



**PUBLIC REQUEST TO ADDRESS
THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

HILDA L. SOLIS
HOLLY J. MITCHELL
SHEILA KUEHL
JANICE HAHN
KATHRYN BARGER

Correspondence Received

Agenda #	Relate To	Position	Name	Comments
16.		Favor	Christina M Samons	DCFS absolutely needs an audit, especially as it is reported DCFS is \$200 mil. in debt. I have worked as an attorney in the child welfare system for 7 years and things have barely improved despite the Blue Ribbon Commission report in 2012. DCFS is the largest child welfare agency in the nation and that is NOT a good thing.
			Genevieve M Clavreul	
			Hannah Park	
			Jamie Getskow	
			Jeanette Mann	
			Keisha Dixon	
			Kruti Y Parekh	Please make sure this is in alignment with Youth Justice Reimagined vision.
			Latia Suttle	<p>We need to reimagine DCFS, but what that means is that the County needs to go further than this motion does.</p> <p>Although we support the sentiment of this motion to assess DCFS, we are calling on the County to do more than what is outlined in this motion to address child safety and the structural racism inherent in the child welfare system as it currently exists.</p> <p>For too long, the County's child welfare policies have been reactive. The County must focus on how to radically reshape how we respond to families, beginning with the practices that improperly funnel Black, Brown and Indigenous families into the system.</p> <p>I also want to remind the Board that there are numerous ways to immediately take action to reduce the harm of DCFS that do not need an evaluation or analysis. We have submitted a set of 11 demands on changing the way DCFS operates. For example, •Parents should be permitted to record all interviews and conversations with DCFS to ensure accuracy and integrity of the information gathered and presented in their cases. •DCFS must identify all available services and inform and connect all parents, including veterans, incarcerated parents and others, to these services. Crucially, DCFS must pay for all county imposed, court-ordered services. Los Angeles is the only county in California we are aware of that does not pay for the services to which parents are ordered. Military Veterans must be properly identified upon initial contact with DCFS and when cases are open in Family Court. Neither DCFS nor Family Court ask people are they veterans. When Family Court orders monitored visitations parents are paying astronomical cost. Unemployed disabled women veterans receiving VA Compensation for injuries incurred during their time in service have to use that to pay to see their child or</p>



**PUBLIC REQUEST TO ADDRESS
THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

HILDA L. SOLIS
HOLLY J. MITCHELL
SHEILA KUEHL
JANICE HAHN
KATHRYN BARGER

Correspondence Received

		<p>children. This cost can get up to over \$1,000 per month to visit with your child. This leaves the parent having to decide to pay the rent or visit with their child. I support the motion's recommendation for an audit and analysis of DCFS's programs and program outcomes. The public needs more information and transparency about the referral of families to DCFS, the court process, and the outcomes of their programming for children and families. Any data that is collected in this audit process must be shared with advocates and the community, and remain publicly available.</p> <p>DCFS must provide demographic data like race, income, and previous foster system involvement of the children and families under its surveillance.</p> <p>DCFS must also provide data that breaks down the number of families that are: (1) are referred for investigation, (2) have dependency court cases filed, (3) have their children removed and placed in the foster system; 4) whose parental rights are terminated 5) have family court cases 5) Have Domestic Violence Restraining orders that were ignored by Family Court 6) How many children have been removed from a protective mother and given to the father. Please see attached article regarding Victims of Domestic Abuse With No Haven In Family Court theconversation.com/victims-of-domestic-abuse-find-no-haven-in-family-courts-159192</p> <p>. A lot of these cases from Family Court end up being referred to DCFS or cases opening with DCFS.</p> <p>7) Track the referrals from Family Court to DCFS</p> <p>8) Track how many cases have orders separating a mother from a child when Parental Rights are still in place and their are no criminal charges and giving the child to the father 9) Track the number of military veterans that have Family Law cases, DCFS referrals and DCFS open cases to include the demographics. 10) Track how many cases are sent back to Family Court with mother having to pay for monitored visitation when there is no criminal charge and parental rights are still in place. Some of the cases with DCFS doesn't place children in Foster Care but severs one biological parent when there are two.</p>
	Lou Moore	
	Minouche Kandel	
	Monique Scott	
	Punnipa Ju	
	ruben arroyo	
	Shimica Gaskins	
	Tina Rios	
	Wendy Garen	
Other	Debra Zamudio	If DCFS SURVIVES AFTER NEWS COMES OUT ABOUT HILLYWOOD AND

