MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

A.10104-A DARLING/S.8851-A BRISPORT

AN ACT to amend the social services law, in relation to increasing salaries for foster care direct care workers; and making an appropriation therefor

The Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies (COFCCA) strongly supports A.10104-A/S8551-A sponsored by Assemblywoman Darling and Senator Brisport which would provide critical salary enhancements for direct care workers employed by voluntary foster care agencies across NYS.

While the recently enacted budget provided some cost of living adjustments for human services workers, voluntary foster care agencies across NYS continue to struggle and recover from multiple years of stagnant rates, unfunded mandates, and the fiscal challenges and constraints that accompanied the COVID-19 pandemic. Our sector continues to see an incredibly high turnover rate, upwards of 49%, due to the low salaries and benefits we are able to offer. Our direct care workers continued to come to work every day throughout the pandemic, to care for children and youth in foster care, and are part of our essential workforce. While other essential workers have been recognized or provided enhanced salary payments in other human service programs (i.e., OPWDD, OMH, and OASAS), foster care programs’ direct care staff, case workers/case planners and their supervisors have not received the same type of support through the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS).

It is for these reasons we must continue to build off the positive momentum started during the budget process by passing this bill and providing critical salary enhancements for direct care workers employed by voluntary foster care agencies across NYS. Staff turnover impacts treatment and causes longer lengths of stay for children in foster care - this is an unacceptable outcome for New York's children and families, and it is costly for the state and counties as it extends a child's time in care.

COFCCA strongly supports A10104-A/S.8551-A and encourages the Legislature to pass this bill. For more information please contact Michelle Newman, at mnewman@cofcca.org or (212) 929-2626.