



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

OCT 08 2023

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning Assembly Bill 448 without my signature.

This bill would require a social worker to conduct a family-finding investigation to identify and locate adult relatives within 30 days after a child has been taken into temporary custody and would make changes to reporting and documentation requirements for social workers and probation officers.

My Administration recognizes the value of keeping children connected to their biological and extended families. Children placed with family members have greater placement stability, fewer emotional and behavioral problems, and more connection to their social-cultural communities. Existing law already requires that, if a child is removed from their home, the social worker or probation officer must, within 30 days, investigate to identify adult relatives of the child.

Last year's Budget Act allocated \$150 million General Fund for the Excellence in Family Finding, Engagement, and Support Program, which supports culturally responsive, family-centered, and trauma-informed family-finding and engagement services that focus on maintaining permanent connections for foster children with their family members. The new documentation requirements in this bill would result in ongoing General Fund costs of over \$6 million to support the increased administrative workload for county child welfare agencies and county probation departments. Though this policy has merit, its costs must be considered as part of the annual budget process.

In partnership with the Legislature, we enacted a budget that closed a shortfall of more than \$30 billion through balanced solutions that avoided deep program



cuts and protected education, health care, climate, public safety, and social service programs that are relied on by millions of Californians. This year, however, the Legislature sent me bills outside of this budget process that, if all enacted, would add nearly \$19 billion of unaccounted costs in the budget, of which \$11 billion would be ongoing.

With our state facing continuing economic risk and revenue uncertainty, it is important to remain disciplined when considering bills with significant fiscal implications, such as this measure.

For these reasons, I cannot sign this bill.

Sincerely,

Gavin Newsom

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Gavin Newsom', is written over the printed name and extends across the page.