				DCFS INVOLVEMENT THERE WILL NOT BE A DEPT LEFT I HOPE
			Tieira Ryder	All of our social service programs need an overhaul and restructuring
		Item Total	18	
Grand Total			18	

January 24, 2022

LA County Board of Supervisors
555 W. Temple St.
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Supervisors:

On behalf of The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation, I write in support of the proposed board motion authored by Supervisors Barger and Hahn, titled "Assessing the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)." As you are aware, the Commission for Children and Families role is to advise the Board of Supervisors on strengthening service delivery systems and enhancing partnerships to create safer and more secure futures for Los Angeles County's at-risk children and their families.

One way to strengthen these systems and partnerships is by taking time now, while the Board is undertaking a search to identify a new Director of DCFS, to review and revise long-established work practice, collaboration styles, budget practices and more. This way, the Department will be in line with new federal and state guidelines and requirements as it relates to foster youth policy, funding reimbursements, and the direction of the Board as related by Board policy. I encourage your Board to support providing a comprehensive analysis and recommendations of the programs, leadership and management structure, and program effectiveness so that the Board and new Director of DCFS are aware of long-standing challenges along with opportunities for improvement and cost-savings.

Sincerely,



Wendy Garen

DIRECTORS

Peter J. Taylor
CHAIRMAN

Paul G. Haaga, Jr.
VICE CHAIRMAN

Manuel A. Abascal

John B. Emerson

Karen Hill Scott, Ed. D.

Elizabeth H. Lowe

Steven A. Nissen

Nina Revoyr

Gayle E. Wilson



Women's reports of domestic violence are widely rejected by family courts. [The Image Bank/Getty Images](#)

Victims of domestic abuse find no haven in family courts

Joan Meier, George Washington University

December 2, 2021 8.41am EST



The #MeToo movement may have shifted the balance of credibility on sexual abuse and

Victims of domestic abuse find no haven in family courts

Joan Meier, George Washington University

December 2, 2021 8.41am EST



The #MeToo movement may have shifted the balance of credibility on sexual abuse and harassment at work more toward victims and away from alleged perpetrators. But the same cannot be said regarding men's violence and abuse at home: In fact, women's reports of domestic violence are still widely rejected, especially in one critical setting: the family court.

When women, children or both report abuse by a father in a case concerning child custody or visitation, courts often refuse to believe them. Judges even sometimes "shoot the messenger" by removing custody from the mother and awarding it to the allegedly abusive father.

For instance, courts reject 81% of mothers' allegations of child sexual abuse, 79% of their allegations of child physical abuse, and 57% of their allegations of partner abuse. Overall, 28%

their allegations of partner abuse. Overall, 28% of mothers alleging a father is abusive lose custody to that father; this percentage rises to 50% when an allegedly abusive father accuses the mother of “parental alienation” (more on this below).

Family courts’ hostility – both in the U.S. and abroad – toward claims of paternal or spousal abuse has been widely reported by scholars and litigants. But it’s only recently that empirical data has been produced that validates the growing chorus of distress.



Recent study shows abuse claims by mothers and children are often ignored by courts. David Potter/Construction Photography/Avalon/Getty Images

‘Dynamic of resistance’

I am a scholar of domestic violence and the

‘Dynamic of resistance’

I am a scholar of domestic violence and the law. Working with four other researchers, I conducted a federally funded study that reviewed all electronically published family court cases between parents in the U.S. between 2005 and 2014 related to custody or visitation that involved abuse or alienation claims.

Among the results from this analysis of thousands of cases: Courts rejected women’s claims of partner violence and child abuse by men, on average, roughly two-thirds of the time. They rejected mothers’ claims of child abuse by fathers approximately 80% of the time. And they reversed custody from mothers alleging abuse to the allegedly abusive fathers at rates ranging from 22% – for partner violence claims – to 56% when mothers alleged both sexual and physical child abuse.

The same dynamic of resistance to mothers’ abuse claims against fathers in custody cases has been documented across the globe.

Courts’ skepticism in these cases is due to many factors, but a key driving force is the concept of “parental alienation” or “parental alienation syndrome,” which was invented in the 1980s by a psychiatrist named Richard Gardner.

