(Phoenix, AZ) – The following is a statement from Siman Qaasim, president and CEO of Children's Action Alliance on Governor Ducey's State of the State Address, which was delivered this afternoon from the state capitol:

“The governor highlighted some bright spots for Arizona’s children. Among them, we commend him for calling on the community to help foster children aging out of the system to have better supports. One of CAA’s legislative priorities is to enable former foster youth aging out of the system to stay on their health plan.

“We strongly support his plan to double the stipend for kinship caregivers. It’s time Arizona leaders recognize the hardship grandparents and other kinship caregivers assume when they take on the financial responsibility of raising these children when their own parents cannot.

“When the governor releases his budget, we hope to see funding for child care services so low-income working families don’t have to choose between moving up the economic ladder and a safe, high-quality child care environment.

“We agree with Governor Ducey that ‘Arizona can only be strong with strong public schools’ and we are interested in hearing more about his plan to provide new support to schools that continue to face a teacher shortage. We are encouraged to hear that critical district additional assistance dollars are on track for accelerated restoration, but Arizona still lags far behind in teacher pay. Arizona still has the worst school counselor-to-student ratios in the country and 1,800 classrooms are still without a permanent teacher.

“The Governor cautioned against the ‘spending lobby’; we firmly believe that children are not an expense, they are an investment. We encourage lawmakers to put the priorities of children and families first this year.”

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