

**NOMINATIONS OF ROBERT MICHAEL GORDON,  
JANUARY CONTRERAS, AND  
REBECCA E. JONES GASTON**

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**HEARING**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON THE

NOMINATIONS OF

ROBERT MICHAEL GORDON, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL RESOURCES, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES; JANUARY CONTRERAS, TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES; AND REBECCA E. JONES GASTON, TO BE COMMISSIONER, ADMINISTRATION ON CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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FEBRUARY 9, 2022  
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# CONTENTS

## OPENING STATEMENTS

	Page
Wyden, Hon. Ron, a U.S. Senator from Oregon, chairman, Committee on Finance .....	1
Crapo, Hon. Mike, a U.S. Senator from Idaho .....	3

## ADMINISTRATION NOMINEES

Gordon, Robert Michael, nominated to be Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC .....	3
Contreras, January, nominated to be Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC .....	5
Jones Gaston, Rebecca E., nominated to be Commissioner, Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC .....	7

## ALPHABETICAL LISTING AND APPENDIX MATERIAL

Contreras, January:	
Testimony .....	5
Prepared statement .....	31
Biographical information .....	32
Responses to questions from committee members .....	40
Crapo, Hon. Mike:	
Opening statement .....	3
Prepared statement .....	50
Gordon, Robert Michael:	
Testimony .....	3
Prepared statement .....	51
Biographical information .....	52
Responses to questions from committee members .....	64
Jones Gaston, Rebecca E.:	
Testimony .....	7
Prepared statement .....	71
Biographical information .....	72
Responses to questions from committee members .....	78
Wyden, Hon. Ron:	
Opening statement .....	1
Prepared statement with attachments .....	87



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HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES; JANUARY  
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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND HUMAN SERVICES**

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**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2022**

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE,  
*Washington, DC.*

The hearing was convened, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m., via Webex, in Room SD-215, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Ron Wyden (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Cantwell, Brown, Bennet, Casey, Whitehouse, Hassan, Cortez Masto, Warren, Crapo, Grassley, Thune, and Lankford.

Also present: Democratic staff: Michael Evans, Deputy Staff Director and Chief Counsel; and Ian Nicholson, Investigator and Nominations Advisor. Republican staff: Lincoln Foran, Policy Advisor; Kellie McConnell, Health Policy Director; and Gregg Richard, Staff Director.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RON WYDEN, A U.S. SENATOR  
FROM OREGON, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

The CHAIRMAN. This morning the Finance Committee meets to discuss three nominations for important roles in the Biden administration. First, January Contreras is President Biden's nominee to serve as Health and Human Services Assistant Secretary for Children and Families. This role is all about overseeing programs that deal with caring for some of the most vulnerable people in our country—particularly the young. And I just want to take a moment—we are going to put my full statement into the record—and say how pleased I am to have two witnesses who are going to particularly focus on Family First.

Senator Crapo and I, working with Senator Hatch, really felt that was historic legislation. You know, the country was essentially, prior to the bill, faced with two choices. We would have a kid in a foster home—some good, some not so good—or we would have a kid at home in a situation that just was not acceptable, was not good for the child. You might have a parent with some alcohol challenges, drugs—you name it. And what Family First was all about was creating a third option, a third option that would really be good for kids, which is why it was called Family First.

So, Senator Crapo and I have had a chance to be in public service a bit. This is one of the most historic bipartisan efforts I have been part of. So we are really looking forward to the two of you who are going to work in those precincts to do a good job in this country.

January Contreras has championed the safety and well-being of women, children, and families. She has led Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services. I note that we have kind of almost a shared DNA around legal aid. I ran the legal aid program for the elderly.

So I am very glad that you, and then of course Ms. Jones Gaston—we claim her as one of ours because we brought her out west, and she has been doing great stuff with us in Oregon. She is uniquely qualified. Both of you, in my view, give public service a good name. And we are really looking forward to hearing from you this morning. And before she came west, Ms. Jones Gaston served as the Executive Director of the Maryland Social Services Administration. What I really liked about my conversation with Ms. Jones Gaston was she was pure passion in terms of getting Family First spread from sea to shining sea.

I think you told me, Ms. Jones Gaston, in our discussion, we are at 14 States I think right now, but a lot of the rest of them are moving very quickly, and that is good.

Mr. Gordon is President Biden's nominee to serve as HHS Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources. He has worn a lot of hats during his time in public service. He served as Director of the Department of Health and Human Services for the State of Michigan, and played a key role in the pandemic response there. He supervised thousands of people with a budget of \$27 billion. He previously worked at the U.S. Department of Education and the Office of Management and Budget.

