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April 18, 2020

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

Dear Ms. Bosler:

In a letter dated April 15, 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 social service programs serving vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 crisis.

Specifically, Item 5180-151-0001 is augmented by \$63,300,000 for the Department of Social Services (DSS) to provide a one-time disaster cash benefit to assist undocumented immigrants who are experiencing financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Second, Item 5180-141-0001 is augmented by a total of \$10,000,000 for DSS to implement and administer the federal Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) benefits, which will provide up to \$1.2 billion in federal food benefits to families with children eligible for free or reduced-price school meals that have been impacted by school facility closures due to COVID-19.

Lastly, Item 5180-101-0001 is augmented by a total of \$3,005,000 for DSS to support foster youth programs, including \$1,846,000 to temporarily extend payments to foster youth who would have otherwise aged out of extended foster care (EFC), and \$1,159,000 to help provide temporary locations to accommodate physical distancing or quarantine for foster youth who have been or could be exposed to COVID-19.

The COVID-19 outbreak is a public health crisis that has caused a significant downturn in California's economy, increasing the demand on our social safety net system. Given the critical need to help vulnerable communities, I concur with the spending request.

I am very appreciative of the Administration's efforts to help address the needs of families that do not qualify for federal assistance programs, including displaced undocumented working families. The economic fallout from the COVID-19 epidemic is hitting the undocumented community particularly hard and a one-time disaster cash benefit will help lessen the impact on these families. I want to ensure that California is doing as much as it can and respectfully request that the Administration provide the JLBC with information about the implementation of this program including how the department selected the community-based organizations (CBOs) to administer the cash grants, how the money was distributed, the number of people who applied and how many individuals received the cash awards. I know that undocumented residents are under significant financial distress at this time and request that the department work with the CBOs to provide the Legislature with information, statistical and anecdotal, regarding the need for additional assistance. I applaud the Administration for considering creative ways to provide assistance to communities throughout the state and request that DSS provide the JLBC with the plan it has developed to work with philanthropic organizations to expand the reach of these cash grants.

Additionally, I am extremely supportive of the federal Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) benefits and request that the Administration inform the JLBC when the state plan has been approved and when the implementation of the federal benefit begins.

Finally, your actions to date recognize the challenges facing our foster youth. I remain concerned about the impact that the COVID-19 crisis is having on former foster youth, including those who recently aged out of EFC. I urge DSS to work with the counties to develop a plan to identify and check on this population to ensure they are getting the services they need, especially as it pertains to housing and health care.

Sincerely,



Holly J. Mitchell
Chair

cc: Members of the Joint Legislative Budget Committee