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*By Facsimile Transmission and U.S. Mail*

Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Governor  
California State Capitol, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 403 (Stone) – Request for Signature

Dear Governor Brown:

The Youth Law Center writes to urge you to sign AB 403 (Stone), which will transform California's child welfare policy to support the healthy development of children and youth in foster care. The Youth Law Center is so appreciative of Governor Brown's administration's commitment to making the most significant reform in decades to address the harmful conditions of youth in congregate care by implementing critical protections, accountability and efforts for quality. We are proud to partner with the administration, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), a unanimous California Legislature, and over twenty thousand concerned citizens across the country who have signed a petition in support of AB 403.

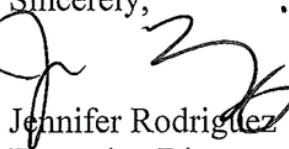
The Youth Law Center (YLC), a national legal advocacy organization focused on ensuring every youth in the foster care and juvenile justice system has the opportunity to live a healthy and productive life, has worked to reduce and eliminate detrimental use of congregate care for over 30 years. The core of our mission is achieving the policy established in AB 403: ensuring every youth grows up with the parenting and individualized supports necessary for healthy development. YLC has spent the last 3 years working closely with the administration in developing the policy proposals contained in AB 403.

AB 403 recognizes that youth have the right to grow up in a family - in fact, it is a basic developmental need. It is well documented that placement in congregate care interferes with healthy child development. Years of research have made it clear that separating youth from their families and placing them in group care facilities exacerbates, rather than reduces, youths' problem behaviors. Congregate care is proven to be one of the greatest risk factors for inappropriate psychotropic medication administration, troubling school outcomes, sexual exploitation, and delinquency involvement. In fact, foster youth in at least one congregate care placement were more than twice as likely to be arrested than youth living in a foster family.

With AB 403, California is leading the nation in reforming foster care to ensure that youth are not unnecessarily placed in congregate care, and when they are, they receive treatment that responds to their individual, identified needs with a goal of return to a family as soon as possible. Over 20,000 concerned citizens from across the country have signed on to petitions stating *"We have an opportunity to stand up for thousands of forgotten children and youths by supporting A.B. 403, which makes sure that California's children are not unnecessarily placed in congregate care and that when children must be placed, that institutional care is an intervention that offers children the individualized treatment necessary to quickly return to families."* Those signatures can be viewed at <http://www.takepart.com/article/2015/05/24/youth> and <https://www.change.org/p/children-in-foster-care-deserve-families-not-institutions>.

The 1 in 3 teens currently languishing in California congregate care need reform now. We are grateful for your vision and leadership in signing AB 403 and transforming California child welfare to ensure every child grows with the parenting necessary to become happy and healthy adults.

Thank you Governor Brown.

Sincerely,  
  
Jennifer Rodriguez  
Executive Director

cc: Honorable Mark Stone