

# BACK TO THE START

March 4, 2024

## **Response to the Governor's Proposed Budget:**

Back to the Start promotes upstream development and growth rather than paying an even higher price on downstream systems, such as mass incarceration, that only treat the symptoms of our policy failures. We commend Governor Newsom for preserving, in large part, funding for childhood services that are essential to our community. We appreciate the priority given to expanding access to education and health care, getting tens of thousands of people out of encampments and into housing, and combating crime.

However, we have concerns that the proposed cuts to key programs aimed at early childhood, foster youth, and family stabilization undermine the state's progress in reducing homelessness, supporting our foster youth, and dismantling the systemic and racial inequities at the root of mass incarceration. The cost of retaining (or even expanding) these programs is remarkably low in proportion to the overall budget and the potential downstream costs associated with not having these services in place.

### **We specifically oppose reduced funding and/or elimination of the following programs:**

**Family Urgent Response System (FURS):** The Governor's Budget proposes a reduction of \$30 million in 2024-25 and ongoing to FURS, which threatens to eliminate this program. FURS provides immediate, trauma-informed support to foster youth and caregivers statewide by providing a 24/7 crisis hotline and County Mobile Response and Stabilization Teams. This allows for direct in-home services for de-escalation, stabilization, conflict resolution, and ongoing services to support further family stabilization.

**Housing Supplement for Foster Youth in Supervised Independent Living Placements:** The Governor's Budget proposes a reduction of \$195,000 in 2024-25 and \$25.5 million (\$18.8 million General Fund) in 2025-26 and ongoing. The supplement funding program is aimed at helping youth ages 18-21 in extended foster care by providing financial support for housing.

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**Housing Navigators (Housing Navigation and Maintenance Program – HNMP):** The Governor’s Budget proposes a reduction of \$13.7 million in the General Fund and ongoing. The HNMP supports former foster individuals aged 18–24 who receive federal housing vouchers by recruiting landlords, assisting with security deposits, providing lease education, and additional support services to promote sustainable housing for our foster youth.

*Back to the Start* joins the coalition of advocacy groups and activists in opposing budget cuts to these programs vital to the development of our youth. We urge the State to reconsider cuts to these valuable programs, which support our youth in living sustainably and building a future for themselves. We must support our children and families in the early childhood period and during the critical transition from youth to adulthood to fight the inequities that are at the root of trauma, poverty, poor educational achievement- and incarceration.

As part of our work, we have also collected childhood narratives written by incarcerated individuals highlighting the need for support and interventions in this critical space. We encourage collaborators to reach out to us at [info@backtothestart.org](mailto:info@backtothestart.org) to access these stories or to learn more.