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DATE

The Honorable Benjamin Allen

Chair, Senate Committee on Education

State Capitol Building, Room 2083

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SUPPORT SB 12 (BEALL) — FOSTER YOUTH IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Dear Senator Allen,

(Your organization) is pleased to support Senate Bill 12 (Beall), which would increase the rate of college retention and completion among California’s foster youth by increasing access to the Pell Grant, a federal grant that provides full-time college students $5,815 annually.

Sentence about your organization and why it cares about improving college outcome for foster youth.

While California’s foster care system has made important strides in the last five years for older youth, one area where it continues to struggle is post-secondary achievement. By age 26, just 4 percent of former foster youth have achieved a college degree as compared to 36 percent of the same-age population of young adults. A key reason for this is a lack of access to financial aid; a 2015 report found that just 50 percent of foster youth in California’s community college received the federal Pell Grant, even though almost all foster youth students qualify. Evidence shows that receipt of financial aid is a strong predictor of degree attainment among vulnerable students, especially the foster youth population.

SB 12 would ensure foster youth receive the financial aid to which they are entitled through three provisions. First, it would help current foster youth apply for financial aid by requiring their social worker to identify a person to assist them. Next, it would streamline the financial aid verification process for foster youth who apply through Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Finally, it would expand an existing on-campus based support program from the current level of 10 community college districts to 20 districts, thereby enabling more foster youth to receive the support they need to succeed.

The Pell Grant is fully-federally funded and currently underutilized by California’s foster youth. By increasing access to this important program, California’s foster youth will draw down an additional $29.5 million annually in federal funding to support their academic success and economic security.

(your organization) thanks you for your consideration and urges you to support SB 12.

Sincerely,

Name, title and signature