



**LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION
FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**
Celebrating 35 Years of Advocacy & Achievement

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Executive Director

June 17, 2019

Los Angeles Unified School District
Board Members and Superintendent
333 South Beaudry Ave., 24th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90017

Dear Board Members and Superintendent Beutner:

RESTRUCTURING THE FOSTER YOUTH ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

On behalf of the Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families (Commission), we respectfully urge you not to restructure the Foster Youth Achievement Program (FYAP) in ways that will result in dilution of the program's singular focus on and intensive service delivery to foster youth, ultimately decreasing the effectiveness of services to this vulnerable population. Furthermore, we implore you to engage stakeholders in the decision making process regarding proposed changes to the FYAP.

The Commission serves as an advisory body to the County's Board of Supervisors on matters impacting children and youth involved with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. As such, we are acutely aware of the significant and unique needs of students in the foster care system; most of whom have experienced trauma that has negatively impacted all aspects of their lives, including, most notably, educational attainment.

Similarly, we are also aware of the FYAP's success in improving outcomes for LAUSD students in foster care. For example, as you know, LAUSD's 2017-2020 Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) notes that among other improvements, the chronic absenteeism rate for students in foster care in the District has decreased by 4%. The LCAP goes on to attribute these successes to the District's "renewed focus and increased investment in supporting foster youth".

In the past, we have invited LAUSD leadership to present on the FYAP to the Commission, as the program is renowned nationally for its infrastructure of supports to schools, students, and caregivers.

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The FYAP has served as a gold star model, both in its program design, as well as the collaborative, deliberative, and data-informed process through which it was developed. In contrast, to date, there has been little effort to engage key stakeholders, including students, the community, child welfare leaders, and experts in the field in making decisions so consequential to outcomes for foster youth.

We write to you with considerable concerns regarding any modifications to the FYAP that would diminish the quality and quantity of services and supports provided to LAUSD's youth in foster care. We respectfully urge you to continue to demonstrate the leadership exemplified at the inception of the FYAP, by engaging stakeholders in a transparent process to address concerns and identify thoughtful solutions before making any significant changes to program.

Please contact me at wsmith@usc.edu or Executive Director, Tamara Hunter at huntet@dcss.lacounty.gov if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Dr. Wendy B. Smith, Chair

WS:th

c: Chief Executive Officer
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel
Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Chief Probation Officer, Probation Department
Children's Deputies, Board of Supervisors
Justice Deputies, Board of Supervisors