Use your organization’s stationery, then submit your letter to Governor Newsom by emailing it to leg.unit@gov.ca.gov and please send a signed copy to Julie McCormick, mccormickj@clccal.org.

September XX, 2022

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of the State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 2189 (Friedman) Access to Housing and Services for Foster Youth – SUPPORT**

Dear Governor Newsom:

[Name of your organization] is pleased to support AB 2189 (Friedman) which will support foster youth in making a successful transition to adulthood in three critical ways: (1) by ensuring expectant and parenting youth receive the infant supplement regardless of their placement; (2) by ensuring that all youth retain access to the clothing allowance benefit regardless of their housing status; and (3) by allowing courts to extend enrollment in Extended Foster Care beyond age 21 until the county has fulfilled its obligations under WIC 391 to ensure that the youth have received all the necessary supports and services.

[Describe your organization and its connection to this issue.]

California was one of the first states to opt into the federal opportunity to create an Extended Foster Youth (EFC) Program. The EFC Program was created by AB 12 (Chapter 559, Statutes of 2010) and represented a historic expansion of services to foster youth, who often faced enormous challenges as they emancipated from the foster care system at age 18 prior to the creation of EFC, often leading to poverty, homelessness and incarceration.

Chapin Hall’s recent CalYouth study on the EFC Program has shown numerous benefits for participating young adults, including improvements in education, employment, housing, and social support, as well as reductions in pregnancy and criminal justice system involvement. However, that same study revealed that over 35 percent of youth reported they experienced homelessness while actively enrolled in extended foster care. AB 2189 sets out to remove two major barriers that prevent foster youth from fully benefiting from extended foster care.

One of these barriers involves the requirement that youth reside in an approved placement in order to receive crucial funding. While a minor or nonminor is eligible for certain services and supports while in foster care, including supplemental support for pregnant individuals, and a clothing allowance if provided by the county, youth currently are ineligible for these payments if they do not reside in an approved placement setting. Because of the lack of sufficient housing for transition age foster youth, many youth experience periods of homelessness and/or housing instability while in care. Under current law, youth cannot receive funding meant for their day-to-day survival when they are unhoused or in unapproved placements, which is when they need these funds the most.

A second barrier to foster youth deriving a benefit from extended foster care involves inadequate discharge planning and mechanisms for accountability when county agencies fail to provide foster youth who are exiting care with essential documents, information and services that they need to survive independently. Both federal and state law provide protections to ensure that young people leave foster care with a concrete plan for discharge that provides safety, stability, and an opportunity to thrive. For example, state law requires county child welfare agencies, at the last scheduled review hearing held before a dependent child turns 18 years old, and at every review hearing thereafter, to submit a report verifying that the minor or non-minor received certain essential documents including their Social Security card, birth certificate, and valid ID before they exit care. The report must also verify that the youth received certain information (e.g. financial literacy programs and state internships) and critical services to assist with the transition process (including assistance applying for public benefits, applying for college, or vocational training, and securing housing).

However, there is no process in place to remedy the situation when the county child welfare agency does not provide youth with the documents, information, and services needed to transition successfully to independence. The law is unclear regarding whether a court can maintain jurisdiction over a youth once they turn 21 when the county child welfare agency has failed to provide exiting youth with critical support that enables youth to secure education, employment, and most importantly, housing. Appropriate enforcement mechanisms, including keeping a court case open past age 21, will ensure that the necessary discharge planning begins early, so that youth are less likely to exit the foster care system to homelessness.

AB 2189 will help ensure that foster youth have the benefits they need to survive precisely when they are most vulnerable, and it will ensure accountability with current law and successful discharge planning obligations.

[Name of your organization] is pleased to support AB 2189 and respectfully requests your signature on this important legislation. Thank you.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title]

cc: Assembly Member Friedman