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CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

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April 16, 2020

Ms. Keely Martin Bosler, Director
Department of Finance
Room 1145, State Capitol
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Ms. Bosler:

In a letter dated April 13, 2020, you notified the Joint Legislative Budget Committee (JLBC), pursuant to Section 36.00, Chapter 2, Statutes of 2020, of your intention to augment the *2019 Budget Act* to provide support to foster youth and families with at-risk children during the COVID-19 crisis.

Specifically, Item 5180-101-0001 is augmented by a total of \$33,965,000 for the Department of Social Services (DSS) to assist families that have children at risk of entering foster care. Included in that augmentation, \$27,665,000 will provide a monthly payment of \$200 for food and other necessities to families based on the Emergency Response and Family Maintenance caseload, \$3,300,000 to Stage One Child Care providers, consistent with Executive Order N-45-20 and \$3,000,000 to provide diversion cash assistance to families with gross income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

Second, Item 5180-141-0001 is augmented by \$177,000 for DSS to automate the payment mentioned above.

Lastly, Item 5180-151-0001 is augmented by \$8,468,000 for DSS to provide additional support and services to foster families, including through Family Resource Centers and by increasing access for foster youth to laptops and cell phones.

Given the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 outbreak and the need to help families and foster youth, I concur with the spending request. During this unprecedented public health

crisis, I am committed to finding solutions to the challenges facing our older foster youth, including those in congregate settings, and I am pleased that the Governor pledged to providing further assistance to this population. I want to make sure we protect them from any possible exploitation and I look forward to reviewing the additional augmentations that the Governor announced during his press conference on April 13.

I appreciate the Administration's efforts to provide access to laptops and cell phones for foster youth with consideration of all funding streams available for that purpose. I want to ensure all youth in the foster care system are able to access these needed resources and encourage the department to continue that effort, including computers for foster youth under age 13.

I appreciate the Administration for actions already taken to address the impact of the pandemic on families in the CalWORKs program. Additionally, helping families that are facing sudden financial instability by expanding the CalWORKs family diversion program as requested is a helpful change. I respectfully request that the department provide the JLBC with an update on how many families took advantage of this assistance in each county.

Finally, the COVID-19 crisis is placing extraordinary stress on California's safety net system. I am concerned about families on CalWORKs and how they are faring during this difficult period. I urge the Administration to continue its prioritization of our most vulnerable families and consider additional state-wide approaches for those families, including those families that are nearing the end of their benefit eligibility.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "H. Mitchell". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. It is contained within a thin black rectangular border.

Holly J. Mitchell
Chair

cc: Members of the Joint Legislative Budget Committee