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March XX, 2022

The Honorable Phil Ting  
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee  
California State Assembly  
1021 O Street, Suite 8230  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner  
Chair, Senate Budget Committee  
California State Senate  
1021 O Street, Suite 8630  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Dr. Joaquin Arambula  
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee 1  
1021 O Street, Suite 6240  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman  
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee 3  
1020 N Street, Suite 502  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Request for Allocation of \$250 Million to Support Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health**

Dear Chairs Ting, Skinner, Arambula, and Eggman:

I respectfully write today to request a one-time **\$250 million** General Fund appropriation over four years to support infant and early childhood mental health services and provider training. These funds would support home and community-based services that prevent and mitigate mental health concerns, promote healthy social emotional development, and train existing providers of infants and toddlers.

Governor Newsom's administration recently made several robust down payments to improve the health and wellbeing of California's children and youth with the Children & Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI). The CYBHI offers the promise of transforming and vastly expanding children's mental health services, however, the CYBHI will miss serving the critical needs of our infants and toddlers. The majority of the funding directed to programs relies on partnerships with the public-school systems. Because public schools typically only serve children in grades K through 12, the system does not have the infrastructure to serve the needs of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Allocating funding for California's youngest children, ages 0-5, will ensure that the State meets the mental health needs of children across the entire age spectrum.

Children under age 5 comprise 23% of the young people ages 0 to 21 enrolled in Medi-Cal; yet, they do not receive a proportional share of health and mental health care services. This is despite evidence that 43% of young children have experienced at least one Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE). Research shows that investments and interventions to promote the social-emotional health of children 0-5 positively impacts later mental health, physical health, and educational and career trajectories. What's more, there is the potential for significant cost-savings across the life course.

Under the CYBHI, the State has an opportunity to set aside funds specifically for the 0-5 population. Of the \$4.4 billion dedicated to the initiative, \$800 million has been earmarked for dyadic therapy, a form of integrated physical and behavioral health treatment that serves parents or caregivers and children together in the pediatric

clinic. While these funds are necessary and will support families with young children in the health care setting, further investments for the 0-5 population must be increased to address the mental health needs of young children in all the settings that are most comfortable to them, including in the community and in the home.

In alignment with the CYBHI's vision to bring care to where children are, funding should be provided to support additional evidence-based prevention programs in community and home-based settings, including, but not limited to, childcare and family resource centers, Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, Triple P Positive Parenting Programs, and the Incredible Years. Funds would go towards the expansion of services at the local level as well as investments in provider trainings to better support the existing workforce. To meet the State's goal of reducing ACEs and toxic stress by half within one generation and to advance the Governor's commitment to improving the mental health of our state's children and youth, the CYBHI must prioritize supporting the social-emotional health of children ages 0 to 5 with a multi-layered, multi-systems public health approach to child, family, and community-wellbeing. This can be achieved with increased investments in infant and early childhood mental health services.

To ensure robust community-based mental health prevention and early intervention services for infants and toddlers, I am requesting one-time funds in the amount of \$250 million over four years for the purposes outlined above.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc Levine". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

MARC LEVINE  
Assemblymember, District 10

cc: Governor Gavin Newsom  
Senate President pro Tempore Toni Atkins  
Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon  
Senate and Assembly Budget Committees  
Senate and Assembly Budget Subcommittees