

WEBINAR | APRIL 2026

2026 Child Welfare Legislative and Budget Priorities

ALLIANCE
for **CHILDREN'S**
RIGHTS

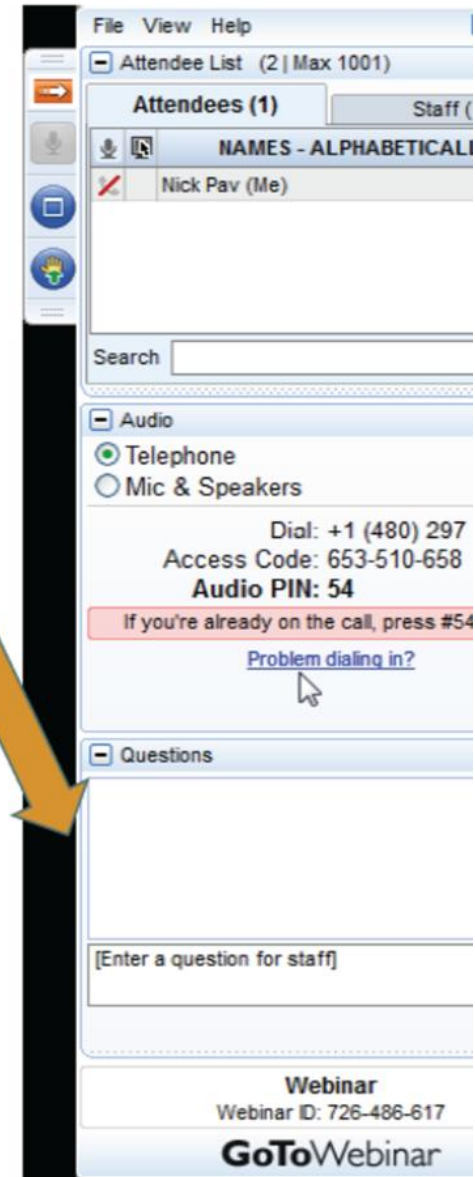


LOGISTICS

Webinar resources, including recording and supplemental materials, will be posted at <https://allianceforchildrensrights.org/resources/>

All attendees are muted during webinar.

Please submit questions using the “Questions” function on your GoToWebinar dashboard.



2026 CHILD
WELFARE
BILLS AND
BUDGET
REQUESTS



FY 26-27 BUDGET

Limits new ongoing spending

"... reflects a cautionary approach to spending in anticipation of future headwinds."

Instability in Washington, D.C.

"... this federal change adds nearly \$300 million in costs to CalFresh, the state's program providing food assistance for more than 3 million California households."



CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE OF
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES



California
Alliance

Empowering lives. Enriching futures.



AB 2764 (AHRENS) – ENSURING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO EXTENDED FOSTER CARE STATEWIDE

Under AB 12, youth ages 18-21 who were in foster care on their 18th birthday are eligible for extended foster care (EFC) if they meet one of five federal participation requirements.



Youth are sometimes being held to stricter local requirements, (i.e. 40 hours per week of productivity through work or school, mandatory volunteer hours, or demonstration of independence skills), unintentionally excluding youth from EFC or specific placements such as THP-NMD.



AB 2764 would align eligibility requirements with federal law and newly released THP-NMD Regulations to eliminate confusion for providers and youth about eligibility across counties and prevent youth from losing placements due to changes in employment or other circumstances.

AB 2126 (ELHAWARY) PEER EMPLOYMENT AND EQUITY REFORM (PEER) ACT

AB 2126 would create an automatic exemption from disqualification if the applicant for a peer support specialist position is a former or current foster youth and the crimes were committed under the age of 21, excluding certain felonies, like child abuse or neglect, spousal abuse, elder abuse, crimes against a child, or a crime involving violence to provide a streamlined career pathway for foster youth and streamline hiring for culturally responsive, trauma-informed staff.

AB 1626 (GABRIEL) MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING FOR COACHES

Requires California youth sports coaches to receive training in mental health informed practices to equip coaches to recognize early warning signs of mental health distress, especially for student athletes who are less likely to seek help, and provide practical tools, supportive communication, and referrals to school and community resources.

