



September 9, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Assembly Bill 640 (Cooley) – REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I respectfully request your signature on Assembly Bill 640. AB 640, authored by Assembly Member Ken Cooley, relates to eligibility redeterminations for Extended Foster Care (EFC). RCRC is an association of thirty-seven rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each member county.

The federal Fostering Connections to Success Act of 2008 gave the states the option of extending foster care to age 21. California adopted this option through the passage of Assembly Bill 12 (Beall and Bass, 2010). California's EFC Program began implementation on January 1, 2012 and allowed foster youth aged 18 to remain in care, without a new foster care eligibility determination, so long as that youth agreed to meet specified participation requirements. Since 2010, the EFC program has grown into a successful program serving young adults in foster care ages 18-21.

Unfortunately, the EFC Program has not been fully funded by the state as intended by the Legislature when the program was established. Counties have borne significant and unexpected costs since the program began nearly a decade ago. AB 640 would provide some fiscal relief to counties by allowing counties to establish Title IV-E eligibility for many of these youth as they enter EFC, without any disruption in services or supports to these youth. It is estimated that net new federal funding could be approximately \$28 million to counties.

When AB 12 was implemented, the state had assumed that only 60 percent of eligible foster youth would opt into the program, but the opt-in rate has actually been more than 90 percent. The state also assumed that county-funded KinGAP cases eligible to convert to FedGAP for a 50 percent match was assumed to be as high as 90 percent, but only 45 percent of cases have become eligible. This led to a considerable funding gap,

1215 K Street, Suite 1650, Sacramento, CA 95814 | www.rcrcnet.org | 916.447.4806 | Fax: 916.448.3154

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which counties continue to shoulder. AB 640 would help mitigate some, though not nearly all, of those unanticipated costs.

States are permitted to re-determine eligibility for Title IV-E at the time a foster youth enters the EFC Program, pursuant to federal policy. Under this process, it is more likely that a non-minor dependent (NMD) will meet the Title IV-E eligibility because only the NMD's income and resources are considered for eligibility. California's program is not currently designed to take advantage of this policy, however. AB 640 would correct that oversight and enable counties to determine eligibility at the time a youth enters EFC, without any disruption to their services or support funding.

Ultimately, this proposal is intended to give counties some measure of relief from the significant EFC costs they are incurring, which can free up funds for further reinvestment in the Child Welfare Services system.

Again, RCRC respectfully requests your signature on AB 640.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Mary-Ann Warmerdam". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

MARY-ANN WARMERDAM
Senior Vice President Governmental Affairs

cc: The Honorable Ken Cooley, Member of the State Assembly