

Please submit to the Asm. Human Services Committee through the advocates portal:

<https://calegislation.lc.ca.gov/Advocates/>

and email to:

wtountas@cwda.org

DATE

The Honorable Alex Lee
Chair, Assembly Human Services Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 6330
Sacramento, CA
95814

**RE: AB 898 (BRYAN) AS INTRODUCED
FEBRUARY 19, 2025 – SUPPORT**

Dear Assembly Member Lee:

[Your County/Organization] is pleased to support AB 898 by Assembly Member Bryan, related to the Family Urgent Response System (FURS).

FURS is a coordinated statewide, regional, and county-level 24/7 response system designed to provide collaborative and timely state-level phone-based response and county-level in-home, in-person mobile response during situations of instability, to preserve the relationship of the caregiver and the child or youth. FURS was established in 2019 and implemented beginning January 2021. It has since been a valuable tool for supporting current and former foster youth, caregivers, and families, and to stabilizing foster care placements. FURS currently receives approximately 5,000 calls annually from foster youth and their caregivers.

To access FURS, a caregiver or foster youth must first contact the state-level hotline, which is staffed with operators trained in conflict resolution and de-escalation techniques who provide immediate assistance over the phone to help defuse conflict and to provide focused engagement and assessment to make a referral to the county mobile response system for further support as appropriate.

County child welfare, probation and behavioral health agencies are mandated to jointly establish county mobile response teams, which may be dispatched by the state hotline if requested by the youth and caregiver. If dispatched, the county mobile response team provides face-to-face, in-home response (within one to three hours of a referral for urgent referrals and within 24 hours for non-urgent referrals), supportive services to address situations of instability, preserve the relationship of the caregiver and the child or youth, develop health conflict resolution and relationship skills, promote healing as a family, and stabilize the situation.

Statute requires the state hotline to dispatch county mobile response teams, which occurs for only 30 percent of calls to the hotline. County mobile response teams are not being fully utilized to support caregivers, children and youth. This results in missed opportunities to prevent a crisis that can lead to placement disruption. Additionally, eligibility for FURS is limited to current and former foster youth, which misses an important opportunity for the program to strengthen at-risk families and prevent entries into foster care.

[Feel free to add any details about FURS in your county.]

AB 898 introduces changes to ensure that FURS can be responsive to the needs of vulnerable families and youth. First, the bill clarifies that counties have the flexibility to dispatch FURS teams, when not otherwise responding to calls placed through the statewide hotline, to respond to local needs (with the approval of children, youth and families), without a statewide hotline call. This change would allow county mobile response teams to perform valuable outreach and education to families about FURS, provide support to foster youth with acute needs, and provide transition support during placement changes, among other important services. AB 898 still preserves prioritization for calls made through the statewide hotline and requires that FURS retain the capacity to serve that population.

AB 898 also permits counties to utilize their FURS teams to support families who are receiving family preservation and voluntary or court-ordered family maintenance services, thereby reducing entries into foster care. Finally, the bill requires the county child welfare, probation and behavioral health agencies to revisit their local implementation plan every other year to support cross-system collaboration and enhance overall program efficacy.

[Feel free to add any details for how this bill would impact your county]

This bill will improve the health outcomes of populations currently served by FURS while also expanding the benefits of FURS to at-risk families and youth who are now excluded from such vital supports. [Your county/organization] is therefore pleased to support AB 898 and respectfully urges your AYE vote on this bill.

Sincerely,

Signature

cc: The Honorable Issac Bryan
Honorable Members and Consultants, Assembly Human Services Committee
Robert Smith, Department of Social Services
Angela Pontes, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom
Amanda Kirchner, County Welfare Directors Association of California