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“Home At Last” To Focus on Improving Safety and Permanence for 500,000 Children in Foster Care

*New national project will address needs of vulnerable children by encouraging action on
Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care’s recommendations to reform foster care*

LOS ANGELES – Home At Last, a new partnership focusing on reform of the nation’s foster care system, was announced today in Los Angeles. Supported by a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts to Occidental College, Home At Last will be led by the Children’s Law Center of Los Angeles – a nationally known and respected nonprofit organization that represents more than 25,000 children in foster care. The project will conduct research, issue policy briefs, and partner with state and national organizations to enhance awareness and provide education about the critical need to address the challenges facing over half a million U.S. children in foster care and to enable other struggling families to remain intact without court involvement.

“Now it is time for all of us to take action,” said CLC Executive Director Miriam Aroni Krinsky, who will also serve as Executive Director of Home At Last. “While foster care is intended to be a temporary refuge, too many foster youth spend years in the system and experience turbulence as they drift from placement to placement. Within two years of ‘aging out’ of foster care, more than half of former foster youth are unemployed, almost a third will become homeless, and one in five will be incarcerated. The nonpartisan Pew Commission has given our nation a roadmap to improve safety, permanence, and well-being for abused and neglected youth who too often languish in foster care.”

“The Pew Commission was created to help address the problem of children languishing in foster care. We look forward to the important contribution Home At Last will make in raising awareness about how the Pew Commission’s recommendations can help move children from foster care to safe, permanent families,” said Maureen K. Byrnes, Director, Policy Initiatives and the Health and Human Services Program at The Pew Charitable Trusts.

The Pew Commission’s recommendations focus on federal financing and court oversight of foster care. Specifically, they seek to: 1) improve existing federal financing mechanisms to facilitate faster movement of children from foster care into safe, permanent families and to reduce the need to place children in foster care, and 2) improve court oversight of foster care cases to facilitate better and more timely decisions affecting children’s safety, permanence and well-being. Home At Last will underscore the following recommendations calling for improved court oversight, described in greater detail in the Pew Commission’s report *Fostering the Future: Safety, Permanence, and Well-Being for Children in Foster Care*:

- ? Adoption of court performance measures by dependency courts to ensure that they can track and analyze their caseloads, increase accountability for improved outcomes for children, and inform decisions about the allocation of court resources;
- ? Incentives and requirements for effective collaboration between courts and child welfare agencies on behalf of children in foster care;
- ? A strong voice for children and parents in court and effective legal representation by better trained and supported attorneys and advocates;
- ? Leadership from Chief Justices and other state court officials in organizing their court systems to better serve children, provide training for judges, and promote more effective standards for dependency courts, judges and attorneys.

Home At Last will encourage action in these areas in partnership with key legal, judicial and child welfare organizations across the country. The project will also partner with child welfare and advocacy organizations in a number of states to facilitate improvements in state legal processes and dependency courts. State partners include: the Center for Public Policy Priorities in Texas; the Public Children Services Association of Ohio; the Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children in New York; and the Juvenile Courts Office within the Administrative Office of the Courts in Arkansas.

“This effort will engage state partners to raise awareness and shape foster care reform efforts among federal and state policymakers, judges, community leaders, child welfare professionals and advocates, the media, and others,” said Kenyon Chan, interim president at Occidental. “The project holds promise as an effective and meaningful vehicle for social change in the foster care system.”

For more information about Home At Last, visit www.fostercarehomeatlast.org.

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