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Assemblywoman Rubio Introduces Bill to Help Foster Youth Keep Their Social Workers

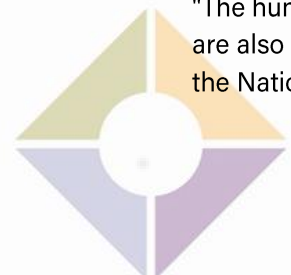
Sacramento, CA – Assemblywoman Blanca E. Rubio (D-Baldwin Park) introduced AB 1006, a bill that will require the California Department of Social Services to convene a stakeholder workgroup with current and former foster youth, foster care caregiver organizations, Foster Family Agency social workers, and child advocacy organizations, to examine the adverse effects of high turnover of social workers on foster youth. Additionally, AB 1006 will mandate that the State identify measures and submit specific recommendations to reduce turnover and improve permanency outcomes for foster children and youth to the Legislature before December 31, 2022. AB 1006 is co-sponsored by the National Association of Social Workers-CA Chapter and the California Alliance of Child and Family Services.

"It is my honor to continue fighting for Foster Family Agency Social Workers. The data is already available that reducing turnover improves overall health and achievement outcomes for foster youth. The resiliency of our foster youth in the face of COVID-19 cannot be understated; however, providing for them should not come at a financial burden to those who dedicate their lives to keeping them safe," said Assemblywoman Rubio.

It is estimated that 60,000 foster youth are in California's child welfare system on any given day. Foster Family Agencies are private nonprofit organizations that provide homes for 29% of foster children and youth in home-based foster care and 100% of all foster children and youth who have elevated needs in the Intensive Services Foster Care Program. Foster Family Agency social workers typically provide higher supports and services for youth who may have intellectual or physical disabilities, are teenagers or are themselves parenting, who are part of a large sibling group, or who have challenging behavioral and mental health needs.

Many of these children and youth need the stability provided by having one social worker remain with them during their time in foster care. Research shows that foster youth will achieve permanency 74.5% of the time with one social worker, 17.5% with two social workers, and then it drops to less than 3% when there have been three or more social workers during the life of the child's case.

"The human service workforce is the heart of care delivery. When we under-resource social workers, we are also under-resourcing the children and families they serve," said Deborah Son, Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers-CA Chapter. "NASW-CA celebrates Assemblywoman Rubio's



tireless leadership in ensuring successful mechanisms of care that are sufficiently resourced to sustain their work, particularly amid current conditions. Social workers are essential, and they are needed more than ever during these times as they are uniquely trained to provide services rooted in equity and social justice. By investing in lower turnover rates for social workers, we are ensuring the longevity of high-quality professionals to support the growing mental health needs of Californians."

"Social workers are a critical component for foster youth in achieving permanency, and California must do more to reduce turnover for these essential professionals," said Chris Stoner-Mertz, CEO of the California Alliance of Child and Family Services. "Research shows that loss of a social worker negatively impacts the chances for foster youth to achieve permanency through reunification, adoption, and guardianship. The California Alliance applauds Assemblywoman Rubio's dedication to foster youth and her leadership in bringing this vital issue attention. AB 1006 is a critical step in the right direction, and we are proud to sponsor this piece of legislation."

"We must protect our most vulnerable children and youth who need to know that their social worker will be there for them from their first day in foster care until their last day," said Norma A. Duque, CEO, Nuevo Amanecer Latino Children's Services, a Foster Family Agency that serves 430 children and youth. "We need to make sure that we are doing everything we can to help California's foster children and youth reunite with their biological families, and if that is not possible, then to be adopted or be with a guardian. Too many of our youth have their permanency plans disrupted when they lose another social worker. We need to support the social workers who dedicate their lives to helping others and who rebuild that trust and bond with our foster children and youth."

"Walden has over 130 foster youth in our agency, and many of them have specialized medical needs that require skilled and experienced social workers who will be there for the child and family from the beginning until reunification, adoption, or guardianship. It is heartbreaking when our social worker tells us they love this job but can no longer stay because they need more supports to provide for their own family as well," said Sue Evans, Chief Operating Officer of Walden Family Services, serving 130 children and youth.

Assemblywoman Rubio represents the 48th Assembly District, which is comprised of the cities of Azusa, Baldwin Park, Bradbury, City of Industry, Covina, Duarte, El Monte, Glendora, Irwindale, Monrovia, West Covina, and the San Gabriel Valley unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County, including Bassett, Charter Oak, Citrus, East Arcadia, Ramona, Valinda and West La Puente.

