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June 4, 2026

The Honorable Shannon Grove
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 7150
Sacramento, 95814

The Honorable Melissa Hurtado
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 6510
Sacramento, CA

**RE: Request to Preserve Assembly Action Restoring Local Child Support Agency
Administration Funding**

Dear Senator Grove and Senator Hurtado,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to respectfully request that the final budget agreement includes the Assembly's action to restore Local Child Support Agency (LCSA) administration funding. By contrast, the Senate's proposal would extend a prior reduction to this vital funding for an additional two years.

For Kern County, extending the funding cuts would result in approximately a \$1.5 million impact each year, directly affecting our ability to maintain timely, effective services for families who depend on us.

We recognize the extraordinarily difficult fiscal environment facing the Legislature. The State continues to manage significant General Fund pressures, uncertainty related to H.R. 1, and competing demands across the Health and Human Services spectrum. We also appreciate the necessity of making difficult decisions within a constrained budget framework. However, child support services are essential to family stability, economic security, and the long-term well-being of children across California, including thousands of families in Kern County.

LCSA's help parents establish and maintain orders, distribute more than \$2 billion in support annually to nearly one million families, make timely modifications when circumstances change, and connect families to broader services that promote stability. When LCSA capacity is reduced, the consequences fall directly on the children and parents who wait longer for orders, payments, case actions, and assistance navigating an already complex system. Preserving administrative funding is therefore essential to maintaining an effective, accessible, and equitable program statewide.

The current reduction represents \$6 million General Fund annually, or approximately \$17.6 million in total program impact when federal matching funds are included. Extending this reduction would create significant operational challenges and unavoidable service impacts for families. Counties would likely need to impose hiring freezes, leave vacancies unfilled, absorb attrition, reduce service capacity, and at worst, implement layoffs.

The impact would not fall evenly. Twenty LCSAs statewide, including Kern, are among the most underfunded agencies in California. These counties are funded at roughly 20% below the state's allocation methodology, compared to an average 6% underfunding among the remaining 27 LCSAs. The proposed \$17.6 million (\$6 million GF) restoration was designed—through consultation with CalCSA and LCSA directors—to move these 20 counties toward greater funding equity, decreasing their average underfunding from 20% to approximately 16.6%. Withholding this restoration does not merely delay an enhancement; it perpetuates structurally insufficient funding for the counties already least resourced to absorb further reductions.

The CA Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) estimates that staffing costs for LCSAs will increase by approximately \$40 million total funds in 2026–27, with \$18 million of that increase attributable to these 20 underfunded LCSAs alone. Achieving the necessary savings without restored funding could impact as many as 287 positions statewide, 131 of them within the 20 most underfunded counties. Similar pressures in 2027–28 could result in another 250 positions impacted, 136 of which would again fall within these same counties. Even with continued caseload decline, only about 25% of these cost pressures would be offset, leaving staffing reductions as the only feasible path to absorb the shortfall.

Most LCSAs expend approximately 85% of their budgets on staffing, leaving little flexibility to reduce operating expenses. As a result, agencies would be forced to freeze hiring immediately, hold vacant positions open indefinitely, and, in some cases, conduct layoffs. Case-to-staff ratios, currently averaging 202:1 across these counties, would increase to 223 in 2026–27 and 233 the following year, essentially undoing six years of State-supported progress in improving timely service delivery.

While statewide caseload has declined, workload has not. In fact, recent legislative and policy changes have increased expectations for individualized engagement, more frequent modification reviews, enhanced coordination with courts and partner agencies, and sustained adherence to federal performance standards. Reductions in staffing without corresponding reductions in workload would require LCSAs to prioritize only statutorily mandated actions, delaying or limiting services such as negotiated stipulated orders (which are more reliable for families), ability-to-pay analyses, case follow-up, and consistent parent engagement.

These service reductions would also have downstream fiscal consequences. Child support collections reduce reliance on CalWORKs, CalFresh, and other safety-net programs. For families currently receiving aid, each dollar of child support avoids roughly 57.4 cents in costs to other social programs; for former or never-aided families, each dollar avoids approximately 17.9 cents. Undermining LCSA capacity, particularly in a program that is 66% federally funded, creates added pressure on other state-funded programs.

For these reasons, we strongly urge adoption of the Assembly's action restoring LCSA administrative funding and preservation of the resources necessary for counties, especially those most

underfunded under the State's allocation methodology, like Kern, to meet their obligations to families.

Thank you for your consideration and for your ongoing work on behalf of California's children and families. Kern County Child Support Services and our Board stand ready to provide any additional local information that may assist as the Legislature works toward a final budget agreement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Phillip Peters", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Phillip Peters, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation
California Child Support Association (Cal CSA)
California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
Kern County Child Support Services
Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange