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September , 2024

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000 Capitol Swing Space
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 2929 (J. Carrillo) - Request for Signature

Dear Governor Newsom:

[Organization name] strongly supports AB 2929 (J. Carrillo) which addresses important aspects of family connections for youth in the foster care system in our state.

Add information about your organization and connection to this issue.

Family finding is a critical tool already at the disposal of social workers that can increase relative placements among youth removed from parental care. Relative placement has been shown to be in the best interest of a child for a variety of reasons, including increased stability for a child, preservation of cultural identity and connections to the community, and fewer school changes.

Both state and federal law include a preference to place children in out-of-home care with relatives. For example, California Welfare and Institutions Code Section 361.3, states that preferential consideration must be given to a request by a relative of the child for placement of the child with the relative. Numerous nationwide studies have documented the poor outcomes of children and youth who are removed from their homes and placed into the child welfare system. Children involved with the child welfare system have increased rates of chronic health problems, developmental delays and disabilities, mental health needs, and substance abuse problems.

Studies have also demonstrated the significant benefit to children in the child welfare system that 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.

Delay in relative engagement often means that the relative will not be selected as placement for the child. Fact finding hearings can sometimes take months to complete with placement decisions at times taking over a year. During this time, the child could be placed with non-relatives and develop strong connections all while a relative may have a home ready and waiting for the child. AB 2929 seeks to avoid these unnecessary delays by ensuring 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.

For these reasons, [Organization name] respectfully requests your signature on AB 2929.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title]

cc: ASM Juan Carrillo