Dear Chairs and Members of the Committees,

A statewide coalition of the undersigned organizations led by John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY) respectfully requests an augmentation of $16.5 million (GF) in FY 2023-24 and ongoing to improve housing affordability and reduce homelessness among the more than 3,300 youth in extended foster care placed in Supervised Independent Living Placements (SILPs). This investment, which would establish a “SILP Housing Supplement,” would draw down $10.8 million in federal matching funds.

Currently in California, 3,361 foster youth are placed in a SILP and receive a monthly foster care payment of $1,129 to pay for all aspects of their household: housing, food, transportation, utilities, clothing, and supplies. The foster care rate paid to youth living in a SILP is the same across California, regardless of local housing costs.

There is strong evidence that this rate is insufficient, particularly in parts of the state with high housing costs. According to the CalYOUTH Study, 40% of youth residing in SILPs reported that they did not have enough income to pay for rent and other household expenses. This lack of economic support places youth at risk of homelessness: nearly half of youth in foster care in California experienced an episode of homelessness between age 18 and 21 and more than one-third experienced homelessness more than once.

Funding this request would establish a SILP Housing Supplement, which will provide a supplementary payment to youth placed in a SILP based on the local cost of housing. It is modeled after the Housing Supplement for the Transitional Housing Placement for Nonminor Dependents (THP-NMD) adopted in 2020, which has been successfully implemented by the California Department of Social Services.

Like the THP-NMD Housing Supplement, the SILP Housing Supplement would augment the foster care rate paid for SILPs based on Fair Market Rent (FMR), which is the system developed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to determine the allowable rent level for individuals who participate in their Housing Choice Voucher
program. The SILP Housing Supplement would be calculated annually and would vary based on the cost of housing in each county according to that county’s FMR.

Funding the SILP Housing Supplement would adjust the monthly basic rate paid to youth in SILPs to align with their local cost of housing, allowing them to stabilize their living, school, and work while in extended foster care. Providing the SILP Housing Supplement will help foster youth achieve housing stability while drawing additional federal funding assistance.

We respectfully request $16.5 million in FY 2023-24 and ongoing, to ensure California’s transition-age foster youth remain affordably housed, giving them a strong foundation to achieve their goals and improve their opportunities as they enter adulthood.

Sincerely,

John Burton Advocates for Youth
African American Wellness Center for Children & Family
Alameda County of Education
Alliance for Children’s Rights
Allies for Every Child
Beyond Emancipation
Calaveras County of Education
California Alliance of Caregivers
California Alliance of Child and Family Services
Children Now
Children’s Advocacy Institute
Children’s Law Center of California
Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice
Corporation for Supportive Housing
Covenant House California
Creative Alternatives
Doing Good Works
Foster & Kinship Care Education
Foster Care Counts
Foster Greatness
Gather Respect Advocate Change Engage
Heritage Group Homes
Hollywood NOW
Latinas with Masters
Law Foundation of Silicon Valley
MILPA
National Association of Counsel for Children
National Association of Social Workers – California Chapter
Norco College
PAL Center
PATH Scholars
Peacock Acres
Public Counsel Law Center
Reedley College
Sanctuary of Hope
Santa Cruz Barrios Unidos
Scholarship Prep
Starting Over Inc.
StarVista
The Community College Foundation
The National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform
Think of Us
Together We Rise dba Foster Love
Trinity County Child Welfare Services
Turn Behavioral Health Services
Urban Strategies Council
Vista De Mar Child and Family Services
VOICES
Waking the Village
Walden Family Services
Youth Leadership Institute

Cc: Members, Senate Budget Committee
    Members, Assembly Budget Committee
    Members, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
    Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
    Chris Woods, Office of the Senate Pro Tempore
    Mareva Brown, Office of the Senate Pro Tempore
    Jason Sisney, Office of the Speaker of the Assembly
    Kelsy Castillo, Office of the Speaker of the Assembly
    Jessica Barthalow, Office of Senator Skinner
    Tania Dikho, Office of Assemblymember Ting
    Elizabeth Schmitt, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
    Nicole Vasquez, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
    Chantelle Denny, Senate Republican Fiscal Office
    Megan De Sousa, Assembly Republican Fiscal Office
    Ginni Bella Navarre, Legislative Analyst’s Office
    Angela Short, Legislative Analyst’s Office
    Dr. Mark Ghaly, Health & Human Services Agency
    Kim Johnson, Department of Social Services