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Assembly California Legislature



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April 3, 2018

The Honorable Philip Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Dr. Joaquin Arambula
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
State Capitol, Room 5155
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Fostering Success: Supporting Vulnerable Foster and Crossover Youth – SUPPORT

Dear Chairs Ting and Arambula:

I respectfully request a budget allocation of \$7,575,000 to support community-based programs for foster youth who are criminalized for low-level offenses or are at risk of falling into the juvenile justice system.

In 2016, too many vulnerable foster youth were arrested by law enforcement for low-level offenses. A disproportionate number were children of color, girls, youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer, and youth with disabilities. Youth in foster care are already affected by the trauma of removal from their families; yet, they continue to be further traumatized by being funneled into the juvenile justice system.

Foster youth, particularly those placed in group care, are at higher risk of becoming trapped in the delinquency system. Many group care facilities continue to rely on law enforcement as the primary behavior management response to minor incidents causing no injuries. In one case, a child was charged with battery and booked into juvenile hall after hitting someone with a package of hot dog buns.

In 2016, of the 6,217 non-mandated calls by group homes to law enforcement, 60% were for behavioral health emergencies, property damage, substance abuse, and theft. The calls resulted in 435 youth being cited, 527 youth being detained or arrested, and another 319 youth being booked into juvenile hall. In the 2016 annual report on dual status youth in Los Angeles, almost 40% of foster youth who crossed over into the delinquency system were residing in group care at the time of the delinquency referral. Foster youth deserve better than to be sent to juvenile hall as a time-out and behavioral health intervention.

As such, I specifically request that \$7,575,000 be allocated annually for three years to the counties with facilities making 100+ calls to law enforcement a year or with significant numbers of foster youth in group care crossing over to the delinquency system:

- 1) \$575,000 to provide trauma-informed, culturally relevant training to local law enforcement, group home, and shelter staff. Training to professionals interacting with

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youth should include adolescent development principles, de-escalation techniques, culturally relevant and trauma-informed interventions, and evidence-based interventions. Training is eligible for a 75% federal match of funds that would supply an additional \$1,500,000 for training.

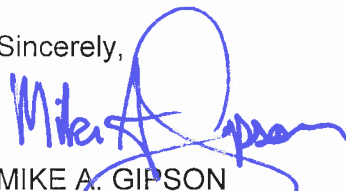
- 2) \$7,000,000 to provide services for children in group homes and shelters delivered by public and private agencies, and non-law enforcement community-based organizations focused on promoting health and youth development. Community-based services for children and youth in out-of-home care should include: education (academic and vocational); mentorship (authentic, lived experience); extracurricular activities and supports such as art, music, civic engagement, and sports; behavioral health (Aggression Reduction Therapy and Multi Systemic Therapy); and mental health mindfulness and self-awareness services. Community-based supports and services can reduce the use of group and shelter care for this population and can allow youth to live in the least restrictive environment.

Data showing group care facilities too often misuse law enforcement to respond to behavior that would otherwise be handled without law enforcement intervention are part of the research underpinning California's Continuum of Care Reform. Relying on law enforcement to deal with foster youth behavior pushes our most vulnerable children into the juvenile justice system at the time when they most need trauma-informed, culturally-relevant care. Similarly, probation supervised foster youth residing in group homes are pushed into detention and other secure placements. Childhood trauma and juvenile detention both dramatically increase a child's risk of adult incarceration.

This proposal would fund a community-based infrastructure to divert vulnerable youth away from the justice system and secure confinement that is both socially and fiscally responsible by treating children accused of low-level offenses appropriately for their age, in community settings, with an emphasis on health and wellbeing.

I respectfully request this funding to ensure our foster youth have access to the care that they deserve and have opportunities for positive personal development and community programs. If you have any questions, please contact Deepen Gagneja at 916-319-2064.

Sincerely,



MIKE A. GIPSON
Assemblymember, 64th District

cc: Members and Staff of the Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon