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Governor Signs Legislation to Provide Support for Foster Youth from 18 to 21

Sacramento—Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has signed Assembly Bill 12, by Assembly Members Jim Beall and Karen Bass, which will provide critically needed support for foster youth who reach age 18 while still in a foster care setting, and makes them eligible for continued support up to age 21 if they are working or going to school or are medically unable to engage in those activities.

“None of us would allow our own children to be without support—and certainly we should not allow this to be the case for our foster youth,” said Justice Carlos R. Moreno of the California Supreme Court, who chairs the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care.

California Chief Justice Ronald M. George appointed the commission and urged the Governor to sign this important legislation. AB 12 will implement key policy reforms recommended by the commission, which spent over two years seeking ways to find safe and permanent homes for the state’s 75,000 foster children.

“Governor Schwarzenegger has taken a vital step toward improving the lives of our foster youth,” declared Justice Moreno. “The futures of many of our most vulnerable young people are much brighter as a result of this historic legislation, and we in the judicial branch are committed to implementing AB 12 in a manner that will ensure improved outcomes for these youth.”

AB 12 allows California to take advantage of recently enacted federal child welfare legislation, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, which was passed in 2008. This legislation provides federal funds for California’s Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program, as well as federal funding to support foster youth from age 18 to 21.

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Research demonstrates that foster youth who are provided support during those critical years are more likely to obtain an education and are less likely to become homeless. Providing this support, with the help of the federal government, will assist California's foster youth in reaching their full potential.

AB 12 is sponsored by the Alliance for Child and Family Services, California Youth Connection, the Children's Law Center of Los Angeles, the County Welfare Directors Association of California, the John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes, the Judicial Council of California, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the Youth Law Center. To learn more about AB 12, visit: www.cafosteringconnections.org .

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