By strengthening coaches' capacity as mentors, AB 1626 addresses the acute mental health needs of our youth, while creating safer, more supportive athletic environments for all students.



AB 1540 (GONZALEZ) 988 CRISIS HOTLINE LGBTQ+ PRESS 3 OPTION



Ensures all LGBTQ+ youth have access to critical and lifesaving suicide and crisis intervention available when calling "988" and pressing option "3".

AB 1579 (RAMOS) CHILDREN'S CRISIS CONTINUUM PILOT PROGRAM EXPANSION

- Expands the allowable program types for residential crisis treatment to include Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTFs), Crisis Stabilization Unit/Psychiatric Health Facility (CSU/PHF) combinations, Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Programs (STRTPs), or other CDSS-approved residential crisis models **to preserve safety and oversight standards while giving counties the flexibility needed** to build sustainable, accessible crisis care options for youth statewide.

BUDGET ASK: FFA BRIDGE FUNDING

Requesting one-time \$30 million in funding to stabilize the more than 200 Foster Family Agencies (FFAs) serving over 6,500 foster youth across California.





**Children
Now**

AB 1602 (RUBIO) CHILD WELFARE DISASTER RESPONSE FUND



- Establishes a statewide Child Welfare Disaster Response Fund that ensures resources are immediately available to disaster-impacted communities to mitigate the urgent needs of children and youth in foster care and their caregivers.
- Corresponding budget request of \$800,000 (one-time) to fund Child Welfare Disaster Response Fund.



**SB 1051
(MENJIVAR)
EMERGENCY
CHILD CARE
BRIDGE**

Allows Emergency Child Care Bridge Navigators to submit referrals to county child welfare agencies for approval of child care vouchers for eligible foster children and alleviates some of the pressure on social workers by allowing another trusted partner working with the child and family to leverage this critical support.



California

Coalition for Youth



AB 1967 (ZBUR) ENDING YOUTH INSTABILITY

- Requires a more timely and responsive investigation by county child welfare whenever a youth seeks to enter foster care through self-petition, and
- Ensures that a nonminor (aged 18-21) is not precluded from entry into extended foster care because their guardian or adoptive parent continues to collect benefits on behalf of the youth when they are not providing ongoing financial support.

SB 492 (MENJIVAR) YOUTH HOUSING BOND ACT OF 2026

- Creates a dedicated funding source, the 2026 Youth Housing Bond Fund, to combat youth homelessness;
- Allows both public agencies and community-based organizations with specific youth expertise to apply for the youth bond funds,
- Supports housing for youth experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness and current and former foster youth.



AB 1899 (CALOZA) OFFICE OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION



- Creates an Office of Youth Homelessness Prevention in the California Interagency Council on Homelessness, which becomes a state department on July 1, 2026.
- Tasks the Office with creating a framework to achieve Functional Zero for youth homelessness by September 15, 2027.
- Authorizes the Office to lead in coordinating a set of specific funding, policy and practice efforts to reduce youth and young adult homelessness to Functional Zero.
- Creates a 12-member Advisory Committee for the Office.

BUDGET REQUEST: HHAP

- Asking the Legislature to continue their strong commitment and leadership on combating the homelessness crisis through \$1 billion in ongoing funding for the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention Program (HHAP) and growing the youth set aside to 25%.



BUDGET REQUEST: CAL OES YE & HY PILOT PROGRAMS

- \$75 million one-time General Fund for the Homeless Youth Emergency Services and Housing Program (YE) and the Homeless Youth Emergency Services Pilot Program (HY Pilot) to preserve and expand critical services for homeless youth for another grant cycle.
 - These two programs are currently scheduled to conclude on December 31, 2026, and March 31, 2027, respectively.
- Counties currently receiving funding: Alameda, El Dorado, Fresno, Humboldt, Los Angeles, Monterey, Orange, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, Santa Clara, Stanislaus, Ventura.
 - Ask includes funding for 5 NEW counties.



