*(Organization Letterhead)*

DATE

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown Jr.

Governor, State of California

Attn: Legislative Affairs; Request for Signature

State Capitol

Sacramento, CA 95814

Facsimile: (916) 558-3177; (916) 558-3160

RE: Request for Signature for AB 1909 (Ammiano)

Dear Governor Brown:

**[AGENCY]** strongly supports **Assembly Bill 1909**, which is supported by a diverse range of organizations and associations throughout the State, has been developed by a group of educators, social workers, and advocates who participate in the California Foster Youth Education Task Force, and has no opposition.

Children in foster care face extraordinary challenges to their educational success. Due to the the abuse and neglect foster children have experienced, they are more likely to exhibit emotional and behavioral problems than their non-foster peers, which problems often impact their school behavior. Unfortunately, they also experience disproportionate levels of school discipline, which impedes their access to education. A 2009 San Mateo County study showed that foster children were ten times more likely than their non-foster counterparts to be expelled from their school district (Castrechini, 2009). A study of foster children in several states confirmed that one sixth (17 percent) of the foster children had been expelled, compared with 5 percent of the general population sample (Courtney, *et al*., 2004, p. 42).

Because foster children often change homes and the adult responsible for their educational decisions also shifts, it can be difficult for their schools to identify the appropriate adult to contact if discipline problems arise. This difficulty can result in a foster child’s being removed from school or expelled from his or her school district before the foster care agency or the child’s attorney knows anything is wrong. A lack of notification to parties responsible for the foster child’s welfare creates missed opportunities to address the root causes of the child’s behavioral issues and for the school to access mental health and other resources available from the juvenile court and child welfare agency to help the child. It also can lead to an unnecessary and potentially very harmful disruption to the foster child’s education.

Under AB 1909, school districts would alert a foster child’s county social worker and attorney when the child is facing expulsion from his or her school district, in situations in which the school district’s decision to recommend expulsion is discretionary. In addition, attorneys for foster children would provide their contact information to the school districts’ educational liaisons for foster children, which should increase communication about foster children’s school progress among these key agencies and help keep these children in school.

We ask that you sign this critical bill for foster children into law. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[AGENCY CONTACT]

cc: The Honorable Tom Ammiano, (916) 319-2113