



**Children's Law Center**  
of Los Angeles

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**CLC Applauds Governor's Decision to Sign Critical Legislation to Improve Lives of Foster Youth Across California**

LOS ANGELES - CLC, along with child advocates across California, are applauding Governor Schwarzenegger's decision today to sign three bills into law, all of which aim to improve outcomes for youth in California's foster care system.

AB 12, authored by Assembly member Jim Beall, Jr. (D-San Jose) and Speaker Emeritus Karen Bass and co-sponsored by a coalition of statewide organizations including Children's Law Center of Los Angeles, will extend support for California foster youth who are currently forced out of foster care - frequently with little or no adult support - as soon as they turn 18. "By signing AB 12 into law, Governor Schwarzenegger has enabled California to take advantage of the tremendous resources and opportunities offered by the federal Fostering Connections Act to support these youth until the age of 21 instead of essentially cutting them off at age 18. With the aid of federal dollars, California now has the opportunity to lift so many these youth out of unemployment and homelessness. This kind of opportunity doesn't come around very often. We applaud Governor Schwarzenegger for doing the right thing for the sake of thousands of youth in our state," said Leslie Heimov, Executive Director.

In addition to allowing CA to access much needed federal funding, AB12 also creates opportunities for young adults to continue to receive the social and emotional support which can be provided by the courts and the child welfare agency while testing the waters of independence. For example, youth will be able to live in a college dorm or apartment with friends while still receiving financial assistance, advice and guidance, and referrals to needed services.

Governor Schwarzenegger also signed into law two other CLC-sponsored bills, AB 743 and SB 654 (the latter co-sponsored by the California Welfare Directors Association). AB 743 will ensure that more foster youth are placed with their siblings at the outset of the case and are less likely to be separated during their time in care, and SB 654 will allow more foster youth to access the critical services of California's Independent Living Program, thus better preparing them for life after they have aged out of the foster care system.

Children's Law Center of Los Angeles is a nonprofit, direct legal services provider acting as the voice in court for close to 100% of Los Angeles County's 24,000 abused and neglected children. CLC's committed attorneys and social work investigators are tireless advocates for these vulnerable youth, guiding them through the complicated and often overwhelming foster care system and accompanying court process. Appearing at every hearing, often with their young clients beside them in the courtroom, the child's attorney is the only person in the courtroom speaking exclusively on behalf of the child to ensure that their needs are met.

Community members may learn more about CLC and make donations to support CLC's efforts to help vulnerable children and families by visiting [www.clcla.org/donate.htm](http://www.clcla.org/donate.htm) <<http://www.clcla.org/donate.htm>>. All donations are tax-deductible.