Gardner claimed that the vast majority of child

Gardner claimed that the vast majority of child sexual abuse claims in custody court were false. In addition to attributing false allegations to mothers' vengeance against their ex-husbands, he theorized that mentally unbalanced mothers also convince themselves (falsely) that their children are being abused by their fathers.

Gardner's "parental alienation syndrome" ("PAS") was eventually discredited by courts and scholars. But the notion of parental alienation as the toxic influence of a primary parent that turns children against the other parent continues to profoundly influence family courts' responses to women's claims of abuse, especially child sexual abuse.

Thus, our study found, consistent with Gardner and parental alienation theory, that when a father accused of sexual abuse responded by accusing the mother of parental alienation, 50 out of 51 courts sided with the father and refused to believe the sexual abuse claim.

Our study also found that when allegedly abusive fathers respond to any type of abuse allegations by accusing mothers of alienation, mothers are roughly twice as likely to be disbelieved, and their rate of custody losses doubles to roughly 50%.

Court resistance to mothers' abuse

Court resistance to mothers' abuse claims

A federally funded study reviewed all U.S. electronically published judicial opinions in custody/visitation cases between parents between 2005 and 2014 involving abuse or alienation claims.



Chart: TCUS • Source: [Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law](#) • [Get the data](#)

While Gardner's syndrome theory has been repudiated as unscientific, parental alienation writ large continues to be treated by many family court professionals and judges as quasi-scientific, even though there is no credible scientific research to support the theory.

More specifically, there is no empirical research supporting the idea that, when one parent bad-mouths the other or takes other steps to undermine the other's relationship with a child, the child actually turns against the "targeted" parent. In fact, research has found the opposite: that bad-mouthing can actually backfire, by turning the child against the bad-mouthing

turning the child against the bad-mouthing parent.

Nor is there any objective way to distinguish a child's legitimate and justified estrangement due to the avoided parent's own behaviors from an estrangement unjustifiably fueled by the other parent.

In short, there is no scientific or objective means of applying the alienation label. Rather, it is applied whenever an evaluator or court subjectively chooses not to believe a mother and/or a child's abuse claims and chooses to instead believe the mother is malicious or sick and the child is not in reality.

Who gets protected?

Most people presume that family courts are protective of children and responsive to abuse concerns. This assumption persists in part because society underestimates abusers' manipulations of the legal system, courts' inclination to prioritize fathers' rights and access above most other concerns, and the backlash against women who are seen as not wanting to share the kids.

The belief that it is fathers, not mothers, who can't get a fair shake in custody cases is further fueled by fathers' rights groups' claims that courts are biased against fathers.

courts are biased against fathers.

This common assertion helps fathers whose parenting may be poor or destructive cast themselves as victims while casting mothers who raise such concerns as perpetrators. And it encourages courts to view their prioritization of fathers' rights as progressive and egalitarian.

Indeed, the scholarly literature surrounding custody court decision-making routinely emphasizes the importance of fathers and shared parenting. These articles often reiterate that fathering is critically important to children, without much attention to the specifics of individual parents' past behaviors and impacts on their children. This pro-father sentiment translates into treating mothers as personae non gratae when they seek to restrict paternal access or claim a father is dangerous or harmful.

In fact, while family courts' special valuation of fathering is difficult to prove empirically, our study did find that protective fathers are not penalized for accusing the mother of abuse, as are mothers who accuse fathers of abuse. The study also found that parental alienation claims benefit fathers more than mothers.

Deadly consequences

The harm to both children and their protective

Deadly consequences

The harm to both children and their protective mothers from these family court practices is significant.

One study of what are called “turned-around” cases involved allegations of child abuse that were at first viewed as false and later judged to be valid. This study found that a majority of children in these cases were forced to live with their abusive fathers, that the vast majority reported new incidents of abuse and that children’s mental and physical health significantly deteriorated before a second court finally sent them back to their safe mothers.

Worst of all, family courts’ refusals to take seriously one parent’s claims that the other parent is dangerous have enabled over 100 child homicides.

Perhaps it is time for #MeTooHome.

Did you find this article insightful?

