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ACR-196 Foster Care Month. (2021-2022)

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 196

CHAPTER 98

Relative to Foster Care Month.

[Filed with Secretary of State July 12, 2022.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 196, Cooley. Foster Care Month.

This measure would declare the month of May 2022 as Foster Care Month.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, There are nearly 60,000 California children and youth in foster care who need and deserve safe, permanent connections to loving adults, a stable home, and adequate preparation for a secure future; and

WHEREAS, The needs of children and youth for belonging and unconditional emotional commitment are best met in families; and

WHEREAS, Many California counties and community partners have successfully supported permanent family connections for foster youth, provided support for families at risk of entering the child welfare system, and changed practices to fully engage youth, family, and communities, thereby reducing the number of children in foster care; and

WHEREAS, California recognizes the enduring and valuable contribution of relatives and foster and adoptive parents who open their hearts, families, and homes to vulnerable children and youth; and

WHEREAS, California recognizes the numerous individuals and public and private organizations that work to ensure that the needs of children and youth living in, and leaving, foster care are met, that help provide foster and former foster children and youth with vital connections to their siblings, and that help launch young people into successful adulthood; and

WHEREAS, California is engaged in continuum of care reform, which is a comprehensive approach to improving the experience and outcomes of children and youth in foster care by improving assessments of children and families to make more informed and appropriate initial placement decisions, emphasizing home-based family care placements of children, appropriately supporting these placements with needed services, creating short-term residential therapeutic programs for youth whose needs cannot be met safely in families, and increasing transparency and accountability for child outcomes; and

WHEREAS, California is further engaged in building a comprehensive behavioral health system for youth and families impacted by the child welfare system that is responsive to the trauma inherent to family separation; and

WHEREAS, California is committed to working in partnership with local governments, advocates, and stakeholders to address the disproportionate representation of Black and indigenous youth and youth of color in the foster care system, and further, to

address systemwide outcomes that reflect that children of color in the foster care system are more likely to experience multiple placements and less likely to be reunited with their birth families than White children in the foster care system; and WHEREAS, The COVID-19 pandemic has created unique challenges for children and youth in foster care, including widening the gap in education achievement and mental health support services; and

WHEREAS, Historically, foster youth have experienced alarming rates of homelessness as they transition out of care. While California has taken great strides to address this, 1 in 4 foster youth experience homelessness after exiting care and before turning 23 years of age; and

WHEREAS, California is committed to working in partnership with the federal government and local governments to improve the lives and futures of all children and youth touched by the child welfare system; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature declares the month of May 2022 as Foster Care Month; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.