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## **2017-18 Budget Includes Important New Money to Benefit Children in Foster Care**

SACRAMENTO – Today, Governor Jerry Brown signs the California 2017-18 budget that includes important new money to benefit children in foster care. The budget creates the Emergency Child Care Bridge, a new program to support the implementation of the Continuum of Care Reform, and will assist the state and counties in the recruitment of new resource families.

When word about the final action on the 2017-18 Budget came out, Los Angeles County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl shared, “I am so happy that we will now be able to get new, and essential assistance, to resource families who want to provide loving homes for children in foster care, but are sometimes unable to because they can't find and afford child care, especially in the short time they have to prepare after that phone call comes saying 'OK, we've got a child for you!' State legislators and the Governor deserve our deepest thanks for prioritizing this important emergency child care funding, which will help us to find homes for some of the state's most vulnerable children.”

Many counties continue to struggle with declines in the available number of caregivers, in part due to positive outcomes as children exit to adoption and guardianship, and difficulty in recruiting working families. In Los Angeles County alone, state-licensed homes have declined by over half, from more than 8,000 in 2005 to fewer than 4,000 in 2015. The Acting Director of Los Angeles' Department of Children and Family Services, Brandon Nichols noted, “In Los Angeles County, we are working hard to address a shortage of foster homes, and the ability to immediately provide quality child care will help us address the challenges new resource families face when asked to provide a safe and loving home for a child in need. The Emergency Child Care Bridge program is sure to help. We are grateful to the State Legislature and Governor for prioritizing foster children in this year's budget.”

When abused and neglected children are removed from their home, often they are in a state of crisis, and providing stability and routine are key to helping them recover. A challenge for many potential resource families, who would otherwise be in a position to provide that stability, is the lack of child care. “I regularly hear from foster and relative caregivers that their greatest need is help with the cost of child care. Many cannot accept placements or continue to foster because of their inability to cover these costs. Recruiting new foster and kinship homes will be more feasible now that working families know they will be supported,” shared Jennifer Rexroad, Executive Director, California Alliance of Caregivers.

The Emergency Child Care Bridge will provide up to six months of child care for a resource family administered by the counties. Frank Mecca, Executive Director of the County Welfare Directors Association of California, speaking on behalf of the counties who will be running this program, expressed, “With the child care bridge, the Governor and Legislature have created a pathway for more foster parents to open their homes and hearts to take in abused and neglected

*The Emergency Child Care Bridge Proposal was supported by a broad coalition of stakeholders including: Alliance for Children's Rights; California Alliance of Caregivers; California Alternative Payment Program Association; Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles; ChildrenNow; Los Angeles County; Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services; County Welfare Directors Association of California; Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce; and USC Children's Data Network.*