

May XX, 2025

The Honorable Mike McGuire
President Pro Tempore
1021 O Street, Room 8518
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Robert Rivas
Speaker of the Assembly
1021 O Street, Room 8330
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Scott Wiener, Chair
Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee
1021 O Street, Room 8620
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel, Chair
Assembly Budget Committee
1021 O Street, Room 8230
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Emergency Child Care Bridge May Revision: \$42.7 Million Ongoing Cut
POSITION: REJECT

Dear Pro Tem McGuire, Speaker Rivas, Chair Wiener and Chair Gabriel:

The organizations below respectfully request that you reject the Governor's May Revision proposal to cut \$42.7 million from the Emergency Child Care Bridge Program for Foster Children (Bridge Program). This program helps to immediately stabilize traumatized children in the most appropriate foster care placement, and provides them with a bridge to long-term, high-quality early education programs to promote their educational success. This is a **46% cut** to the program that will harm abused and neglected children's access to early care and education services across the State.

Lack of Access to Child Care Creates Placement Instability

County child welfare agencies rely on the commitment of resource families to provide safe and loving homes for children who have been abused and neglected. Unfortunately, many willing resource parents cannot provide homes for foster children because they lack access to child care. Research showed that the initial stage of placement is when children are at greatest risk for experiencing placement instability, especially in the first six to seven months. Evidence also suggested that infants experience the most placement moves during the first month of their placement as compared to older children.

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 from the home of a parent, 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, state-subsidized 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. The Emergency Child Care Bridge was designed to address this "timing gap" so that children can be promptly placed and stabilized with loving relatives or with the right resource family. The Bridge helps alleviate some of the strain placed not only on our resource families, but on both the child welfare and child care systems.

Emergency Child Care Bridge Program Critical to CCR Success

The Emergency Child Care Bridge program has been one of the most successful programs with 48 counties opting to participate in the program. In 2023-24, over 2,791 families representing

3,642 children began participating in the program for the first time. During that same year, 2.5% of the children in the Bridge Program were unable to find child care after 12 months demonstrating that there is still a gap in the ability for foster children to transition into long-term care.

The Bridge Program supports the success of the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) and the child welfare system in its mission to provide loving foster homes for our most vulnerable children. Counties continue to need additional resource parents to provide loving care for foster children, and access to child care is a key strategy in recruiting and retaining resource families who can help mitigate the impacts of trauma on children's lives. The benefits of high-quality child care for young children can make a significant impact on their social, emotional and academic development, especially for children who have suffered abuse, neglect and exploitation and other adverse childhood experiences.

We believe that cutting this program is detrimental to abused and neglected children and must be preserved. We are looking forward to working with you and urge you to reject this cut in the Budget.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned Organizations

cc: Members and Staff of the Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee
Members and Staff of the Assembly Budget Committee
Ginni Bella Navarre, Deputy Legislative Analyst, LAO
Angela Short, Legislative Analyst, LAO
Joe Stephenshaw, Director, California Department of Finance
Jennifer Troia, Director, California Department of Social Services
Kim Johnson, Secretary, Health and Human Services Agency