

**TESTIMONY OF JANUARY CONTRERAS  
BEFORE THE U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
FEBRUARY 9, 2022**

Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Crapo, Members of the Committee, thank you for considering my nomination to be the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families. I am grateful to President Biden for nominating me for this role, and, if confirmed, will work diligently each day under his leadership and that of Secretary Becerra.

Before beginning, I would like to thank my family. Here with me today are my youngest son and my sister. And watching from home are my wonderful husband of 27 years, my oldest son who's in college, the woman who shaped me – my mother, my proud dad, his wife and my brother, and my aunts, uncles and cousins. Without a doubt, watching over my shoulder are my nana and tata, my Fontes grandparents, who I carry in my heart each day. I am always grateful to my family for supporting me in all that I do.

Growing up, I was fortunate to learn the value of service and hard work from my own family. My grandfather was a paratrooper in World War II. My grandmother raised 11 children on a shoestring budget.

I was born on Bergstrom Air Force Base in Texas, where my father served. By the time I was a toddler, we moved to Arizona, where my family has lived for generations.

My parents both began long careers at the U.S. Postal Service, where they worked the second shift for most of my childhood. This meant my grandparents pitched in to help until I was old enough to stay home by myself. My sister was born when I was 11 years old. And my very first leadership role was launched when I began taking care of her a couple of years later – cooking her dinner and tucking her in every night.

Being responsible for my sister's well-being gave me a deep sense of purpose that has stayed with me throughout my 25 years of public service.

My public service career began as a prosecutor in the State of Arizona. I went on to serve as Assistant Director of our state Medicaid agency, one of the most cost-efficient, high quality Medicaid programs in the country. I also served as a member of Governor Janet Napolitano's Cabinet when I led the Department of Health Services. In each of these roles, collaboration was key. I worked with diverse, bipartisan stakeholders including state, local and tribal government leaders, advocacy organizations, health care providers, faith-based organizations, and government contractors.

I value my state agency experience because it's where I managed large organizations and budgets, it's where I learned how to bring talented teams together to achieve common objectives, and, most importantly, it's where I first experienced the heavy responsibility of delivering results that make a difference in people's lives.

In 2013, after a long career in government, I founded Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services or ALWAYS—an organization that provides life-changing legal services to some of the most vulnerable people in my home state.

The people ALWAYS serves are the same people the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) serves—children in foster care, young adults who have transitioned out of foster care, youth who are homeless, unaccompanied children, and survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking.

The mission of the ACF is *my* professional mission.

If confirmed as the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, I will work with the talented men and women of ACF to prioritize prevention and family well-being, including strengthening supports for grandparents and kinship caregivers. Congress laid a new way forward with the passage of the Family First Prevention Services Act, and I would work with colleagues in and outside of the federal government to live out the promise that Family First envisions. Throughout ACF programs, I would lead with a commitment to reduce racial disparities, and to lift up whole-family and community-based strategies to increase safety, financial stability, and economic mobility for kids, youth and families, including accessible child care.

Each time I have been entrusted with the responsibility of stewarding public resources and executing mission critical services, I am grateful. Each time I have been in these roles, I have remained focused on the faces I was entrusted to serve—children, youth, and families who need allies to help them thrive, trafficking and domestic violence survivors looking for safety and security, families with low-incomes looking for help to keep the lights on.

If confirmed as the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, I will remain focused on the faces ACF has been entrusted to serve. If confirmed, I am ready to get to work with every ACF colleague across the country to carry out this important mission.

Thank you for your consideration of my nomination. I look forward to answering the questions that you have.