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October 2, 2009

Roger Dickinson, Chair
Marilyn Ratkay, Vice Chair
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Scott Moak, Commissioner
Douglas Ose, Commissioner
Jason Sample, Commissioner
Dr. Glennah Trochet, Commissioner

First 5 Sacramento Commission
2750 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 330
Sacramento, CA 95833

RE: Funding For Child Protective Services

Dear Commissioner Dickinson and Commissioners:

Protection of our children should be the most basic priority of any community. The First 5 Sacramento Commission clearly recognizes this principal through its mission to support the healthy development of children under six years of age, the empowerment of families and the strengthening of communities. Nothing supports our children more – nothing strengthens our communities more – than protecting our children from abuse and neglect. To fail in this is to abandon our children to a life without opportunity or the ability to succeed...a future without hope. It is for the future of our children, and through them the strengthening of our community that I strongly urge this Commission to provide funding for the Child Protective Services' Clearance Examination Program. This is not an issue of supplantation because this program will be eliminated; there are no county funds available to continue it.

The continued operation of the Clearance Examinations performed by the CAARE Team at UCD Medical Center is essential. Now every child who is either under six, injured or who complains of illness/injury and who is removed from his/her home by CPS, is given

a medical clearance examination prior to placement. Between 7/1/08 and 6/30/09 (fiscal year 08/09) 829 children 5 years of age or younger were given clearance examinations. The number of times when abuse is discovered during the Clearance Examination is staggering:

- Of the children who were removed from their homes for reasons other than physical abuse, 38% of them had evidence of physical abuse. In other words, although physical abuse was not the initial reason these children were removed from their homes, the clearance exams uncovered evidence that physical abuse had in fact occurred.
- For the most vulnerable subset of these children, those under 6 years of age who were removed from their homes for reasons other than physical abuse, 55% were found to have physical abuse injuries.
- Of the children who were removed from their homes due to domestic violence within the home, 13% had findings of inflicted physical trauma.
- In cases where children were removed from their homes due to allegations of physical abuse, 20% of their siblings had findings of physical injuries.

Without the continued operation of the Clearance Examination Program there would be no way to determine if a child is injury-free prior to being placed into foster care. Not only would this have a very harmful effect on the County's ability to retain and recruit responsible foster parents, it would be impossible to determine if the injury to a child was inflicted before or after placement, and thus impossible to identify the culpable party.

If these reasons are not enough to underscore the importance of the Clearance Examinations, there is an additional devastating consequence should the Clearance Examination Program cease to operate. Clearance Examinations account for approximately 60% of the funding for the UCD Medical Center's CAARE Team. Without the monies derived from Clearance Examinations, the CAARE Team will cease to exist. Without the expertise of the CAARE Team, law enforcement evidentiary examinations of child molest/neglect victims will either no longer be performed, or be performed by medical personnel without the expertise and training of the CAARE Team. As a result, some victims will not be identified, evidence will not be collected and perpetrators will not be brought to justice and, in fact, will be free to re-offend.

The total cost of the Clearance Examination Program is \$236,250, of that amount the cost to the county is \$132,820. While this county cost is not inconsequential, the protection it provides to our most at-risk children is a bargain when weighed against the alternatives. For these are not children who are potentially at risk, these are children who have been thrust into the system who desperately need to be rescued.

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These budget critical times have forced everyone, including the county, to look at all possible funding opportunities, which is why Child Protective Services has applied to the First 5 Commission for funding of this vital program. But the reality is – this program is critically important in good budget times as well as bad. With unallocated reserves of over \$100 million, the First 5 Commission has the funds available to support this program. I strongly encourage you to fund the county share of this program on an ongoing basis through your grant process. If the goal of the First 5 Sacramento Commission is truly to enhance the health of children and give them a better opportunity to succeed in life, I urge you to view this not as a burden, but rather an opportunity to insure that the children who, through no fault of their own, rely on the Clearance Examination Program have a chance for a better future.

Sincerely,



JAN SCULLY
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

cc: Kimberly Dahl, Acting Executive Director
Jimmie Yee, Alternate Commissioner
Penelope Clark, Alternate Commissioner
Marcie Launey, Alternate Commissioner
Dr. Robert Bonar, Alternate Commissioner
Cindy Weideman, D.D.S., Alternate Commissioner
Kathy Kossick, Alternate Commissioner
Sacramento County Board of Supervisors
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