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Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Governor of the State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Request for Signature – AB 1849 (Gipson)

Dear Governor Brown,

The Youth Law Center is proud to serve as co-sponsor for Assembly Bill 1849 (Gipson), which clarifies instructions about Medi-Cal coverage for youth exiting foster care at age 18 or older. AB 1849 will reduce barriers to foster youth receiving the extended health coverage they are entitled to under the Affordable Care Act and existing state law.

The Youth Law Center is a national public interest law firm that works to protect the rights of children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. We have worked for years to promote access to reliable health insurance and care for foster and former foster youth. We have been especially active in working to implement the foster youth provisions of the Affordable Care Act, which requires states to provide youth who exit foster care at age 18 or older with Medicaid coverage (Medi-Cal in California) up to age 26 regardless of income.

This extension of coverage to age 26 fills a critical need for former foster youth (FFY), who do not have the same option as their peers to stay on a parent's insurance plan. These vulnerable youth too often lack adequate supports to navigate the transition to adulthood successfully. For example, they are much less likely than their peers to have health insurance, but tend to have more health care needs due to abuse, neglect, or trauma experienced during childhood.

Despite the importance to FFY of receiving uninterrupted, automatic Medi-Cal coverage, we have found that outdated provisions in the law have prevented or delayed young people receiving the coverage and care they deserve. Existing state law requires young people exiting foster care to be automatically transitioned into the Medi-Cal program for FFY until age 26 with no interruption in coverage and with no application required. However, several sections of the code still contain outdated instructions for social workers preparing youth to transition out of foster care. For example, one section of the code still states that social workers should assist the youth in completing a Medi-Cal application despite the fact that as of January 1, 2014, youth should be receiving uninterrupted and continuous coverage with no application needed. As a result of outdated instructions and the lack of conformity in the code, some youth have been incorrectly dropped from coverage as they transition out of care and others have left care without receiving

information about their ongoing eligibility and without a copy of their Medi-Cal benefits identification card.

AB 1849 will make simple, technical fixes to (1) reduce barriers to foster youth receiving uninterrupted health coverage as they exit care and (2) prevent youth from leaving care with inaccurate or insufficient information about their ongoing coverage or without their Medi-Cal Benefits Identification Card. AB 1849 clarifies that social workers preparing foster youth to transition out of care are required to ensure that such youth are automatically transitioned to the Medi-Cal for former foster youth program without the need for a new application. These fixes will remove unnecessary barriers to young people accessing health care coverage that they desperately need and to which they are entitled.

For these reasons, the Youth Law Center is proud to co-sponsor AB 1849 and respectfully requests your signature.

Sincerely,



Virginia Corrigan
Staff Attorney, Youth Law Center