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### **PURPOSE**

Assembly Bill 448 seeks to build upon the work being done in California to connect youth in the foster care system with family. By requiring documentation of family finding efforts in court reports, all parties involved in the child welfare case (attorneys, judicial officers) will have the information necessary to facilitate meaningful and ongoing connections between the youth and their family.

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### **BACKGROUND**

It is estimated that in California there are nearly 60,000 children in foster care, and nearly 50% of them are Latino. Studies have demonstrated the significant benefit to children in the child welfare system who are placed with relatives rather than with strangers in foster homes or in group care.

A 2008 study in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine found that children placed into kinship care had fewer behavioral problems three years after placement than children who were placed into foster care. This study also noted that a large body of research acknowledges the evidence that children in kinship care are less likely to change placements, benefiting from increased placement stability and better outcomes.

Researchers also found that children placed with relatives were more likely to remain in their same neighborhood, be placed with siblings, and have consistent contact with their birth parents than other children in foster care.

By requiring documentation of family finding efforts in court reports, all parties involved in the

child welfare case (attorneys, judicial officers) will have the information necessary to facilitate meaningful and ongoing connections between the youth and their family.

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### **EXISTING LAW**

Sections 309, 319, 358.1, 366, and 366.1 of the Welfare and Institutions Code requires the juvenile court, during the dispositional hearing for a dependent child, to make a finding that the child's social worker has exercised due diligence in identifying, locating and notifying the child's relatives.

Effective January 1, 2017, all new relative home placements were required to meet Resource Family Approval (RFA) standards and counties are encouraged to consider the likelihood that a relative will be able to meet those standards when evaluating that possibility. Existing law also provides for a process to place with a relative, either on an emergency basis or based on a compelling reason, prior to full RFA.

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### **SOLUTION**

AB 448 would strengthen existing requirements around social workers and/or probation officers' documentation of family finding efforts.

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### **SUPPORT**

Children's Law Center of California (Sponsor)

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### **CONTACT**

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