support them as healthy, young families. Additionally, California incurs high medical costs related to maternal

¹ Pediatrics June 2016, 137 (6) e20152992; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2015-2992>

² California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (CalYOUTH): Conditions of Foster Youth at Age 17 (page 44)

Healthy Futures for Foster Youth – Budget Proposal

mortality and morbidity, stillbirth, miscarriage, and complicated pregnancies. This budget investment will more than pay for itself in future savings. Extending a modest expenditure will promote healthy futures for foster youth.

Thank you very much for your support and we urge your consideration of this important budget proposal. If you have questions regarding this request, please contact Anna Johnson with John Burton Advocates for Youth at anna@jbay.org or 920-471-8177.

Sincerely,

1. Alliance for Children's Rights (Sponsor)
2. Black Women for Wellness (Sponsor)
3. Children's Law Center (Sponsor)
4. John Burton Advocates for Youth (Sponsor)
5. National Center for Youth Law (Sponsor)

CC:

Gail Gronert, Office of the Assembly Speaker
Jason Sisney, Office of the Assembly Speaker
Nicole Vazquez, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
Irene Ho, Office of Assembly Member Ting
Renita Polk, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Mareva Brown, Office of the Senate Pro Tempore
Chris Woods, Office of the Senate Pro Tempore
Jessica Bartholow, Office of Senator Skinner
Joe Shinstock, Assembly Republican Fiscal Consultant
Rebecca Hamilton, Senate Republican Fiscal Consultant
Kim Johnson, Department of Social Services
Jennifer Troia, Department of Social Services
Salena Chow, Department of Social Services
Robert Smith, Department of Social Services
Mark Ghaly, Health and Human Services Agency
Jennifer Lopez, Health and Human Services Agency
Paula Villescaz, Health and Human Services Agency
Marco Mijic, Health and Human Services Agency
Adam Dorsey, Department of Finance
Justin Freitas, Department of Finance
Ginni Bella Navarre, Legislative Analyst's Office
Angela Short, Legislative Analyst's Office