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California Civil Liberties Advocacy  
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April 6, 2019

Assembly Member Cristina Garcia  
California State Assembly  
State Capitol, Room 2013  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: **Letter of Support for Assembly Bill 163 (Garcia) — Group homes: foster family agencies: unaccompanied undocumented minors.**

Dear Assembly Member Garcia:

I'm writing on behalf of the California Civil Liberties Advocacy in support of Assembly Bill 163. This bill would ensure that unaccompanied minors under the custody of the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement are monitored by county child welfare departments. We strongly support this bill and the focus on making the children safer while they are in the agency's custody. This intervention would ensure that unaccompanied children have a chance to meet and speak freely to a child welfare representative. This would help a worker identify if a child is being maltreated and if they have been suffering emotional or psychological abuse.

California should not be a part of this chaotic trend of keeping children in custody just because they are undocumented. Keeping group homes full of children cost the state and local governments a lot of money, resulting in unnecessary waste. This bill would ensure that the well-being of children are being checked by child welfare workers in a timely manner and make group home or foster family agencies accountable if they violate the personal and legal rights of children.

We could not undo the traumatic experience that undocumented children are experiencing, but we can make sure that they are being treated with dignity and respect while they are in our care. Therefore, CCLA is supporting AB 163.

Sincerely,

Mary Joy Hyatt

Legislative Advocate

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