



May 29, 2019

To: The Honorable Holly Mitchell
Chair, Budget Conference Committee

Honorable Members
Budget Conference Committee

From: Justin Garrett, Legislative Representative, California State Association of Counties
Sharon Rappaport, Associate Director, Corporation for Supportive Housing
Frank J. Mecca, Executive Director, County Welfare Directors Association
Christopher Martin, Legislative Advocate, Housing California

RE: CHILD WELFARE SERVICES – BRINGING FAMILIES HOME
- SUPPORT ASSEMBLY VERSION

The California State Association of Counties (CSAC), Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) and Housing California respectfully request your support of the ASSEMBLY VERSION to provide a one-time appropriation of \$25 million General Fund (GF) for fiscal years 2019-20 and 2020-21 to continue and expand the existing Bringing Families Home (BFH) Program, which provides rapid re-housing, supportive housing, and other critical housing-related supports to child-welfare involved homeless families and those at risk of homelessness in support of family reunification and family maintenance efforts.

The Legislature established the BFH Program through the 2016-17 Budget Act, appropriating \$10 million GF on a one-time basis to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to administer this program for three years. This funding authority for the program will end on June 30, 2019. Twelve counties currently participate in the program,¹ and these counties are required to provide a one-to-one dollar match for funds received.

Counties launched the program in July 2017 and began serving families in the fall of 2017. In this short time, the BFH program has had a significant positive impact to parents and their children. CDSS reports that as of March 2019, 608 families, including 1,270 children, have

¹ Participating counties include: Kings, Los Angeles, Orange, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, Sonoma and Yolo.

been permanently housed. Another 1,400 families have been identified, assessed or placed on waiting lists and will be left without the critical services they need as counties begin to dismantle the program. The current BFH participating counties are on track to spending \$8-10 million on an *annual* basis, not including county match, and report less than \$1.5 million will remain after the program expires on June 30, 2019.

In 2017, twenty-three counties submitted applications to participate in this grant-based program, requesting a total of \$18 million.² Since then, California's housing crisis has grown, leaving even more vulnerable families to compete for affordable housing. The child welfare system was never intended and is not equipped to deal with the magnitude and scale of California's unique housing crisis. Lack of housing poses a unique challenge to child welfare staff working to reunify families and keep families intact. BFH is the only program of its kind in the state positioned at the intersection of homelessness and child welfare to help this vulnerable population. It is imperative to build on the momentum for serving these families and their at-risk children in need of housing assistance.

Early results of the BFH program show great promise, consistent with other research studies demonstrating that homeless prevention programs like BFH work to avoid foster care placement and allow for reunification of birth parents and children in foster care. Counties report BFH has helped leverage additional federal housing assistance funding through local housing Continuums of Care. Research shows the high rates of poverty in African American communities, a population which is also disproportionately represented in our child welfare system. The BFH Program is a critical tool in combating inequities faced by all child welfare-involved families including those disproportionately impacted by poverty.

For this reason, we urge your support of the ASSEMBLY VERSION for a one-time augmentation of \$25 million GF for the next two fiscal years to enable these twelve counties to meet the current need while allowing for some modest expansion of the program to additional counties.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

cc: Jason Sisney, Office of the Assembly Speaker
Gail Gronert, Office of the Assembly Speaker
Mareva Brown, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore
Chris Woods, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore
Nicole Vazquez, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1

² Counties that applied for funding but did not receive: Alameda, Butte, Colusa, Kern, Mariposa, Placer, Riverside, Shasta, Stanislaus, Ventura, and Yuba.

Cyndi Hillery, Assembly Republican Fiscal Office
Renita Polk, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 3
Rebecca Hamilton, Senate Republican Fiscal Office
Luan Huynh, Office of Senator Holly Mitchell
Irene Ho, Office of Assemblymember Philip Ting
Colin Sueyres, Office of Senator Jim Nielsen
Alex Norring, Office of Senator Richard. D. Roth
Elise Gyore, Office of Senator Richard. D. Roth
Zachary Leary, Office of Senator Nancy Skinner
Spencer Street, Office of Senator John M. W. Moorlach
Teresa Trujillo, Office of Assemblymember Jay Obernolte
Maria Alvarez, Office of Assemblymember Kevin McCarty
Brandon Ebeck, Office of Assemblymember Chad Mayes
Anthony Dimartino, Office of Assemblymember Shirley N. Weber
Richard Figueroa, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom
Tam Ma, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom
Mark Newton, Legislative Analyst's Office
Ginni Bella Navarre, Legislative Analyst's Office
Marko Mijic, Health and Human Services Agency
Paula Villescaz, Health and Human Services Agency
Pat Leary, California Department of Social Services
Robert Smith, California Department of Social Services
Kären Dickerson, California Department of Social Services
Diane Cummins, HHS, Department of Finance
Adam Dorsey, HHS, Department of Finance
Jay Kapoor, HHS, Department of Finance
Justin Garrett, California Association of Counties
County Caucus