



For Immediate Release
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Assembly Proposes Budget that Will Help Foster Families Access Child Care

Many of our youngest foster children are languishing in shelters because long waiting lists for state subsidized child care are frustrating county efforts to recruit and retain otherwise willing foster parents. On Tuesday, California's Assembly voted to include \$22 million in the forthcoming budget for a child care bridge proposal that would provide time-limited child care vouchers for the youngest of these children, ages 0 - 3. The request for funding was proposed by a broad coalition of child welfare and child care advocates, led by Los Angeles County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl.

Although most foster families eventually get access to state subsidized child care, they can rarely access that child care at the moment a foster child is placed into their homes. This is due to a "timing gap" between the moment of placement and the moment, typically several months later, when they are able to get off the long waiting lists for subsidized child care. The proposed vouchers will allow more loving families to step up and care for our state's children.

The proposed voucher would have helped Amy, a single working foster parent to 2½-year-old, PJ. Amy waited three months for subsidized child care, during which she used all of her sick days and then paid out-of-pocket for child care. Months later, the absence of immediate child care prevented her from taking PJ's newborn baby brother into her home and he was placed elsewhere.

"Unfortunately, Amy's experience is not unique," says Molly Dunn, a Senior Policy Attorney with the Alliance for Children's Rights. "Foster parents receive a foster care benefit to cover the basic needs of the child. That payment for a 0 to 4 year old is \$688 a month and includes just \$59 for child care. Meanwhile, the average cost of child care is \$803 a month."

"Children who suffer the trauma of abuse and neglect should be able to stay together with their siblings and be placed with families, ideally their relatives. Sadly, we repeatedly hear from relatives and caregivers that the high cost of child care is preventing them from taking in children because they simply cannot afford the out-of-pocket expense of child care," said Frank Mecca, Executive Director of the County Welfare Directors Association of California. "We commend the Assembly for understanding that child care assistance is critical to the well-being of neglected and abused children. Providing this assistance can help us minimize the secondary trauma children might otherwise experience by being placed with strangers or in institutions."

The child care bridge proposal will next be considered in the Budget Conference Committee, consisting of Assembly and Senate members. Once the Committee has reached consensus, both houses will vote on the final version of the budget and it will be sent to Governor Brown by June 15.

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