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June 12, 2006

To: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

From: David E. Janssen
Chief Administrative Officer

MOTION TO SUPPORT THE STATE LEGISLATURE'S PROPOSED BUDGET INCREASES FOR THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM (ITEM NO. 66-F, AGENDA OF JUNE 13, 2006)

Item No. 66-F on the June 13, 2006 Agenda is a motion by Supervisor Burke directing the Chief Administrative Officer and our State legislative advocates to: 1) support the Legislature's proposed budget increases for the Child Welfare System that would improve casework staffing levels, provide support for kin and permanent placement, and help foster youth achieve success through housing and education assistance programs; and 2) recommend that the Board send a five-signature letter to the California State Assembly Speaker, the State Senate President Pro Tem, and the Governor urging their support for the budget increases.

The Assembly and Senate Budget Subcommittees took the same action on the issues addressed in this motion, and, therefore, they were not part of the Budget Conference Committee agenda. However, these issues could be re-opened in negotiations between the Legislative leadership and the Governor.

Specifically, the Assembly and Senate Budget Subcommittees approved the following increases:

- **Caseload Reduction.** $80 million ($50 million General Fund) to increase the number of child welfare social workers and reduce the number of children per social worker over time as proposed in County-supported AB 2193 (Bass);

- **Kinship Care Parity.** $8 million (General Fund) to provide kinship care providers a specialized care increment and clothing allowance that is currently only available in the Foster Care Program and to extend eligibility for Kinship Care assistance to certain probation youth who have been living with a relative for at least 12 months;

- **Housing for Emancipated Youth.** $4 million (General Fund) for the Transitional Housing Placement Program and to eliminate the county share of cost for the program;

- **Adoption of Hard to Place Youth.** $4 million (General Fund) for efforts to help with the adoption of hard to place foster children;

- **Higher Education for Foster Youth.** $5.7 million (General Fund) for additional financial aid for foster youth attending two-year or four-year colleges under the Chafee Scholarship program;

- **Adoptions.** $12.2 million ($7.1 million General Fund) to hire additional State and county adoptions caseworkers;

- **Kinship Support Services Program.** $2.5 million (General Fund) to expand Kinship Support Services and allow all counties to apply for Kinship program funding.

On May 30, 2006, on behalf of the County, our Chief Legislative Advocate joined over 100 other stakeholders in the Child Welfare System who signed a letter to the Governor and the Legislative leadership urging their support for this new funding.

The County also supports related legislation including: AB 1982 (Bass), which would extend eligibility for the Kinship Guardian Assistance Payment (Kin-Gap) Program to wards of the juvenile delinquency court; AB 2193 (Bass), which would establish a new child welfare budget methodology and declare the Legislature's intent to fund the program to meet optimal caseload standards; and SB 1576 (Murray), which would eliminate the 60 percent county match requirement for the Transitional Housing Placement Program.

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) indicates that greater support for social workers, kinship support, and increased adoptions will support permanence for youth by either keeping them with their families or increasing adoptions when that cannot happen. For those youth who remain in the system until adulthood, providing transitional support will encourage success and independence. Because the State Legislature's proposed budget increases for the Child Welfare System will improve

outcomes for children, DCFS recommends that the County support this proposal, and we concur.

Support for the State Legislature's proposed budget increases for the Child Welfare System is consistent with Board policy to: support proposals to ensure full funding for the Child Welfare Services program, including increased funding to cover all mandated services pursuant to the SB 2030 Workload Study and the fully loaded costs of a social worker; support efforts which enhance legal permanency for children in foster care by promoting kinship adoption and enhancing KinGAP; and support legislation and funding to facilitate successful emancipation, promote self-sufficiency and improve opportunities for youth aging out of foster care.

DEJ:GK
MAL:MS:cc

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel
Department of Children and Family Services