

February 24, 2020

Via Hand Delivery to:

Honorable Christopher T. Sununu
Office of Governor Christopher Sununu
State House
107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

Re: Your Failure to Prioritize Child Protection

Dear Governor Sununu,

In December of 2016, shortly after you were first elected, the Independent Audit of DCYF was released providing several foundational recommendations for reform. Among those independent recommendations was the need for necessary child protection staffing levels at DCYF to address caseloads that were five times the national average.

The first budget you proposed in early 2017 did not include the funding for the independently recommended child protection staffing at DCYF. Nor did it include funding for the voluntary services program and other key, foundational recommendations in that audit. Then, the second budget you proposed, in early 2019, also did not include the funding for the independently recommended child protection staff at DCYF, budgeting only a fraction of what is needed and independently recommended for staffing.

As a consequence, the Legislature moved forward with Senate Bill 6 in 2019. Senate Bill 6 funded the independently recommended child protection staffing at DCYF. During the legislative process on Senate Bill 6, your staff and your administration sought to cut back the scope of and staffing in Senate Bill 6. We refused. Senate Bill 6 became effective June 3, 2019. Knowing Senate Bill 6 was going to become law, your administration should have begun the hiring process prior to your signature.

Subsequently, your administration actually delayed the hiring of the child protection staffing in Senate Bill 6 necessary to protect our children. That's despite the overwhelming bipartisan support of Senate Bill 6 in the Legislature.

Indeed, according to your administration's recent Fiscal Committee request (FIS 20-028), a total of \$3,627,961 in General Funds from child protection/DCYF was saved due to your "delay in hiring" the child protection staff in Senate Bill 6. A total of \$6,016,190 in General Funds was authorized in surplus funds outside of the budget, in Senate Bill 6, effective June 3, 2019. You had an opportunity to claim leadership on one of the fundamental issues facing New Hampshire's most vulnerable citizens and instead you sought to cut corners by reducing the allocated resources by **60.3%**.

Overall, this reflects not only an ongoing resistance to administer the Legislature's bipartisan directives, but a troubling and ongoing failure to prioritize child protection.

We are writing in an effort to enhance both transparency and accountability on this. Accordingly, please provide the following, and, if you must, consider this a Right-to-Know request pursuant to RSA 91-A:

- 1.) Your administration's compliance with the staffing levels required in Senate Bill 6 as of August 1, 2019; October 1, 2019; December 1, 2019; and February 1, 2020;
- 2.) Any and all internal or external complaints related to staffing levels at DCYF, from August 1, 2019 to the time of this letter;
- 3.) Any and all internal or external correspondence or analysis concerning the impact on children from insufficient staffing at DCYF, from August 1, 2019 to the time of this letter;
- 4.) The average number of cases per staff at DCYF right now; and
- 5.) What amount of money from Senate Bill 6, if any, has been retained in order to reach and maintain the child protection staffing levels required in Senate Bill 6 as well as to meet the national standard for caseloads.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jon Morgan
Senate District 23

cc: Lori Shibinette, Commissioner of Health and Human Services