

Background

The 2024-25 state budget proposes to eliminate a number of dedicated supports and services for children and youth involved with the child welfare system (approximately \$70 million General Fund ongoing). The cuts would impact important supports that preserve placements and prevent moves into congregate care and the criminalization of children and youth in foster care; housing programs that are foundational to youth's successful transition into adulthood; and prevention efforts critical to keeping children and youth safely at home with their families.

Specifically, the budget proposes to eliminate the following programs:

- **The Family Urgent Response System (FURS).** FURS provides children and youth who have spent time in foster care and their caregivers with immediate trauma-informed support when they feel they need extra help. This coordinated statewide solution consists of a 24/7 hotline and county mobile response teams in all 58 counties that provide an in-person response typically within one hour. FURS is critical to preserving placements and relationships, linking youth and families to longer-term supports and services, promoting healing, and preventing the unnecessary criminalization of youth. It is also a critical resource to promote stability for older youth (up to age 21) currently or formerly in foster care who are living on their own (\$30 million ongoing).
- **The Housing Navigation and Maintenance Program (HNMP).** HNMP provides housing navigation and services to assist youth ages 18-24 with securing and maintaining housing, with priority given to youth currently or formerly in foster care. In 2022, the program was expanded to serve youth exiting foster care and youth formerly in care who have been issued federal Housing Choice Vouchers through the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) or Family Unification Program (FUP). HNMP ensures youth can turn housing vouchers into actual housing, helps California access \$22 million in federal housing assistance for youth, and prevents youth from becoming homeless when they exit foster care (\$13.7 million ongoing).
- **The Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP) Housing Supplement.** A SILP is the most independent extended foster care placement available to youth ages 18 to 21. Youth in SILPs must secure their own housing and receive their monthly foster care payment directly from the county child welfare agency. The SILP Housing Supplement would help reduce homelessness and housing instability by providing youth with additional funding for housing costs, which have increased drastically since the establishment of the SILP, outpacing the growth in the Basic Rate paid to youth (\$18.8 million ongoing).
- **The Los Angeles County Child Welfare Services Public Health Nursing Program.** This program provides public health nursing interventions to children, youth, and their families who are at imminent risk of entering or re-entering the child welfare system. It strengthens support and access to services for families in which health issues endanger family stability and child health and safety, and prevents additional referrals to the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services. Moreover, once children and youth leave foster care and return to their biological families, public health nurses are available to work with families to assist and support them as they continue to navigate their child's or youth's health issues (\$8.3 million ongoing).

Next Steps

The State has a moral and legal obligation to support and protect children and youth who are involved with the child welfare system. The California Legislature must restore these programs and services that are key to the safety and wellbeing of our most vulnerable children and youth.

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