

Dear Governor-elect Newsom:

We, the undersigned **coalition members of The California Children's Trust**, write to invite you to partner with us to transform the way our state supports the health and development of children. The Trust is a statewide initiative with significant momentum and a broad, diverse, and growing coalition that has come together to redesign how we conceive, fund, administer, measure, and deliver a comprehensive system of social, emotional, and behavioral health supports to California's children. We are engaged with leaders and communities from across the state, working to co-create approaches to child well-being that cut across systems and transform outcomes for children, especially children who are vulnerable to the effects of poverty, inequality, and structural racism.

Data show us that **our state's systems are failing to support California children and their families:**

- In CA, **60%** of children have at least one adverse childhood experience (ACE), increasing their risk for behavioral, developmental, and school challenges as well as costly long-term health problems, yet **only 22%** of young children receive a developmental screening during a pediatric well-child visit and **only 4%** are screened for underlying ACEs.
- Further, among CA youth we have seen a **61%** increase in self-reported mental health needs and a **50%** increase in mental health-related hospitalizations since 2007, **yet only 35%** of CA youth who report needing help for emotional or behavioral health problems receive services.
- While an estimated **20%** of youth meet criteria for a behavioral health disorder **only 5%** of youth receive mental health services under Medi-Cal and **less than 3%** receive ongoing treatment.

Your administration has a unique opportunity to lead and unite youth and family serving government agencies with disparate approaches under a shared agenda at a time of unprecedented consensus about the need for reform. We are prepared to work with your administration, and the incoming leadership of the Department of Health Care Services, Department of Education, Department of Developmental Services, Department of Managed Health Care, Department of Social Services, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, First 5, and the Department of Public Health, local counties, and others to advance the most effective and desirable strategies that will equip us to succeed together. **We ask that you work with us to address three key goals:**

1 **Maximize federal funding by leveraging existing revenues.** There are currently billions in unspent state and county dollars that are eligible for federal matching funds. We can expand funding for children's services by billions without new state investment and can invest our existing state dollars in more effective ways. We see multiple pathways to better leverage the state funding provided to counties, finance federal entitlements, and incentivize counties to increase their investment of additional local resources to access federal financial participation.

2 Broaden access to services that kids need while enhancing quality, integration, and accountability for outcomes across child-serving systems. We can evolve our fragmented pathology driven mental health system into a unified approach that provides a foundation for resilience and healthy development by taking actions such as adopting anti-racism and poverty reduction goals and strategies; increasing the inclusion of children and families with lived experience in the design, delivery, and evaluation of behavioral health programs and strategies; developing plans to meet the obligations of the Federal Mental Health Parity Law; and encouraging consistent implementation of SB1287 (Hernandez), which clarifies the broad definition of medical necessity so that all children who need supports can access them.

3 Transform how we purchase services for children. We can create systems that pay for outcomes and are accountable to the experiences of children and families if we explore possibilities such as unifying child-serving departments by adopting a standard set of child well-being indicators, piloting collaborations that transform procurement practices, and implementing strategies to pay for value (meaningful outcomes) rather than volume (units of service).

As a broad statewide design and planning coalition we believe that changes to our public systems can be accomplished if we plan, partner, listen, and are willing to innovate. We ask that you work with us to tackle the behavioral health challenges for youth, early on, and provide adequate resources to children and families to mitigate the effects of childhood adversity because we know that left untreated, mental health problems manifest themselves in poor educational and health outcomes. We believe that early formative behavioral health supports are a fundamental tool for healthy development and a path towards health equity. The need is urgent, and the opportunities are immediate.

We have been inspired by your ongoing commitment to children's well-being and early development and your leadership on poverty and healthcare. We currently see an unprecedented opportunity to address all four.

We are eager to have a meeting with you to discuss and elaborate on the strategies above, and to partner with you and your administration on this vital new path.

Sincerely,

[Signatories at the organizational and individual level listed here]

If you are willing to sign, please send your organizational name or your individual name as you wish it to appear to info@cachildrenstrust.org