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April 4, 2014

The Honorable Shirley Weber, Chair
Assembly Budget Subcommittee #1
State Capitol Building, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 958014

Re: Services to Child Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Dear Chair Weber and Members:

Solano County urges your support to provide \$20.3 million General Funds in fiscal year 2014-15 to protect and serve child victims of commercial sexual exploitation through California's child welfare services system. Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is an emerging national and statewide epidemic that deserves our highest attention. State support is needed to build capacity in child welfare agencies to effectively meet the needs of this unique population.

While our county child welfare agency has made strides to serve this population, commercially sexually exploited children (CSEC) have suffered extensive abuse and trauma that can easily overwhelm our social workers and service providers. Solano County has identified 10 – 12 youth in this population who have unique service and placement needs. Our current programs do not have the needed resources required to address the myriad of issues that these children face.

The commercial sexual exploitation of children is a critically important problem in California that requires a comprehensive solution. This includes the need for education of our foster youth as well as training for foster care providers to prevent exploitation. Children in the foster care may be particularly vulnerable to victimization due to their history of trauma and for this reason, it is also important that all social work staff receive training on identification of CSEC and appropriate case management services.

In addition, due to the extensive trauma and violence experienced by CSEC victims, services must be tailored to meet their individual needs, working collaboratively with other systems including domestic violence providers, mental health, law enforcement, and others to leverage resources. This epidemic can be seen throughout California and for this reason; all counties will need training and support to coordinate with other systems to leverage these resources. In addition, this proposal would provide for specialized staff in the large, urban counties where the incidence of CSEC is higher.

The Honorable Shirley Weber, Chair

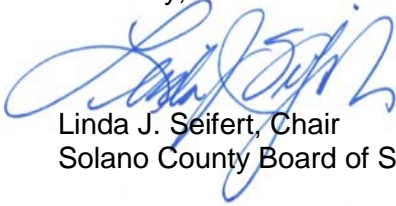
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All counties currently lack capacity to provide enhanced supervision and support to protect victims through the regular foster care program. This proposal would address this concern making available additional supports to CSEC victims, including immediate needs for clothing and safe shelter, and long-term services so that CSEC victims can achieve positive outcomes of permanency and well-being.

We thank you for your attention to this important matter on behalf of child victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

Sincerely,



Linda J. Seifert, Chair
Solano County Board of Supervisors

CC: County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA)
Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #1
Solano County Board of Supervisors
Paul Yoder, Shaw/Yoder/Antwih Inc.