

For Immediate Release

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California Poised to Become the First State to Hold Itself Accountable for the Educational Outcomes of Foster Children

Foster children suffer from tragically poor educational outcomes: 75% perform below grade level; 80% have repeated a grade by 3rd grade; 50% never obtain a high school diploma or GED; and fewer than 3% attend a four-year college. Foster children perform significantly worse in school than even other at-risk or low-income students.

Despite a special obligation to ensure the well-being of foster children, no state has held itself accountable for their academic success.

The budget bill passed today by California's legislature would make it the first state to hold schools and school districts accountable for the educational outcomes of foster children.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act requires states to evaluate schools and school districts based on the progress of different subgroups of children, including students of color, students with disabilities, and students who primarily speak a language other than English. California's budget bill adds foster youth to this list, creating an incentive for schools to focus on the educational progress of the approximately 42,000 school-age foster children in California.

"I am proud to champion an education reform plan that prioritizes students in foster care," said **Senate Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg**, a longtime champion for foster youth. "The historic education reform package we passed will ensure that the educational achievement of students in foster care remain a priority."

Because most school districts do not know when a child is in foster care, the bill also requires California's child welfare and education agencies to inform school districts which of their students are in foster care.

"Foster children are our children. We have a collective responsibility to ensure they succeed in school," said **Jesse Hahnel, director of FosterEd, an initiative of the National Center for Youth Law** that improves educational outcomes of foster children. "In holding itself accountable for the educational outcomes of foster children, California has become the first state to commit to closing this important, and largely hidden, achievement gap. We hope other states will follow suit." Mr. Hahnel worked with the Governor's Office and Legislature to ensure the budget bill contained these important provisions.

"School was the way I escaped the cycle of poverty. I knew the only way I could avoid a life on the street was through my class work," said **Lily Dorman Colby, foster care alumna and current law student**. "This legislation will help thousands of foster youth achieve their full potential."

The budget bill was passed June 14th, 2013. Governor Brown is expected to sign it into law by June 30th.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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