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AJR-17 Foster Care Tax Credit Act. (2015-2016)

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Assembly Joint Resolution No. 17

CHAPTER 176

Relative to the Foster Care Tax Credit Act.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 10, 2015.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AJR 17, Lopez. Foster Care Tax Credit Act.

This measure would urge the President and the Congress of the United States to enact Senate Bill 664, known as the Foster Care Tax Credit Act, which would provide tax relief to short-term foster parents by helping to cover the actual costs of caring for a foster child.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, Foster parents make a positive and tremendous difference in the lives of so many vulnerable children by opening their hearts and homes, and yet California faces constant challenges in recruiting and retaining enough foster families to ensure each child is placed in a family-like setting; and

WHEREAS, Caring for a child in foster care can be more expensive than caring for one's own biological children. Children placed into foster care often have experienced significant emotional and physical trauma and have higher incidences of medical and behavioral health issues, resulting in additional costs to foster parents. On average, current foster care rates would have to increase almost 40 percent nationwide to provide for basic care; and

WHEREAS, Foster parents do not always begin full-time foster parenting immediately. It is not uncommon for foster parents to first provide shorter-term respite or emergency care before "graduating" into more full-time foster parenthood. Likewise, foster parents may intend to be full-time; however, children placed with them may be reunified with their biological families after short lengths of time. Foster parents may have multiple placements for three to four months at a time. According to the Public Policy Institute of California, in California in 2010, 31 percent of children left foster care within three months; and

WHEREAS, The shortage of foster homes has been widely reported. According to the Los Angeles Times in 2015, "Demand for foster beds exceeds supply by more than 30% nationally. Forty percent of parents withdraw during their first year, and an additional 20% say they want out, national studies show. Those families that remain are often stuck in deep poverty themselves"; and

WHEREAS, Encouraging individuals to become foster parents can contribute to a greater number of children being adopted from foster care. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, of the children adopted from foster care in 2012, 54 percent were adopted by former foster parents. In 2012, that would have equated to 27,358 children adopted by former foster parents; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 664 of the 114th United States Congress, known as the federal Foster Care Tax Credit Act, would seek to help the many families who care for foster children for six months or less, who unlike longer term foster families, are not eligible for tax credit assistance under the federal Child Tax Credit, to cover the actual cost of caring for foster children; and

WHEREAS, The Foster Care Tax Credit Act provides tax relief to short-term foster parents and helps cover the actual costs of caring for a foster child by establishing an inflation-adjusted, refundable tax credit of up to \$1,000 per year, per foster child, which is prorated by the number of months a foster child is in a family's care; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of California, jointly, That because foster parents make significant and meaningful contributions to the lives of so many vulnerable children by opening their hearts and homes, the Legislature urges the President and the Congress of the United States to enact Senate Bill 664 of the 114th United States Congress, known as the Foster Care Tax Credit Act, which would provide tax relief to short term foster parents by helping to cover the actual costs of caring for a foster child; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, the Speaker and Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, the Majority Leader and Minority Leader of the Senate, and each member of the California delegation to the United States Congress.