

Dear _____

I am writing to request your support to reinstate the 5 percent cut to foster care rates proposed in the Senate budget, and to fully fund foster care caseload growth for the next two years. Fully funding both these items is critical to keeping children who are removed from their homes because of abuse or neglect in a safe alternative placement. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) requests \$23.1 million in general revenue (GR) to restore rates, and \$35.4 million in GR to fund foster care caseload growth.

I understand the difficult budgetary choices facing legislators; however, we cannot put the lives of abused children at-risk by slashing the basic safety net the State is obliged to provide for them. These cuts will severely impact placement capacity for children with the most severe needs and will aggravate the current lack of placement capacity for children to stay with their siblings in their home communities.

Texas just completed work on a major redesign of foster care to significantly change current practice and address long-standing issues in the Texas foster care system. The changes have the goal of improving outcomes for children and reducing the length of time they spend in foster care. The project cannot proceed without full funding of both rate cuts and foster care caseload growth.

[briefly identify yourself and your agency and the work you do in the legislator's district]

Thank you for considering this very important request.