**Sample Support Letter - Submit On Your Letterhead**

**Submit via the portal:** <https://calegislation.lc.ca.gov/Advocates/>

**Send copy to:** mccormickj@clccal.org

[DATE]

The Honorable Alex Lee

Chair, Assembly Human Services Committee

1020 N Street, Room 124

Sacramento, CA 95817

**Re: Assembly Bill 926 (Gipson) – SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Lee & Honorable Committee Members:

On behalf of [*name of your organization*], we write to express our support for Assembly Bill 926 (Gipson). This bill would create a rebuttable presumption that visits between a parent and their child in foster care are unsupervised, unless there is a determination that the child's safety is in danger. In doing so, this bill would promote quality family time early in a case to reduce the trauma caused by a child’s removal from their parents.

[Briefly describe your organization and why it supports AB 926.]

In 2021, Congress unanimously passed HB 1194, allowing the presumption that family time visits should be unsupervised unless there is a determination that the child is in danger. Existing law in California does not specify factors to consider when determining whether supervised visits are necessary to protect the health and safety of the child. As a result, most child welfare agencies typically insist that the parent’s contact with the child is supervised by default.

Profound emotional and psychological damage is caused when a child is separated from their parent, and requiring supervised family time without considering the circumstances of the family’s separation merely exacerbates that damage. According to the Children’s Bureau, regular family visits expedite permanency and increase the likelihood of reunification. Family time is critical in reducing the trauma caused by family separation, as it provides an opportunity to form and maintain positive, healthy relationships and facilitate healing. It is important to note that removal of a child from a parent’s care does not necessarily mean negligence and abuse occurred by the parents, meaning that in many cases it would still be safe to allow continued unsupervised contact between that child and parent. A child may be removed because the home environment poses a risk to the child. Likewise, the inability of a parent to provide the appropriate resources to care for a child may result in their removal. Children living in poverty are more likely to be reported to a child welfare agency, with 47% of families who have children placed in the system living below the federal poverty guidelines. A comparative study between states that adopted a state-level Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) found that states offering the credit saw an 11% decrease in foster care entries compared to states without the state-level EITC. By only granting supervised visits without taking into consideration the circumstances of the removal of the child, children are deprived of much-needed family time.

As children are removed from their parents and supervised visits are ordered, children may go weeks without seeing their parents. If a family cannot provide an approved monitor, current law does not require the agency to provide one. As a result, visits often do not happen at all. When a social worker agrees to supervise a visit, typically the visit can only be accommodated during business hours, often conflicting with the parent’s work schedule or the children’s school schedule. Supervised visitation also requires extra work hours and often lengthy travel time for the monitoring social worker, which expends valuable county and state dollars. Since statutory hearings are scheduled in six-month increments, a family that is safe to enjoy unsupervised visits may be left with unnecessary restrictions. This is devastating to a child who may not understand what is happening.

AB 926 requires the juvenile court to order unsupervised family time between a parent or legal guardian and their child, unless the court finds that unsupervised visitation would pose a substantial danger to the physical health of the child or that the child is suffering severe emotional damage. In cases where the court determines that supervision is necessary, this bill requires bench officers to set the frequency and duration of visitation. This bill would also ensure that visits take place in the least restrictive setting that is most conducive to quality family time.

For these reasons, [organization] is pleased to support AB 926 and respectfully urges your aye vote.

Sincerely,

NAME

ORGANIZATION