

For Immediate Release

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Child Advocates Decry "Dangerous" State Budget Cuts

Proposed loss of funding could cost state hundreds of front line workers and eliminate services for foster children

(Los Angeles, CA) – Child advocates warned today that, if the legislature does not act to restore proposed funding cuts contained in the Governor's budget, California's abused and neglected children will be the ones to suffer. California is home to the largest child welfare system in the country, accounting for an astounding one in eight foster children nationwide. Miriam Aroni Krinsky, Executive Director of Children's Law Center of Los Angeles stated, "We are gravely concerned about the effects of these cuts on our most vulnerable youth. The loss of additional social workers may result in more children remaining in dangerous situations or children already removed from their families languishing in foster care far longer than necessary."

The funds in question -- removed from the budget with little advance warning or discussion -- enabled counties to hire additional child welfare workers and professional social workers after reports warned that caseload levels for these positions were dangerously high. Even with the additional funds, caseloads are still higher than recommended in national standards to achieve the best outcomes for children and families. These cuts would exacerbate the situation by further reducing essential child welfare workers. The County Welfare Directors Association estimates that, if the cuts under consideration are enacted, potential personnel losses could exceed 700 workers. Alecia Sanchez of the Children's Advocacy Institute said, "Child Welfare Services already fails too many children. As we continue to seek improvements to the system, these cuts would be a huge setback."

Programs being cut include funds for Child Welfare Services, which administers the foster care system and Children's System of Care (CSOC). CSOC serves emotionally disturbed children at high risk for being placed in foster care. It allows counties to provide and coordinate a comprehensive system of services for these children. Without CSOC, the patchwork of mental health services available is a dizzying maze that is difficult for families to navigate. CSOC's success, both in meeting children's mental health needs and its cost effectiveness, has been well-documented.

The Foster Care Subcommittee represents a wide array of interests including children's legal advocates, foster parents, biological parents, foster youth, social workers, and others interested in improving the state's child welfare system to better serve children and families.

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