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June 16, 2026

The Honorable Josh Becker
Chair, Senate Human Services Committee
1020 N Street, Room 521
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1846 (Stefani), Relative placement options for children who are under the court's protection – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Becker,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to express our support for AB 1846 (Stefani), which provides important clarification to the relative placement preference in juvenile court proceedings.

When a child is placed into foster care due to allegations of abuse or neglect by their parents or guardian, federal and state law require that a relative seeking to provide a loving home be given first consideration for placement above all other settings. Relative preference does not guarantee placement; rather, it ensures that any relative requesting placement is assessed and given preferential consideration based on a number of factors, including the best interest of the child, the wishes of the parent, and the ability of the relative to provide a safe, secure and stable environment.

The relative preference aligns with long-standing research that demonstrates better outcomes in such areas as placement stability, academic achievement, and emotional well-being for children placed with relatives. The data also shows that these children are far more likely to remain with their siblings and have more frequent contact with their parents.

AB 1846 resolves an ambiguity in the law that has led to different interpretations for when social workers have discretion to place a child with a relative. By clarifying this portion of the law, it further aligns significant state and county efforts to promote a kin-first culture by clarifying that the relative preference applies until family reunification services have been terminated.

This bill also grants the social worker or the court discretion to assess a relative if they request placement after family reunification services have been terminated. In its totality, AB 1846

recognizes the critical nature and positive impacts of kinship care and will bolster California's commitment to honor and prioritize keeping families together.

For these reasons, the Kern County Board of Supervisors supports this measure and respectfully urges your committee to vote **YES on AB 1846**.

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, Senate Human Services Committee
 Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation
 County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA)
 California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
 Kern County Department of Human Services
 Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange