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Date

The Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor
State of California
1021 O Street, Room 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 2906 (Bryan) Preserving Social Security Administration Benefits for Foster Youth –
REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE**

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of *organization name*, I write in support of AB 2906 (Bryan), which would require counties to conserve Social Security survivors benefits received by a youth in foster care for that youth's current and future needs, rather than using those benefits to pay for the cost of the child's foster care placement. AB 2906 also creates notification requirements to increase the number of eligible foster youth linked to Social Security benefits upon their exit from care.

Add information about your organization and connection to this issue.

Around 4,000 young people "age out" of the California foster care system each year. Many of these youth lack family or other support networks to assist them, and many have not yet acquired the life skills necessary to become self-sufficient. Consequently, 25% of young adults who age out of foster care end up homeless or incarcerated within 18 months of exiting care.

Current and former foster youth may be eligible for one or more federal Social Security Administration (SSA) Benefits programs, including Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for individuals with disabilities and Social Security survivors benefits for children and youth with a deceased parent. For these particularly vulnerable youth, SSA benefits offer an economic safety net during and after their time in foster care.

Although California has made significant efforts to link transition aged youth in foster care to SSA benefits, there is no requirement in state law for counties to regularly update the court, the youth, or court-appointed counsel about the status of an SSA benefits application or how SSA benefits are used. In practice, youth may never learn that they were eligible for SSA benefits during or after their time in foster care, nor that the county was receiving benefits on their behalf. Although there are several different types of savings accounts and trusts that could be established to put SSA benefits toward a youth's current or future needs, youth in foster care typically are not informed about these options.

AB 2906 would modernize California's child welfare system by requiring counties to:

- notify the youth and other supportive adults about their benefit payment management (representative payee) and benefits, and,
- ensure that the child's or youth's federal Social Security Administration survivors benefits are not used to pay for, or to reimburse, the placing agency for any costs of the child's care and supervision.

Recent amendments also provide clarity in statute by repealing duplicative sections which followed amendments in 2022 (Chapter 50, Statutes of 2022). The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) issued All County Letter 23-28 (the guidance required by the Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) sections 13753(d), 13754(f), and 13757(g) on March 22, 2023. Statute continued to reflect both versions (pre-SB 187 and post-SB 187), which may lead to confusion or misinformation causing people to believe that CDSS has not issued the appropriate guidance and thus the new provisions are not in effect, when in fact they are.

For these reasons, we are pleased to support AB 2906 (Bryan) and respectfully request your signature on the bill.

Sincerely,

Insert signature

Name

Organization

cc: Assemblymember Bryan