He also was a senior official at the New York City Department of Education, a law clerk for Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and a White House aide. He is a highly experienced public servant in all respects. And when you are working on finances at HHS, the core of your job, of course, is upholding what, around here, we like to call the guarantee of Medicare. Medicare is not a piece of paper. It is not a slip. It is not some kind of voucher or arrangement. It is a guarantee. And we are very proud around here that we updated the guarantee—again, as Senator Crapo and I talk about—in a bipartisan way with the CHRONIC Care bill, which recognized that Medicare today is no longer primarily about acute care. It is primarily about chronic disease: cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. So you can expect that we will be very interested in your views on that.

As always, Senator Crapo and I work on these matters in a bipartisan way, and I recognize my colleague.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Wyden appears in the appendix.]

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE CRAPO,  
A U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO**

Senator CRAPO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Today's nominees will have significant responsibilities overseeing programs that affect some of the most vulnerable populations in America. As Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources, Mr. Gordon would have a critical role in stewarding resources across the breadth of the HHS's programs. I look forward to hearing his views on how HHS can improve its service delivery to provide more effective care in programs that affect nearly every American.

If confirmed, Ms. Contreras and Ms. Jones Gaston would oversee programs that protect and support children and youth. I am eager to hear how these nominees propose improving service delivery toward these particularly at-risk groups.

I urge all the nominees to be forthcoming in this discussion, and in all questions for the record; and, should they be confirmed, in the roles to which they have been nominated as they move forward.

Congress is a critical partner to the work of the Department of Health and Human Services, and the programs you will oversee are of unique importance. Working in a bipartisan way with the members of the Finance Committee, we have the opportunity to evaluate and implement policies that better serve the American people.

Once again, I congratulate the nominees here today and look forward to our discussion.

[The prepared statement of Senator Crapo appears in the appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Crapo.

Now we will have some opening statements from each of you, and then we have a set of formalities that we have to go through with respect to some questions.

Mr. Gordon, why don't you go ahead?

**STATEMENT OF ROBERT MICHAEL GORDON, NOMINATED TO  
BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL RESOURCES,  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES,  
WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. GORDON. Thank you, Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Crapo, members of the committee. Thank you for considering my nomination to be the Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources at the Department of Health and Human Services. I am honored by President Biden's decision to nominate me, and if confirmed, I look forward to serving under the leadership of Secretary Becerra.

Before beginning, I would like to thank my family for their love and support. Here with me today are my wife Catherine and older son Silas.

Government funding decisions each day make an enormous difference to millions of Americans in every corner of the country. For all of our sakes, government must run as effectively and efficiently

as possible. If confirmed, I will use data, evidence, and evaluation to deliver results, strengthen program integrity and transparency, and advance equity. This has been the work of my career across 3 decades in the Federal, State, and local governments, in leadership roles handling health and human services, and in managing budget and finance matters.

For more than 4 years, I served as a senior official at the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, including as Acting Deputy Director. At OMB I played a key role in launching evidence-based initiatives at four agencies. One of these was HHS's Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program, which now funds 19 service delivery models supported by solid evidence. Together with HHS leadership, including the official in the role for which I am nominated, I also worked on developing the Head Start recompetition and improving programs for the aging.

In this period, I also helped to negotiate bipartisan budget agreements to keep the government open and the country from defaulting on its debts. And I had particular responsibility for program integrity investments to reduce waste, fraud, and abuse.

The private and nonprofit sectors offer important lessons for government. After leaving OMB and becoming the senior vice president of finance and global strategy for the College Board, I worked as part of a team to reform procurement processes, cut costs, and drive technology changes that improved services for schools and students alike.

That experience informed my work as the Director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, an agency with 14,000 employees and a \$27-billion budget. With extraordinary colleagues, we responded to COVID effectively; expanded access to health coverage; drove improvements in child welfare programs, including an implementation of Family First; increased use of effective approaches to mental health and substance use disorders; and cut technology costs while improving customer service.

One of my happiest accomplishments in Michigan was ending severe delays in the delivery of Medicaid and SNAP benefits. When I arrived, the State had just rolled out a flawed new system which meant that more than 30 percent of Michiganders in some rural counties were not receiving needed help within the legally required 30 days.

Legislators in both parties were angry, and rightly so. In partnership with extraordinary colleagues, we listened to front-line staff, improved technology, shifted work patterns, and held ourselves accountable with a public dashboard showing our results each week. Within a few months, rural counties were performing as well as others, and we went on to simplify and improve the delivery of benefits in ways that earned national praise.

Should I be confirmed, I would apply the same performance focus at HHS. The work of HHS has never been more important. And it has never been more personal for me. Among more than 900,000 Americans who have died from COVID was my father, Alan Gordon, a psychiatrist who spent decades working on behalf of homeless individuals and ex-offenders. He taught me to believe in the dignity of every person, and the honor of public service.