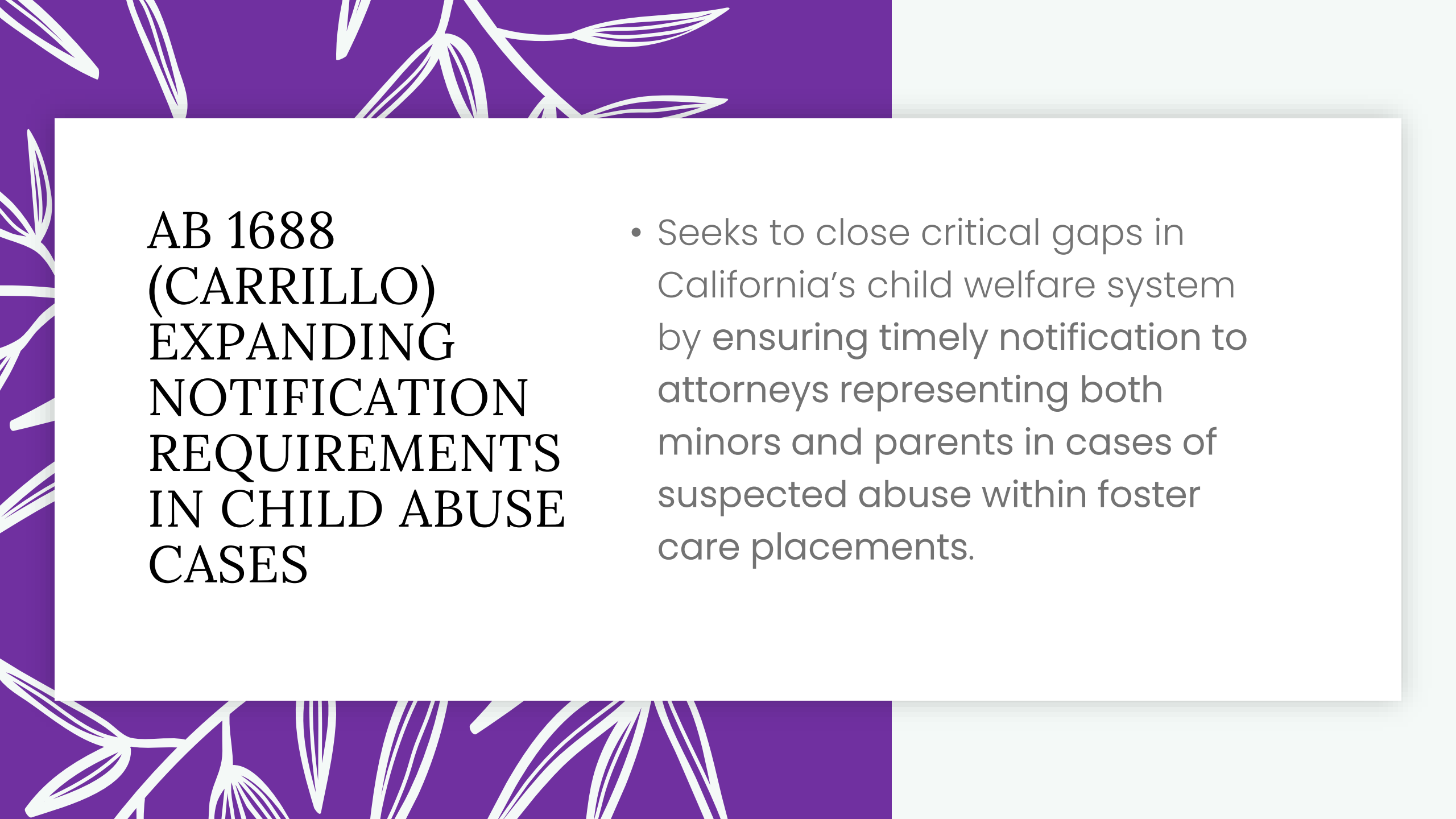


Children's Law Center
of California

E x c e l l e n c e I n A d v o c a c y

AB 1099 (BRYAN) REGIONAL CENTER FAST TRACK PROCESS FOR SYSTEM- INVOLVED YOUTH

- Reduces the barriers that system-involved youth commonly encounter in the Regional Center 2-step intake process so that they receive timely eligibility determinations and can secure essential services to prevent unnecessary family separation and institutionalization.
- Establishes data collection regarding the eligibility process for all applicants along with data specific to system-involved youth to enable comparative analysis to identify and address challenges with regional center processes.



