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Betsy Butler

March 29, 2017

The Honorable Scott Wiener
Chair, Senate Committee on Health Services
1020 N. Street, Room 521
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support SB 245 (Leyva) – Protecting Foster Youth Act

Dear Senator Wiener,

On behalf of the California Women's Law Center (CWLC), we are writing to support Senate Bill 245, the Protecting Foster Youth Act, which will ensure access to comprehensive sexual health education by age 12 and likely decrease the rate of unintended pregnancies among foster youth in California.

While the rate of unintended pregnancies among teens and young adults in the United States has reached a 30-year low, this reduction has not been experienced by youth in foster care. Fifty-two percent of California's foster youth have been pregnant at least once by age 19, a rate almost three times higher than 19-year-olds not in foster care. More than two-thirds of these young women describe their pregnancies as unintended. By age 21, over 1 in 3 young women in foster care will give birth.

Unintended pregnancy and early childbirth have serious long-term implications. For foster youth, early childbearing significantly diminishes their likelihood of lifelong economic stability. The children of foster youth also suffer the consequences of unintended pregnancy: they are three times more likely to have a substantiated report of abuse by age 5 than children born to same-age mothers not in foster care.

By developing and implementing a statewide curriculum to prevent unplanned pregnancy, and ensuring that social workers, caregivers, judges, and attorneys receive this training, SB 245 will likely decrease the rate of unintended pregnancies among foster youth.

CWLC's mission is to advance the potential of women and girls through transformative litigation, policy advocacy, and education. CWLC recognizes the importance of educating young women on reproductive health and family planning. No woman's future should be threatened because of a lack of access to information on reproductive health care.

For these reasons, the California Women's Law Center supports SB 245.

Sincerely,



Betsy Butler
Executive Director