June 18, 2014

The Honorable Jerry Brown
Governor, State of California
State Capitol Building, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Services to Child Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Dear Governor Brown:

Our broad coalition of agencies and organizations urges your support of State Budget as approved by the Legislature, which provides $5 million in 2014-15 and $14 million starting in 2015-16 to protect and serve child victims of commercial sexual exploitation through California’s child welfare services programs. This funding is needed to enable California’s child protection services system to develop capacity for serving this unique population who have suffered extensive abuse and trauma.

Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is an emerging national and statewide epidemic that deserves our highest attention. Various studies have pointed to the fact that many CSEC victims have had prior involvement with CWS, and some have been recruited while being in the foster care system. In addition, three of the top ten highest trafficking areas in the nation are right here in California: San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego metropolitan areas. California’s child welfare system is ill-equipped to respond to the needs of this population. In many respects, these victims are like other children that counties serve in the child welfare services system, but also have unique needs that cannot be fully met with current resources.

The commercial sexual exploitation of children is a critically important problem in California that requires a comprehensive solution. While some county child welfare agencies have made strides to serve this population, these counties have also taken years to build up their resources and collaborative processes. Meanwhile, this problem continues to grow and spread across the counties.

For this reason the undersigned agencies urge your support to build statewide capacity for serving child victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Resources are needed to provide services to commercially sexually exploited children in three major areas:

Prevention: Training for all child welfare staff, foster caregivers, and youth to recognize and report and respond when there are signs of commercial sexual exploitation.
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**Intervention:** Resources are needed to enable county child welfare to leverage resources from other federal, state, and county agencies to rescue and support victims, working alongside other county and community-based partner organizations and with survivors, to provide services.

**Services:** CSEC need enhanced supervision and support to protect them which are not currently provided for in the foster care program, including immediate needs for clothing and safe shelter, and long-term services to re-engage CSEC into their schools and healthy relationships.

The initial investment of $5 million General Funds will lay the foundation for effective service delivery by encouraging the development of response protocols among local agencies, and through training of child welfare staff and foster care providers to identify, prevent, and serve CSEC victims. Beginning in 2015-16 the State Budget provides the needed resources for county child welfare agencies to combat this epidemic and provide direct services to CSEC victims through joint case management with other county and child-serving agencies.

We thank you for your attention to this important matter on behalf of child victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

Sincerely,

Frank J. Mecca, Executive Director
County Welfare Directors Association of CA

Angie Schwartz, Policy Program Director
Alliance for Children’s Rights

Carroll Schroeder, Executive Director
California Alliance of Child and Family Services

Farrah McDaid Ting, Legislative Rep.
California State Association of Counties

Leslie Heimov, Executive Director
Children’s Law Center of Los Angeles

Susanna Kniffen, Associate Director, Child Welfare Policy, Children NOW

Jenny Williamson, Founder/CEO
Courage Worldwide, Inc.

John O’Connor, Executive Director
Equality California

Brittany Vanderhoof, Policy Counsel
Polaris Project

John Bauters, Policy Director-Homelessness
Housing California

Claire Lipschultz, Esq., State Policy Advocate
National Council of Jewish Women-CA

Minoouche Kandel, Esq. Women’s Policy Dir.
San Francisco Dept. on the Status of Women

Tia Orr, Senior Government Advocate
Service Employees Union International (SEIU)

Autumn Burris, Founder/Director
Survivors for Solutions

John F. O’Toole, Director
National Center for Youth Law

Jolena Voorhis, Executive Director
Urban Counties Caucus

Stacey Katz, Executive Director
WestCoast Children’s Clinic

Jennifer Rodriguez, Executive Director
Youth Law Center

C: Secretary Diana Dooley, California Health and Human Services Agency
Will Lighborne, Director, CA Department of Social Services
Lark Park, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of Jerry Brown
Michael Cohen, Director of Department of Finance

Attachments: Coalition List & Article “From the Trenches in the Battle Against Sex Trafficking”
CSEC Coalition & Support List
Updated 6/18/2014
County Welfare Directors Association of California (sponsor)
Alameda County Board of Supervisors
Alameda County Foster Youth Alliance
Alameda County Social Services Agency
Alliance of Children’s Rights
American Association of University Women of California
Butte County Department of Employment and Social Services
Calaveras County Health and Human Services Agency
California Alliance of Child and Family Services
California Coalition of Welfare Rights Organizations, Inc.
California Coalition for Youth
California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
California Women Lawyers
California Youth Connection
Central California Area Social Services Consortium (CCASSC)
Children NOW
Children’s Law Center of California
City and County of San Francisco
Cody Foute, Riverside County Youth Partner and Survivor
County of Orange
Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department
Courage Worldwide, Inc.
The Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking (CAST)
Equality California
Glen County Department of Health and Human Services
Housing California
Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services
John Burton Foundation
Junior League of San Francisco
LA Gay and Lesbian Center
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Madera County Board of Supervisors
Madera County Department of Social Services
Modoc County Board of Supervisors
Napa County Board of Supervisors
National Council of Jewish Women - California
National Council of Jewish Women – Los Angeles
National Center for Youth Law
Oakland City Council
Polaris Project
Riverside County Department of Public Social Services
San Francisco Department on the Status of Women
San Luis Obispo County Department of Social Services
Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors
Service Employees Union International (SEIU)
Sonoma County Human Services Department
Survivors for Solutions
Tehama County Social Services
Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency
Urban Counties Caucus
U.S. Fund for UNICEF
Ventura County Board of Supervisors
WestCoast Children's Clinic
Western Center on Law and Poverty
Youth Law Center