If so, you’ll be interested in our free daily newsletter. It’s filled with the insights of academic experts, written so that everyone can understand what’s going on in the world. With the latest scientific discoveries, thoughtful analysis on political issues and

latest scientific discoveries, thoughtful analysis on political issues and research-based life tips, each email is filled with articles that will inform you and often intrigue you.

Get our newsletters

Beth Daley

Editor and General Manager



Comment on this article



Joan Meier

Professor of Law, George Washington University

Joan Meier received indirect funding from the U.S. National Institute of Justice. She is directing the National Family Violence Law Center at GW Law School.

You might also like



Domestic violence isn't about just physical violence – and state laws are beginning to recognize that



Why more grandparents are raising their grandchildren



January 24, 2022

RE: Public Comment on Agenda Item #16 – Assessing the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)

To the Honorable Members of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California (ACLU) writes as a member of the Reimagine Child Safety Coalition in support of Agenda Item #16 and to urge the County to take bolder action to protect families from the surveillance and overreach of the so-called “foster care system.”

The ACLU is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to furthering the principles of liberty and equality embodied in the United States Constitution and this Nation’s civil rights laws. The ACLU recognizes that the family regulation system in the United States is rooted in centuries of violence, white supremacy, and attempted cultural genocide. As such, the ACLU seeks to advance the civil rights of parents, guardians, and children who are Black, Indigenous, immigrants, LGBTQ, and people with disabilities as they navigate the family regulation system and stands with the Reimagine Child Safety Coalition.

The Reimagine Child Safety Coalition—a group of advocates, organizations, and impacted families united to raise awareness about the harms of the family regulation system — aims to break down the family regulation policies in Los Angeles that target and harm Black and Indigenous families, as well as low-income and other families of color. We believe all communities and families deserve the resources and support they need to thrive, regardless of economic status or race.

The family regulation system—still perceived by many to function to protect children—typically has the opposite impact. Although we support the sentiment of this motion to assess DCFS, we are calling on the County to do more than what is outlined in this motion to address child safety and the structural racism inherent in the child welfare system as it currently exists.

For too long, the County’s child welfare policies have been reactive. The County must focus on how to radically reshape how we respond to families, beginning with the practices that improperly funnel Black, Brown, and Indigenous families into the system. We also want to remind the Board that there are numerous ways to immediately take action to reduce the harm of DCFS that do not need an evaluation or analysis. We have submitted a set of eleven demands on changing the way DCFS operates, and attached a copy to this letter. Examples of these include providing counsel to parents at the

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Hector O. Villagra

PRESIDENT John Erickson **VICE PRESIDENT** Rana Sharif **SECRETARY** Candice Garrett **TREASURER** Michele Goodwin
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION OFFICER Carlos Amador **NATIONAL BOARD REPRESENTATIVE** Sharon Kyle

beginning of any DCFS investigation and eliminating drug testing by DCFS and hospital staff for pregnant, laboring, postnatal people, and infants in hospitals.

We support the retention of an outside consultant to work with the County to provide holistic best practices and to recommend alternative models to DCFS. The County needs to select a consultant that will prioritize transformative practices and models that emphasize: (1) keeping children safe while also keeping families together; (2) centering racial and economic equity for communities and families that are targeted by DCFS; and (3) prioritizing and centering the voices of youth and families with lived experience in the foster system. People with lived experience and members of the Reimagine Child Safety Coalition should provide input on the selection of the consultant.

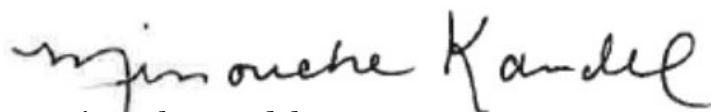
We also support the motion's recommendation for an audit and analysis of DCFS's programs and program outcomes. The public needs more information and transparency about the referral of families to DCFS, the court process, and the outcomes of their programming for children and families. Any data that is collected in this audit process must be shared with the advocates and the community and remain publicly available.

DCFS must provide demographic data like race, income, and previous foster system involvement of the children and families under its surveillance. DCFS must also provide data that breaks down the number of families that: (1) are referred for investigation; (2) have dependency court cases filed; (3) have their children removed and placed in the foster system; and (4) whose parental rights are terminated.

