

Opening Statement

Assistant Secretary for Children and Families-designate Carmen Nazario

Senate Committee on Finance

July 10, 2009

Chairman Baucus, Senator Grassley, members of the Committee, good morning. I am honored to have been selected by President Obama to serve as Assistant Secretary for Children and Families at the Department of Health and Human Services, and I am delighted to be here today to discuss my nomination.

The Administration for Children and Families is crucial to the mission of the Department and to the future of our country – ensuring that children and families are protected, particularly in times of economic distress; and providing low-income working families with the supports they need to succeed under any economic conditions. I am thrilled at the opportunity to assist Secretary Sebelius and to lead the Administration for Children and Families in such important endeavor, and at such an important time.

My career experiences have prepared me for this position throughout more than 40 years in the field of human services at every level of government, as well as in the private and non-profit sectors. I have learned what works and what does not work, and I welcome the opportunity to bring my experiences to bear upon the important work of ACF.

I served as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary at the Administration for Children and Families from 1999-2001, and have an intimate knowledge of the agency's policies, programs, and services. I have worked in all the program areas of the agency. I have worked successfully with states, counties, cities, Tribes, and community service agencies. I have demonstrated success in working collaboratively and productively with members of both parties, and have a proven ability to build consensus, think strategically, and develop institutional capacity for driving change.

I am deeply honored by the President's nomination, and, if confirmed, I will work with Congress to advance and build on the President's priorities, and to ensure that the policies you enact are implemented consistent with congressional intent.

If confirmed, I plan to concentrate on three priority areas:

First, I plan to focus on supporting families to achieve economic success. Providing families with the tools they need to succeed is fundamental to ensuring that low-income working families are full participants in, and contributing members of, our society. This includes a strong focus on prevention efforts, community building, and broad partnerships that include an array of stakeholders.

Second, I believe we must aggressively promote healthy and comprehensive child development. Both President Obama and Secretary Sebelius have said that investing in young children is critical to our future, and I could not agree more. If confirmed, I plan to work collaboratively across sectors to enhance opportunities for children to succeed in school and in life. To succeed in this effort, we need to establish stronger links between the programs within ACF, across HHS and other federal departments, and with outside agencies and organizations.

Third, I will strive to improve ACF's institutional capacity in order to ensure the agency is making a real difference in the lives of families and children. In doing so, I will work to structure the agency's operations so it can carry out its mission efficiently and effectively. My vision for ACF is a highly responsive, self-correcting organization that utilizes data, technology, and succession planning to create an agency of the future.

In pursuing these three objectives, please understand my deep commitment to maintaining an open dialogue with states, tribes, national organizations, and the grantee and advocacy communities to share ideas, learn from each other, and find common ground wherever possible.

Chairman Baucus, Senator Grassley, and members of the Committee, thank you again for this opportunity. I have confidence that the 1400 dedicated public servants who serve as employees of the Administration for Children and Families are prepared to get the job done for all the families and children we care so much about. If confirmed, I am ready to lead them in that important effort.

I am happy to answer any questions.