

John Burton Foundation for Children without Homes
For Immediate Release
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Governor Sends 1,400 Eviction Notices to Abused and Neglected Youth

*Budget Eliminates One of State's Most Effective Child Welfare Programs
for 0.18% of Budget Shortfall*

Former Senate President John Burton: "We can either pay now or pay more later."

SACRAMENTO, CA –Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's 2010-2011 budget sent a clear message to 1,400 abused and neglected children currently participating in the State's model transitional housing program: hit the streets.

Under the Governor's budget, if the state does not receive \$6.9 billion in extra federal funding, a new round of cuts would be triggered, including the complete elimination of the Transitional Housing Placement Program (THP-Plus.) Established in 2001 to address the growing problem of homelessness among youth who "age out" of foster care when they turn age 18, THP-Plus provides safe, affordable housing and supportive services to 2,000 youth annually in California.

"Before THP-Plus, we used to pack up the belongings of youth in foster care into black garbage bags and wish them luck," said Amy Lemley, Policy Director of the John Burton Foundation. "Let's be clear: the Governor's proposal will return us to those dark days, when aging out of foster care was a one-way ticket to homelessness and incarceration."

Aging-out of foster care usually means unemployment, low rates of educational attainment and high rates of involvement with the criminal justice system. One study showed that only 10.8% of youth who age-out of foster year complete high school, less than half the rate for their peers of the same age and race. Former foster youth were also 2.8 times more likely to be arrested and 70% more likely to be incarcerated.

THP-Plus changes this picture drastically. A 2008 survey of 458 youth in THP-Plus conducted by the John Burton Foundation found measurable 19% gain in employment, a 13% increase in hourly wage, and similar advances in education, health and housing stability. They also reported decreased rates of "disconnectedness," defined as an individual how is neither employed or attending school. Rates of disconnectedness decreased by 39% among youth who entered THP-Plus.

According to Chantel Johnson, Legislative and Policy Coordinator of the California Youth Connection, that shouldn't be a surprise, given the lack of help youth get as they transition into young adulthood. "Foster youth age out of the system ill prepared for what

lay ahead,” said Johnson. “At a time when our economy is in shambles and unemployment is at an all time high, it is more than irresponsible for the Governor to cut this crucial safety net for our emancipating youth—it’s cruel.”

THP-Plus provides a safe place to live and common-sense supportive services, such as help finding a job and enrolling in school. According to Michele Jeter, a former THP-Plus participant from Oakland, the program offered a hand up, not a hand out. “The program taught me a lot,” said Jeter, now employed full-time and a mother of two. “It kicked my butt at times, but it paid off. Now, I have a level of stability and security that I didn’t think was possible. My children do too.”

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