The focus of this assessment should not be on strengthening and expanding DCFS; it should be on community-based resources and services to prevent families from entering the child welfare system. The County must ensure parents are aware of Prevention and Aftercare Networks, and connected to housing, legal aid, employment opportunities and economic resources. The County must also support guaranteed basic income for all families. Thousands of children are taken from their families every year because they are living in poverty. Providing a guaranteed basic income directly confronts poverty and improves the stability and wellbeing of children and families.

We call upon the Board to reimagine child safety by reviewing our coalition's list of demands, revise its policies, and take action relating to the Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services and associated agencies accordingly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Minouche Kandel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Minouche" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Kandel".

Minouche Kandel
Senior Staff Attorney

Reimagine Child Safety Coalition Demands to LA County Board of Supervisors

On any given day, there are over 400,000 children in the US child welfare system.¹ Nationally, Black and Indigenous children are overrepresented in the foster care system, with Black children accounting for one-quarter of all children in foster care, and Indigenous children being nearly three times as likely as their White peers to enter the foster care system.²

With over 33,000 children under its surveillance, Los Angeles County's "Department of Children and Family Services is the nation's largest public child welfare agency."³ While only 7.5% of Los Angeles County's population,⁴ Black children are 27.8%⁵ of those young people in the custody of the Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS). Moreover, recent data indicates that over 58% of Black children in Los Angeles will be subjects of a DCFS investigation before they are 18.^{6,7}

DCFS works in direct partnership with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and the Los Angeles Sheriff Department (LASD); they are complicit in the police state that terrorizes and devastates Black families. LA County itself has recognized that anti-Blackness is present in the child welfare system,^{8,9,10} and because of this, Black families and communities are being irreparably damaged. Removing children from their families is not protecting them; it is traumatizing them. We demand that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors take immediate action to prevent children and families from becoming involved with the system and end the practice of family separation by:

01

Ending law enforcement "partnerships" with social workers, including but not limited to placing a moratorium on Multi Agency Response Teams (MART) and enhancing proper protocols with emergency response social workers. Law enforcement should halt the practice of referring children to DCFS because their parent or guardian has experienced domestic violence.

02

Placing a moratorium on detentions related to:

- general neglect as defined by DCFS
- children whose parent or guardian has experienced domestic violence
- children or parents who test positive for drugs during pregnancy or at birth

03

Providing counsel to parents at the beginning of any DCFS investigation.

04

Granting parents the right to record all interviews and conversations to ensure accuracy and integrity of the information gathered and presented in their cases.

1. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/afcarsreport27.pdf>
2. https://www.ncjfcj.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/NCJFCJ-Disproportionality-TAB-2015_0.pdf
3. <https://lacounty.gov/residents/family-services/children-families/>
4. <https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/33/child-population-race/pie#fmt=144&loc=2,364&tf=110&ch=7,11,726,10,72,9,73,87&pdist=73>
5. <https://ccwip.berkeley.edu/childwelfare/reports/PIT/MTSG/r/ab636/s>
6. <https://witnessla.com/a-new-report-and-a-radio-series-point-to-deeply-troubling-issues-in-la-countys-foster-care-system/>
7. <https://www.pnas.org/content/118/30/e2106272118>
8. <http://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/135673.pdf>
9. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-07-14/why-are-black-children-removed-from-homes-at-high-rate-l-a-county-plans-blind-removal-pilot>
10. <https://imprintnews.org/news-2/l-a-s-plan-to-address-the-overrepresentation-of-black-and-lgbtq-youth-in-foster-care/35125>

Reimagine Child Safety Coalition

Demands to LA County Board of Supervisors

05

Mandating that social workers advise parents of the above rights (demands #3 and 4) at first interaction with DCFS. Evidence taken in violation of these rights may not be used in court.

06

Identifying all available services, and informing and connecting all parents, including veterans, incarcerated parents and others, to these services. DCFS must pay for all court-ordered services.

07

Prioritizing relative/kinship foster care placements and removing any and all barriers for family members who want to care for children who have been removed from their parents. This includes updating policies and legislative priorities related to denial of potential kinship caregivers with criminal backgrounds (including anyone who has been included in the gang database) or who do not meet rules about space requirements. Utilize county funds or child specific placements to assist families who do not meet Resource Family Approval requirements.

