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September 16, 2014

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C., 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

The County of San Bernardino supports S.2653, the Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2014. This bipartisan bill will redefine the definition of homelessness used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to accurately depict and assist homeless youth nationwide.

Through the Homeless Children and Youth Act vulnerable children living in unsuitable situations would be eligible for federal homeless assistance programs. Specifically, children living in motels and doubled-up in households with acquaintances would be recognized as homeless. Children living in these situations are particularly vulnerable to predators, including traffickers, because they are hidden from social service providers and have no access to resources or protection. This legislation provides much needed clarity and alignment between the homeless youth definitions used by HUD and the Department of Education to accurately capture those homeless youth in need of resources.

In the County of San Bernardino, the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Office reports more than 33,859 students in our schools are homeless including 555 living in hotels and 31,354 with relatives or friends. However, the 2013 HUD Point in Time Count only documented 2,321 homeless individuals, including 161 children, living in shelters or receiving motel vouchers in our county. The alignment of definitions will serve to eliminate conflicting federal agency regulations and close the gap between disparate and inaccurate homeless youth counts.

This bill also provides added flexibility for local community leaders to set priorities to best serve the local needs of the community and draw on expanded access to funding. Homeless youth are one of the most vulnerable populations in our county. The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2014 will assist this population to access housing and other essential services necessary to inspire hope and transition into a successful and vibrant future.

For these reasons, we support S. 2653 and thank you for introducing this important piece of legislation and for your unwavering commitment to sheltering our most vulnerable populations. If you have any questions, please contact Josh Candelaria, Director of Governmental and Legislative Affairs, at (909) 387-4821 or jcandelaria@sbcountry.gov.

Sincerely,



JANICE RUTHERFORD
Board of Supervisors Chair
Second District Supervisor
County of San Bernardino



JAMES C. RAMOS
Third District Supervisor
County of San Bernardino



JOSIE GONZALES
Fifth District Supervisor
County of San Bernardino

c: County of San Bernardino Congressional Delegation