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April 3, 2025

The Honorable Alex Lee
Chair, Assembly Committee on Human Services
1020 N Street, Room 124
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 896 (Elhawary), Foster care placement transition planning - SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Lee,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to express our strong support for AB 896 (Elhawary), which would enable county child welfare agencies to adopt placement transition policies that support foster children and foster youth as they transition between placement settings and transition from foster care to reunification. The bill enhances agency collaboration with foster youth and caregivers to create transition policies that are supported by best practices.

Children and youth in the foster care system have experienced trauma as a result of abuse, neglect or exploitation. Minimizing further trauma is paramount. While in foster care, children and youth can experience multiple changes in placement, and while some placement changes can be beneficial (such as a move to connect to relative caregivers or to reunify), other changes can be unplanned and destabilizing. Placement changes can also be difficult for caregivers, families, siblings, social workers and other professionals involved in the child's life. Negative experiences for caregivers in particular may cause them to opt to forgo caring for additional foster children in the future. Difficult transitions can disrupt a foster child's journey towards healing from trauma if connections to important adults or siblings are disrupted or activities such as extracurriculars are temporarily interrupted.

California has benefitted from years of implementation efforts through the Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI), a partnership at the state-level between the Department of Social Services (DSS), County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA), and Youth Law Center (YLC). QPI has provided concrete support and guidance to participating counties across the state, including support to counties to implement policies and practices that are child- and youth-focused by building partnerships between county child welfare agencies, resource families, youth and birth families.

AB 896 takes the lessons learned from several counties that participate in QPI and have implemented transition planning policies that have proven effective in reducing trauma and building rapport and trust across caregivers, social workers, and birth families, centered around the best interests of the child and youth.

AB 896 is grounded in child development research to promote a child's healthy development and continuing capacity to trust, attach to others, and build relationships in the future. AB 896 will improve permanency and well-being for foster children and youth by building trust between child welfare agencies and caregivers.

For these reasons, the Kern County Board of Supervisors is pleased to support AB 896 and respectfully urges you to advance this bill through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Leticia Perez', with a stylized, cursive script.

Leticia Perez, Chair
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Honorable Members, Assembly Committee on Human Services
Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation
Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange