

THE DONALDSON ADOPTION INSTITUTE

August 25, 2014

Honorable Edmund G. Brown
Governor
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Brown:

[The Donaldson Adoption Institute](#) (DAI) respectfully encourages you to sign AB1790 to require the Department of Social Services to convene a stakeholder group to identify, and provide recommendations to address, barriers to the provision of mental health services by mental health professionals with specialized clinical training in adoption or permanency issues to children requiring those medically necessary, specialized services. The Senate Appropriations Committee found that the legislation would have negligible state costs.

The Adoption Institute is an independent, nonpartisan policy and education nonprofit that conducts research and analysis in order to improve adoption-related laws, policies and practices for first/birth families, adoptive families and adopted people. One of DAI's primary objectives is to make certain that children and youth adopted from foster care adjust positively and thrive in their new homes, while also supporting adoptive parents and stabilizing families.

Over the last ten years, Californians have adopted and assumed guardianship for about 100,000 children and youth from foster care. We know that the vast majority of children and youth adopted from care have legacies of neglect, abuse, loss and trauma, and while research shows adoption is clearly in their best interests, it also indicates that at least half of them will require specialized services to address mental health needs after adoption.

As DAI's Research Director, Dr. David Brodzinsky (of Oakland, CA), found in [A Need to Know: Enhancing Adoption Competence Among Mental Health Professionals](#), one of the most frequent complaints from members of adoptive families is their inability to find mental health care professionals who are adoption-competent – that is, who understand the unique issues associated with their histories and lives, and how adoption can influence their views of themselves, their identities and their relationships. The report also cites studies confirming that few clinical training programs offer adoption-specific coursework and that many clinicians do not feel adequately prepared to treat the complex trauma and attachment issues facing their clients who were adopted. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently recognized the need to address these problems through the National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative to create such curricula for child welfare staff.

DAI is grateful for your leadership and commitment to California's children. Please feel free to contact me if you would like additional information.



April Dinwoodie
Chief Executive