08

Eliminating drug testing by DCFS and by hospital staff for pregnant, laboring, and postnatal people, and infants in hospitals.¹¹

09

Establishing an independent civilian oversight committee led by parents/people with lived experience. The oversight committee shall have authority to allocate funding to community-based-and-run family preservation-oriented programs that support parents' ability to best care for their own families and avoid involvement in the system (including raising awareness about Prevention and Aftercare Networks, connecting them to housing, legal aid, employment opportunities and economic resources).

10

Upholding the rights of incarcerated parents and their children in foster care by ensuring consistent communication and visitation; providing education and resources to parents on their rights; and addressing issues faced by incarcerated parents who miss key deadlines when they are transferred to new facilities.

11

Guaranteeing basic income for all families.



[Sign the petition](#) to end law enforcement partnerships with DCFS!

Join the Coalition: tinyurl.com/JointheRCSCoalition



@DontTakeOurKids



@ReimagineChildSafety



January 18, 2022

Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
500 W. Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Supervisors,

I am writing this letter in support of the Motion to the Los County Board of Supervisors to approve "Assessing the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)".

FosterAll is a nonprofit organization who has recruited and supported resource families for 36 years in partnership with faith communities across Los Angeles County. Today, FosterAll has over 250 faith partners who are committed to providing resources, donations and their facilities to help children and families in need.

Multiple families have expressed frustration at the lack of communication and support from DCFS. Even a pastor who was in the process to become a foster parent with DCFS never heard back about his next step. Thus, his time expired to become certified. Needless to say, he became so discouraged that not only is he not fostering, but he cannot encourage his congregation to foster with the county. This was a result of too many people having to process a prospective resource parent so he dropped in between siloed departments.

There is no question that DCFS is a behemoth organization. As such, it has so many divisions, departments and functions that fragmentation, duplication and frustration result. There are excellent employees at DCFS, but over time, band aid solutions, more employees and more money only complicate and confound systems. There are functions that could become outsourced to community organizations while leaving the critical services with DCFS.

With the reported enormous financial deficit facing DCFS, now would be perfect time to assess and analyze the structure, departments, their outcomes both positive and negative, and the financial costs associated with each.

Over the years, FosterAll has attempted to secure information or data, such as how many children are waiting or needing to be adopted. That number was not available. There are approximately 300 in the Adoptions Department waiting to be adopted, but there are thousands who do not have a Permanency Plan and have been languishing in the system. How can that be? Again, this is related to the operational structure and process of DCFS as well as other impeding factors. This concern was recently confirmed by a report on January 10, 2022 to the LA Commission on Children and Families from the OCP Permanency Workgroup Update.

BOARD CHAIR

Dan Almquist

SECRETARY

Jonathan Pharris

TREASURER

John W. Prosser, Jr.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brian F. Buchanan

Lupe Erwin

Barry Glaser

Steven Hauser, Esq

Jill Meeks

Steve Oedeker

Anthony Tang

Natasha Wood

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Lou Moore

fosterall.org

*Los Angeles County Office | 1544 W. Glenoaks Blvd. Glendale CA 91201
818.649.8000 fax 818.649.8001*

*Riverside County Office | 3752 Elizabeth St., Ste. D2 Riverside CA 92506
951.228.5553*

This motion is vitally important for the betterment of DCFS for the children and families in LA County. Corporations and nonprofit organizations are frequently assessing their organizational structure and processes. DCFS needs to do the same to streamline for improved results, better services and effective child welfare.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lou Moore", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lou Moore
Executive Director



January 24, 2022

The Honorable Board of Supervisors County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

**STEERING
COMMITTEE**

Gail Bardin
Tom Dennis
Gale Howland
Patrice Gibson
Rosemary Hyde
Ann Jopling
Jeanette Mann
Natasha Mahone
Kim Miles
Matina Nagel
Isabel Ramirez
Judi-anne Simmons
Anne Riffenburgh
Melanie Williams

CONSULTANTS

Eric del Rosario
Jadie Delgado

GRAPHIC ARTIST

Joe Kelly

STAFF

Jane Stockly

Subject: Assessing the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)

Dear Supervisors:

I am writing on behalf of All Saints Church Foster Care Project in support of assessing the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) at a critical time when the department is undergoing a change in leadership as well as implementing the fundamental fiscal and programmatic changes required by the federal Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA).

