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March 29, 2017

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

Re: Support SB 213 (Mitchell)

Dear Senator Wiener,

On behalf of the California Women's Law Center (CWLC), we write in support of Senate Bill 213, which will reduce unnecessary delays in relative placement for children in foster care and will expand the number of available foster care placements by streamlining the review process of a prospective caregiver's criminal history.

Too many foster children remain in shelters due to a shortage of family homes when they could be placed with loving and familiar relatives or foster parents. Under current law, these potential caregivers are often subject to delays in approval or are disqualified for a minor crime, such as petty theft committed decades before. These laws are overly broad and unduly restrictive, having a detrimental impact on foster children.

SB 213 will remedy this problem by streamlining the complex exemption process and simplifying the list of non-exemptible crimes to mirror federal law. California law will continue to completely prohibit placement with any potential caregiver who has been convicted of a serious or violent felony at any time, or convicted of assault, battery, or a drug-related felony within the past 5 years. Less serious crimes that occurred many years ago will be handled through a simplified exemption process that relieves prospective caregivers and county social workers of the unnecessarily burdensome process of collecting and reviewing extensive documentation.

CWLC's mission is to advance the potential of women and girls through transformative litigation, policy advocacy, and education. CWLC recognizes the importance of providing safe and stable homes for foster children with caregivers who will love and care for them. For these reasons, the California Women's Law Center supports SB 213.

Sincerely,



Betsy Butler  
Executive Director