AB 1688 (CARRILLO) EXPANDING NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS IN CHILD ABUSE CASES

- Seeks to close critical gaps in California's child welfare system by ensuring timely notification to attorneys representing both minors and parents in cases of suspected abuse within foster care placements.



JOHN BURTON
Advocates
for Youth

AB 2162 (BRYAN)
PREVENTING
HOMELESSNESS
AMONG
FORMER
FOSTER YOUTH
& MAXIMIZING
FEDERAL
HOUSING
ASSISTANCE

- Increases the upper age limit from 24 to 28 for the state-administered Housing Navigation and Maintenance Program (HNMP), to better match eligibility for federal FYI/FUP Vouchers for former foster youth.
- Adds additional reporting requirement for county child welfare agencies that accept HNMP funding:
 - Do they have a partnership with housing authority/ies to participate in FYI/FUP?
 - If so, how many vouchers issued in their county?



AB 2766 (AHRENS) IMPROVING ACCESS TO STUDENT HOUSING & COURSE ENROLLMENT

- Establishes **priority housing** at California Community Colleges (CCCs) for eligible students with experience in foster care or homelessness, aligning CCCs with existing CSU and UC practices.
- Requires CCC & CSU and requests UC **housing applications to identify** current/former foster youth and students experiencing homelessness.
- Improves transparency by ensuring **eligibility information** is clearly posted on CCC & CSU **campus websites** and requests UC to do so.
- Requires CCC & CSU and requests UC to **defer or waive housing deposits and upfront housing fees** until financial aid disbursement.
- Aligns **priority registration eligibility with NextUp eligibility** so that all youth in NextUp, including those over the age of 25, have access at CCCs.

AB 2251 (C. RODRIGUEZ) MAKING COST OF ATTENDANCE (COA) TRANSPARENT, FLEXIBLE & STUDENT-CENTERED

To receive the Cal Grant, institutions must:

- **Prominently display**, using student-friendly language, information about the institution's **COA adjustment process**, as well as the basis each COA budget category.
- Allows students to request **COA adjustments for any expense category**, with **no limit** on the number of requests.
- Not impose COA adjustment request deadlines earlier than **three weeks** before the end of each term.
- Notify students of the decision on their COA adjustment request within **30 business days**, with limited exceptions.
- Accept COA adjustment requests in either **electronic or hard copy** form.

SB 1421 (MCGUIRE): STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR TRANSITION-AGE FOSTER YOUTH



- Requires the development and inclusion of age and developmentally appropriate performance and outcome measures for extended foster care in the California Child and Family Services Review.
- Adds SB 12 and SB 624 measures related to completion of FAFSA/CADAA and receipt of Foster Youth Tax Credit for NMDs.
- Improvement plans would support improved outcomes for TAY.



BUDGET PROPOSAL: YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Requesting \$80 million ongoing minimum funding guarantee for youth homelessness leveraging the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) program.

Sign on [here](#).



CALIFORNIA TRIBAL FAMILIES COALITION



AB 1574 (ROGERS) TRIBAL PREVENTION SERVICES

Seeks to preserve families and prevent tribal children from entering foster care by creating the Tribal Foster Care Prevention Services Program.

AB 1824 (RAMOS) ICWA COMPLIANCE IN GUARDIANSHIP AND CONSERVATORSHIP

Clarifies and strengthens compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and California ICWA in probate guardianship and conservatorship proceedings by placing clear, enforceable requirements directly in the Probate Code.