The Foster Care Project is a faith-based organization: a ministry of All Saints Church in Pasadena that recruits volunteers and provides resources for thirty-seven agencies serving foster, homeless, and justice-involved children and youth. Although our programs for in-person volunteers are on hold, due to the pandemic, prior to 2020 we annually recruited more than 140 volunteers to serve as mentors, tutors, coach-monitors, special friends, or personal shoppers for more than 1,000 young people. Through our Birthday Club and Angel Tree Christmas Program with DCFS, we provided gifts to another 1,000. Our family reunification program, Family Connect, serves as a model for the County. We have seven donated, family visitation sites, and contract with six part-time consultants.

For the past eighteen years the Foster Care Project has worked very closely with the Department of Children and Family Services, primarily with the Pasadena Office, but also with central administration program and department heads. During that time there have been at least five Directors—yet the challenges that we have experienced have not changed. In fact, it does not seem to make any difference who the Directors are or whether they are come from within DCFS or from another child welfare system, nothing changes. There continues to be a:

- **Lack of communication within DCFS departments and programs and within individual offices.**

Lack of communication was the major challenge identified in the recent 5-year Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process, starting with the Peer Review. The Peer Review included fifteen Peers from eight counties (Riverside, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Tuolumne) and twenty-eight Los Angeles County Workers (Probation Child Welfare Officers and Social Workers). Each team on each subject area identified lack of a system for communication as an area needing improvement whether within an office, between departments, or between clients and social workers.

- **Duplication of software systems and program**

In 1999 Connect our Kids contacted the Foster Care Project about providing free technology tools for family searches. We introduced Connect Our Kids to a local community-based organization serving Transitional Age Youth. Staff were delighted with the program, and it is now being used by youth to find their families and friends.

When we tried to find a way to make DCFS aware of the effectiveness of this tool, we hit a brick wall: everything from the state was going to provide a data system for family searches to each department using different technology for these searches. There was little or no interest in another tool, even if it were free.

- **Inadequate data for assessment of effectiveness of programs**

When the Foster Care Project assessed the effectiveness of our reunification program compared to the effectiveness of DCFS's Family Reunification Program, it was very difficult for the Department to identify comparable families because of challenges with the DCFS data.

- **Long delays for reviews by legal**

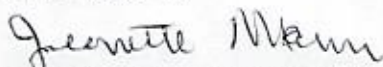
Sixteen years ago when we tried to establish a "take a child to church" program we waited for over a year for approval by legal. Finally the DCFS Director removed the one legal obstacle at a luncheon. Today we are trying to reopen our reunification sites, but one church site, which is ready and eager to resume hosting the visits, has been waiting for months for legal to approve a contract with the site that is identical to the previous contract and standard for the program.

- **Punitive atmosphere which leads to the culture of fear**

A Culture of Fear: An Inside Look at Los Angeles County's Department of Children & Family Services was published in 2013. It details an organization characterized by punitive supervisors and employees who lied to cover up mistakes in fear of being humiliated and punished by their supervisors and ostracized by their co-workers. At one of the Invest LA meetings in 2019, when a DCFS staff member corrected a high-ranking DCFS administrator at a community meeting with representatives from at least ten agencies present, the administrator reprimanded him publicly and very harshly in order to make it clear that she/he was not to be interrupted--much to his embarrassment and chagrin and that of everybody in the room.

Thus, I believe that if a programmatic and management audit is not conducted of DCFS and significant changes are not made in the structure of the department, it will not make much difference who is selected to be the new Director. He/she will not be able to affect significant change. Therefore, I urge you to assess DCFS and provide the appropriate resources and support so the Department can best serve children and youth in Los Angeles County.

Cordially yours,



Jeanette Mann, Community Outreach Chair, All Saints Church Foster Care Project



January 24, 2022

TO: Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, Chair
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Janice Hahn
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

SUBJECT: SUPPORT OF MOTION TO REIMAGINE THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN
AND FAMILY SERVICES

GRACE (Gather, Respect, Advocate, Change, Engage) supports the *Reimagining the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)* motion, authored by Supervisors Kathryn Barger and Janice Hahn. Founded by the Daughters of Charity, who have been working in California since 1852, GRACE and the End Child Poverty in California (ECPA) Campaign use education, advocacy, and mobilization programs to make a positive difference in the lives of low-income families and their children. GRACE dares to imagine a liberated future, free from systemic racism and poverty, in which all children experience a childhood of abundance, love, dignity, and opportunities to thrive. To achieve this vision, GRACE is building a joyful movement by centering communities, building authentic partnerships, and advancing public investments that create transformative intergenerational change.

