



# CAI Newsletter ~ Summer Wrap-Up

## CAI IN THE NEWS



NPR's Morning Edition investigates state agency practices of taking foster youth benefits, featuring insight from CAI's National Policy Advocate, Amy Harfeld.



CAI Senior Staff Attorney Melanie Delgado spoke with the San Diego Union-Tribune about California's AB 1512



Jessica Heldman, Fellmeth-Peterson Associate Professor in Child Rights, contributes to ACS Expert Forum on child labor



CAI's Ed Howard, Senior Policy Advocate, quoted in CalMatters on California social media bills to protect kids online

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## ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

### Children & Social Media



Since 2021, CAI has led efforts to protect children from the harms caused by social media platforms. Although not enacted in California, CAI's groundbreaking work on [AB 2408](#) regarding social media addiction during California's 2021-2022 legislative session led to similar bills introduced in other states, including enactment in Utah and a pending bill in New Jersey.

This session, CAI is co-sponsoring [AB 1394 \(Wicks and Flora\)](#), which addresses the soaring rates of child sexual abuse and child sex trafficking online by holding social media platforms liable for knowingly contributing to these crimes and offering survivors a way to require platforms to remove images and videos showing them being abused. AB 1394 passed in the California Legislature with broad support and is now awaiting the Governor's signature.

Show your support for protecting children online by contacting the Governor at <https://www.gov.ca.gov/contact/> and telling him to sign AB 1394 into law!

Learn more about CAI's efforts to protect children online [here](#).

### Protecting Foster Youth Benefits

For 15 years CAI has advocated to stop the practice of foster care agencies improperly intercepting foster youth's federal benefits to reimburse themselves for the cost of care, rather than using the funds to benefit the child.



In 2021, an [award-winning investigative series on this issue by NPR and the Marshall Project](#) helped spark an unprecedented wave of reform at the national, state, and local levels. CAI provided technical assistance to support many of these efforts and, with the support of the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, is leading a multidimensional campaign to eradicate this practice nationwide.

In California, our team co-sponsored an ambitious and comprehensive bill, [AB 1512 \(Bryan\)](#), which passed the California Legislature and is awaiting the Governor's signature. Let the Governor know that you support ending the practice of taking foster youth's benefits by contacting him at <https://www.gov.ca.gov/contact/>. Finally, along with attorneys from Sheppard Mullin, CAI filed a lawsuit on behalf of two sisters who lost their benefits while in the care of San Diego's child welfare system.

For more information and resources on this issue, visit CAI's new [campaign website](#).





# THE NEXT GENERATION OF CHILD ADVOCATES

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## AWARDS

### James A. D'Angelo Outstanding Child Advocate Award

The James A. D'Angelo Outstanding Child Advocate Award is presented each year to graduating USD Law students for their exceptional work in CAI's Child Advocacy Clinic or for making other significant contributions to the field of child advocacy. We are thrilled to have three recipients of the 2023 award: Stella Gerson, Mackenzie McCoy, and Jadwyn Parrish!



### Joel and Denise Golden Merit Award in Child Advocacy

The Joel and Denise Golden Merit Award in Child Advocacy is presented annually to University of San Diego School of Law students who are already using their developing legal skills to help vulnerable populations of children and youth. Students are eligible for the award at the conclusion of their second year of law school. The 2023 recipient is Kelsey Castanho, a participant and incoming President of Advocates for Children in Education (ACE), a student group that provides special education advocacy for vulnerable youth in the San Diego County Juvenile Court.

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## CAI GRADS AT WORK

**Jennifer Wilczynski '22** has been hired at CHILD USA, a leading think tank fighting for the civil rights of children. Jennifer participated in CAI's course offerings and two of CAI's experiential clinics.

**Ashley Thompson '22** has been hired by Dependency Legal Services of San Diego to advocate for parents in child welfare proceedings - a direct result of her participation with the organization through our Child Advocacy Dependency Clinic.

**Jadwyn Parrish '23** has been hired by Children's Law Center - the largest children's legal services organization in the nation - to represent children in Los Angeles's dependency system. Jadwyn participated in all of CAI's clinics and course offerings!

**Mackenzie McCoy '23** has been hired as a post-bar by Children's Legal Services of San Diego to represent children in San Diego's child welfare system. Mackenzie participated in CAI's courses and its Child Advocacy Policy Clinic.

# WELCOME TO THE CAI COUNCIL FOR CHILDREN

CAI is guided by the CAI Council for Children, an advisory body that meets regularly to review policy decisions and help CAI establish action priorities. Its members are respected professionals and community leaders who share a vision to improve the quality of life for children and youth.

We are thrilled to welcome two new members to the Council:

## Tracy Simmons

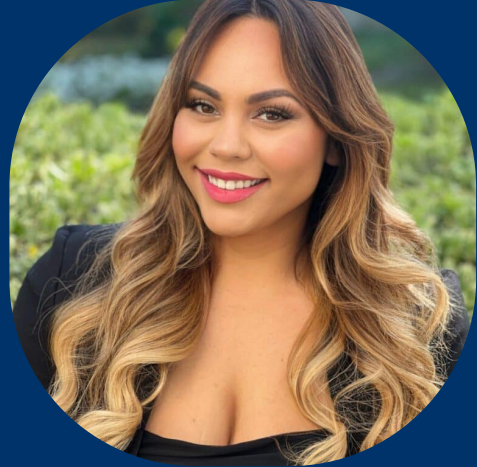


Tracy Simmons served as the Assistant Dean of Admissions, Financial Aid, and Diversity Initiatives at USD School of Law from 2022-2023, and recently joined Howard University School of Law as Associate Dean of Admissions and Student Affairs.

Simmons has served as a consultant for the Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO) Achieving Success in the Application Process program for over 13 years. She is a member of the Association of American Law Schools (AALS), serving as the Chair of the Pre-Legal Education and Admissions to Law School Section twice and as the Chair for the Part-Time Section. She has also served on the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) Consumer Information and Law Student Information Task Force.

Simmons has a background in social work and has served on the Board of Directors for the Sacramento Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) since 2014. She has a B.A. and M.A. from San Diego State University in Psychology and Education, Multicultural Counseling, and earned her J.D. from Golden Gate University School of Law.

## Sarah Pauter



Pauter is currently a Senior Project Manager at John Burton Advocates for Youth, where she works to improve the college retention and graduation rates of homeless and foster youth through legislative advocacy, policy implementation, technical assistance, and training. After spending 17 years in the child welfare system before ultimately emancipating or "aging out," Pauter earned a Bachelor's in Social Work from San Diego State University and a Master's in Public Policy and Administration from Northwestern University. Pauter has dedicated her life and career to improving outcomes for vulnerable children and youth.

Pauter is the Founder and CEO of Phenomenal Families, a San Diego-based nonprofit organization serving foster youth. Pauter also served as Program Director of the Family & Youth Roundtable, where she developed and enhanced public child-serving systems through policy formulation and implementation.

Pauter is a former FosterClub California Youth Ambassador, Foster Care Youth and Alumni Policy Council Member, and Co-Chair of the San Diego County Children's System of Care Council, and served as a Trauma-Informed Systems Specialist with the Center on Child Welfare Trauma-Informed Policies, Programs, and Practices (TIPs Center).

# HELP SUPPORT OUR WORK ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN

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100% of CAI's advocacy relies on external funding.  
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