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### Press Release

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## **NEW REPORT: PROPOSITION 63 BREAKS PROMISES TO VOTERS — OVER 90% OF YOUNG ADULTS WITH WORST RATES OF MENTAL ILLNESS GET LITTLE IF ANY FUNDING**

*Former Prisoners and “Stigma” Programs Funded Before Programs for the State’s Own Children, Even Though Former Foster Youth Have Worst Rates of Mental Illness of Any Young People, Including Suicide Rates*

*26 Counties Receive Grade of “F”*

(San Diego) – Even though the voters were promised that the new tax dollars obtained by Proposition 63 would fund the mental health needs of “transition age youth,” the youth with some of the highest rates mental health needs — the state’s own former foster youth — get next to nothing while funding for prisoners and so-called “stigma reduction” programs get millions of dollars, according to a new Report released today by the Children’s Advocacy Institute (CAI) at the University of San Diego (USD) School of Law.

“Proposition 63 has failed to keep its promise to the voters when it comes to the State’s own children who also happen to have the most crying and critical need for Prop. 63 mental health funding,” said CAI Executive Director Robert C. Fellmeth, Price Professor of Public Interest Law at the USD School of Law. “These children deserve to be first in line, not an afterthought.”

According to the Report, *Proposition 63: Is Mental Health Services Act Funding Reaching California’s Transition Age Foster Youth?*, the incidence of mental illness — including suicide — is three to six times greater among children in foster care than among other children in the community. These youth experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder at higher rates than war veterans. The incidence of panic disorder among foster youth is three times higher than the general population; they experience seven times the rate of drug dependency and nearly twice the rate of alcohol dependency as the general population. Further, Transition Age Foster Youth routinely experience the negative outcomes that Prop. 63 specifically seeks to avoid (*e.g.*, homelessness, poverty, incarceration) at rates far higher than their peers with no foster care history.

The Report grades the counties on their use of Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63) funding to address the needs of Transition Age Foster Youth. Twenty-six counties, home to over 78% of California’s Transition Age Foster Youth, received a failing grade. Seven more counties, home to an additional 15% of the state’s Transition Age Foster Youth, received a “D.” This, even though these uniformly abused and neglected children are by state policy left to live on the streets — homeless, jobless — upon aging out of care, typically at age 18. Up to a third of these youth end up in prison at some point after being forcibly “emancipated” by the state.

“These grades mean that over 90% of California’s Transition Age Foster Youth live in counties that either do not have Prop. 63 programs serving them, or whose Prop. 63 programs lack adequate capacity to meet their needs,” noted CAI Staff Attorney Melanie Delgado, primary author of the Report.

The Report notes that some counties are using Prop. 63 funds to specifically address the mental health needs of former convicts, but not the state’s own children. Further, while the State Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission has allocated \$40 million to special statewide programs such Stigma and Discrimination Reduction, it has refused to commit any statewide funding specifically for the youth with the most urgent mental health needs: former foster youth between the ages of 18–25.

California voters passed Proposition 63 in 2004, amid promises of new money for new programs to address the state’s most vulnerable residents. The measure imposes a 1% tax on adjusted annual income over \$1 million; since 2005–06, it has taken in well over \$4 billion. During that same timeframe, over 20,000 former foster children have been kicked out of the foster care system at age 18 without receiving any meaningful help from Prop. 63. According to Professor Fellmeth, “These kids have been through unimaginable ordeals, including physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse, neglect, plus the added trauma of being uprooted from family, home, friends — everything familiar to them. They are California’s children, and like California, Proposition 63 has abandoned them.”

CAI is an academic, research, and advocacy center dedicated to promoting the health and well-being of California’s children. CAI advocates in the legislature, in the courts, before administrative agencies, and before the public to improve the status of children. CAI strives to educate and inform Californians about children’s needs for economic security, adequate nutrition, health care, education, quality child care, and protection from abuse, neglect, and injury.

The Report is available online at [www.caichildlaw.org](http://www.caichildlaw.org).