The Los Angeles County Department of Child and Family Services is one of the largest child welfare offices in the country. DCFS serves thousands of children each year, many of whom come into its purview because of the impacts of poverty and growing wealth inequality in our county and state. As DCFS has shifted toward preventing children from entering the child welfare system, it is important to take stock of the agency's effectiveness and what is needed to achieve better outcomes for children and families. A programmatic and management audit/analysis could assist the Board and inform the public with a comprehensive understanding of the internal challenges and solutions needed, especially during a transition of leadership.

Reimagining DCFS must be more than words. The county's ability to transform DCFS can only be attained by centering community voice, racial justice and tackling the inequities that exist from intake to when a child emancipates from the system. Our most vulnerable children and families are owed an analysis that will not supplant their experiences but provide transparent information to build a pathway to the solutions that they seek. Thus, GRACE encourages the Board to pass the *Reimagining the Department of Children and Family Services* Board motion and to strengthen that motion by making clear that the audit/analysis will not circumvent or replace other initiatives that are working to provide community-led assessments of DCFS.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shimica Gaskins", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Shimica Gaskins
President & CEO

85 South Grand Ave., Pasadena, CA 91105 • T 626-356-4200 • F 626-356-4219 • www.grace-inc.org

Maya Angelou once said "I come as one, I Stand as 10,000". We are survivors not only of Domestic Violence but of discrimination and injustice at the hands of DCFS. We not only have been harmed by way of emotional and physical harm but we have been removed and separated from our children. This is the worst. Because we are forever bonded with our children. As an indigenous mother in Los Angeles County I say to you. "I come here as one but stand here as 100s of thousands" we are organized, those with DCFS lived experience demand that you create a committee that has a veto power and whose recommendations are more valuable in selecting the new Director or Directors of DCFS. We, those closer to the issue are absolutely closer to the Solution. We cannot keep going in circles, where all our indigenous children keep being removed from our safe nurturing homes. Not only have an independent consultant. But a equally hears committee of those with lived experience, such as myself and those who have witnessed injustices, like Reimagine Child Safety Coalition. Please, let this be the shift in the power. Let this be the very end, when change happens. I am open to meeting with you all. Please email or call me. We made a promise to our indigenous children to fight for them, like a wild mama bear. Peace is the only way out of darkness. Amend this motion to include checks and balances that those with lived experience in Domestic Violence and DCFS, Black parents, Indigenous parents and Specifically this search committee and selection committee should include the lived experience of having your child removed from you. Not adopted as an infant. That's not lived experience.

We envision, and we are creating safety led by survivors who have experienced DCFS and moved out of the child welfare system and are upstanding citizens and respected by their peers and are passionate about child welfare and ending violence against woman and racial equity for all children. We have valuable perspective such as myself. Include us, we hold the key to the issue of over representation of black and indigenous children in foster care. Let us help. Please. Because we aren't going anywhere. We are 100s of thousands and growing. Let this be the time. That We The people of Los Angeles Reinagine Chikd Safety for all our children. They deserve safety, they deserve to be raised by thier loving mothers. Let's end violence against children by returning them to safety. Returning them to their safe mother or fathersor family members or community members. Gabriel Fernandez begged for safety and he was called a liar. I begged for safety and I was called a liar. My child begged for safety but they blamed me. Show us you believe us. Put a seat at the table for us. Because we will continue to knock and knock and knock. 7 "Ask and it will be given to you;(B) seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds;(C) and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

Tina Rios
Apache, Indigenous mother
Born in Los Angeles
Survivor of DV
Lived experience within DCFS (case closed now)
40 hr certified DV counselor
Human Trafficking trained
Suicide Prevention trained

Implicit Bias trained

Autism 101 trained

Contact tracing COVID 19 trained

Harm reduction trained

HMIS trained

2021 DV Council Betty Fisher Award winner

CERT Pasadena Fire department trained

Co founder of Reinagining Child Safety Advocacy Group (four women with lived experience in DCFS)

626-429-8836 - Rios.tina@gmail.com