CWDA

Advancing Human Services
for the Welfare of *All* Californians



**AB 1846 (STEFANI)
RELATIVE
PLACEMENT
PREFERENCE**

Clarifies that the preference to place a foster child with a relative extends through the length of the case and does not end at the dispositional hearing.



AB 2478 (SCHULTZ & SOLACHE) KINSHIP FAMILY APPROVAL PROGRAM

Building on direction previously enacted by the Legislature in AB 2830 (Rivas), implements a streamlined Kinship Family Approval pathway and clarifies emergency placement rules so children can be placed more quickly with safe caregivers who already know and care about them.

AB 2684 (NGUYEN) NMD OUT-OF- STATE VIRTUAL VISITATION

- Allows an NMD to opt-into virtual visitations with their social worker if they live out of state.
- Requires social workers to visit at least 4 times per year.



**SB 1134
(CABALLERO)
CHILD
WELFARE
FORENSIC
INTERVIEWS**

Clarifies that if a county utilizes a Child Advocacy Center (CAC) to conduct a forensic interview in a child abuse investigation, law enforcement, county counsel, and child welfare can access the recording of the forensic interview.

BUDGET REQUEST: EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUNDING

- \$100 million was allocated 5 years ago for Emergency Response Funding for county child welfare agencies which ends in 2026.
- Requesting \$20 million in one-time funding for Emergency Response for FY 26–27 to continue this critical investment.



youth law center

AB 1080 (BRYAN) CONSERVING FEDERAL TITLE II BENEFITS FOR YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

Ensures that foster youth who receive federal Social Security Administration Retirement, Survivors, Disability Insurance (Title II) benefits have those funds properly conserved and used in their best interest.

- Includes broadening conservation to all Title II RSDI child's benefits:
 - Retirement, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (RSDI) (Title II) benefits are received by children whose parent worked and paid into Social Security, and the parent is deceased, disabled, or retired.
 - This does not include Supplemental Security Income (SSI) (Title XVI), which is a means tested disability benefit that would be received based on the child's or nonminor dependent's disability.
- Requires consultation with the child and family team on how the benefits should be used in the child's or NMD's best interest.



AB 2767 (AHRENS) FAMILY FINDING

Creates a statewide standard requiring the Family Finding process to begin as early as possible when a child is removed from a parent's custody and to help place children with relatives to improve life outcomes for children in foster care.



Adds and clarifies rights within the Foster Youth Bill of Rights:

- creates the right to have a foster youth's personal belongings transported during placement changes and other moves in a manner that preserves the youth's property and dignity,
- and clarifies that the right to have storage space for private use also includes the right to maintain reasonable access to and use of personal belongings, clothing, and personal items.

SB 1345 (WAHAB) FOSTER YOUTH BILL OF RIGHTS

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for **CHILDREN'S**
RIGHTS

AB 1689 (QUIRK-SILVA) STREAMLINING GUARDIANSHIP TRANSITIONS

Gives juvenile courts limited, consent-based authority at the initial dependency hearing to terminate or suspend a temporary probate guardianship order when needed to avoid conflicting orders or make appropriate temporary placement decisions.

AB 2769 (AHRENS) SUPPORTING YOUTH IN ATTAINING EDUCATION GOALS



Assists youth formerly in foster care in completing their high school education and achieving their educational goals by creating parity between California's child welfare permanency support programs by allowing adopted youth (adoption agreement signed before age 16 and enrolled in high school or equivalent) to continue receiving Adoption Assistance Program benefits past age 18 until they graduate high school or turn 19 (whichever comes first).

OTHER CHILD WELFARE RELATED PROPOSALS

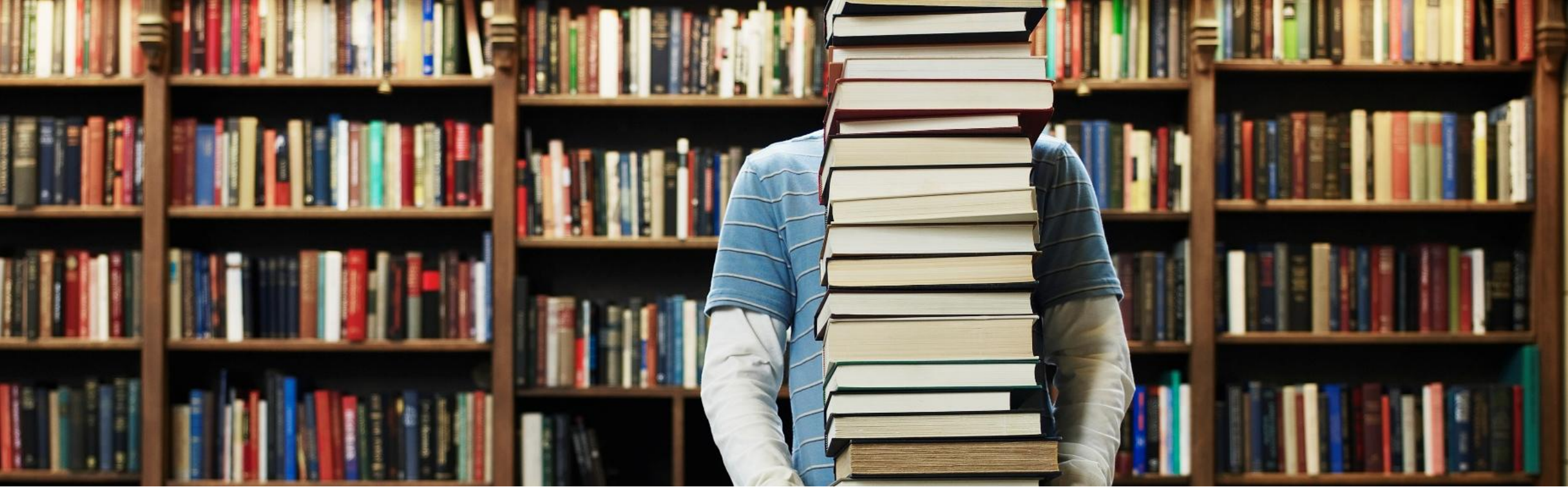


**AB 1866
(ELHAWARY)
ENDING
ENDLESS
PROBATION
FOR ALL
YOUTH**

- Extends AB 1376 (Chapter 575, Statutes of 2025) protections to foster youth on probation.
- Establishes clear timelines and review standards for youth exiting Secure Youth Treatment Facilities.

AB 2441 (C. RODRIGUEZ) COMMUNITY SUPPORTING INNOVATION PILOT PROGRAM

- Requires the Office of Child Abuse Prevention to establish the Community Supporting Innovation Pilot Program to **assess and demonstrate the effectiveness of community-based organizations, including family resource centers**, serving as resource and referral avenues and alternative support pathways for families with complex needs or multiple stressors, or who are navigating significant barriers, but whose children are not at substantial risk of suffering serious physical harm or illness.



AB 2768 (AHRENS) DEFERRING ENROLLMENT- RELATED COSTS

Requires institutions of higher education to defer all enrollment-related costs for eligible current or former foster youth during their initial enrollment until student financial aid funds are disbursed.



SB 1017 (REYES) ACCESS TO SCHOOL RECORDS

Ensures foster youth age 14 and older have direct access to their own school records.

RESOURCES

- Alliance for Children's Rights - <https://allianceforchildrensrights.org/policy/>
- California Alliance of Children and Family Services - <https://www.cacfs.org/advocacy>
- California Coalition for Youth - <https://calyouth.org/>
- California Tribal Families Coalition - <https://caltribalfamilies.org/>
- Children's Law Center of California - <https://www.clccal.org/our-work/legislation-and-policy/>
- Children Now - <https://www.childrennow.org/childwelfare/>
- County Welfare Directors Association of California - <https://www.cwda.org/state-budget-priorities>
- John Burton Advocates for Youth - [Advocate With Us | John Burton Advocates for Youth \(jbay.org\)](https://www.jbay.org/)
- Youth Law Center - [YLC - Standing Up for Children at Risk](#)

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