I would be honored to play my part, as HHS's Chief Financial Officer, in sustaining a robust COVID response, and in strengthening so many vital HHS programs, from cancer research to the Indian Health Service, and of course, to Medicare. Should I be confirmed, I would work with President Biden, Secretary Becerra, and members of Congress to fund Health and Human Services programs that work.

Thanks again for considering my nomination. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gordon appears in the appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Gordon. And we always feel, as we reflect on COVID, it just comes back to people, and families, and all those people whom we miss so much. So, just know our sympathies are with you. And I am sure that it is reflected in your determination to do this job well, and we want you to know that we sympathize.

Okay. I also want to say that Senator Stabenow very much wishes she could be here. She has an important Agriculture Committee hearing that she is chairing, but she wanted me particularly to convey a strong, warm welcome to Mr. Gordon. She had the opportunity to work with Mr. Gordon during his time as the Director of the Michigan Department of Human Services, including on expansion of the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics program in the State, and we think Senator Stabenow's work on that has really been a historic big breakthrough. So, Senator Stabenow wants the record to reflect that she very much appreciates your work and looks forward to working with you at the Department.

Ms. Contreras, please.

**STATEMENT OF JANUARY CONTRERAS, NOMINATED TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, WASHINGTON, DC**

Ms. CONTRERAS. 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; and all of my Fontes family back in Arizona. Also, my proud dad, his wife, and my brother in Missouri. And without a doubt, watching over my shoulder are my nana and tata, my maternal grandparents, whom 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 shoe-string budget. I was born on Bergstrom Air Force Base in Texas, where my father served. And 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, and 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. And when I was 11 years old, my sister was born. And my very first leadership role was launched a couple of years later when I began taking care of her—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 an Assistant Director in our State’s 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 staff, and later 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 leadership, advocacy organizations, health-care providers, faith-based organizations, and government contractors.

I value my State agency experience because it’s where I learned to manage large organizations, large budgets. It is where I learned how to bring talented teams together to achieve common objectives. And most importantly, it is where I learned the heavy responsibility that we have in these roles to deliver results that make a difference in the lives of people.

In 2013, after a long career in government, I founded Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services. We go by “ALWAYS.” It is a legal aid organization that provides life-changing legal services to some of the most vulnerable people in my home State.

The mission of ACF mirrors the mission of ALWAYS. The people we serve at ALWAYS are the same people at the Administration for Children and Families: 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 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 build equity, and to lift up whole-family and community-based strategies to increase safety, financial stability, and economic mobility for kids, youth, and families. And that includes accessible child care.

Each time I have been entrusted with the responsibility of stewarding public resources and executing mission-critical services, I have been grateful. And each time, 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 vio-

lence survivors looking for safety and security; and 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 and partners 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.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Contreras appears in the appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much. And I particularly appreciate your coming back to legal aid and your work there. I think about my time when I was Director of the Legal Services for the Elderly program in our State. And when I would go out to our offices—which were far-flung, with a number of them in rural areas—I was struck by how often whoever was seeking legal representation came with their family. You saw it in those waiting rooms. So, I appreciate your background, and I think it is a real plus for you in consideration for this appointment.

Okay, we are now ready for Ms. Jones Gaston. What a thrill to have somebody we have decided to proclaim to be an Oregonian from this point on.

**STATEMENT OF REBECCA E. JONES GASTON, NOMINATED TO BE COMMISSIONER, ADMINISTRATION ON CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, WASHINGTON, DC**

Ms. JONES GASTON. Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Crapo, members of the committee, thank you for your consideration of my nomination to be the Commissioner of the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families. I am honored by President Biden's decision to nominate me for this role and, if confirmed, look forward to serving children, youth, and families under his and Secretary Becerra's leadership.

Before I begin my testimony, I would like to thank my family. Here with me today are my children's godmothers, friends who have become family. And watching virtually are my son and daughter, my mother and many of my family, friends, mentors, and colleagues. With me in spirit are my ancestors and my birth parents. I would not be here today without the love and support of all of these people.

I was adopted at a very young age after a number of foster care placements and grew up in a small Iowa farming community. Throughout my career in human services and child welfare, I have infused my lived experience, and the experience of others, into my work because I believe that those who have been served by children and family services systems should have a role in changing these systems.

If confirmed as the Commissioner of the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, I would prioritize shifting the focus of child welfare systems from placement to prevention by promoting cross-system partnerships and shared outcomes, and helping States implement the Family First Prevention Services Act; leading from

the ground up by keeping the perspective of States and those with lived experience at the fore; and ensuring equity and inclusion are at the center of all that we do. I have been working in human services and child welfare for almost 25 years. During that time, I have transformed child welfare systems under both Democratic and Republican Governors. I have worked across the Nation to recruit foster and adoptive parents; have implemented innovative policies and programs; and have sat side-by-side with families and youth being served by these systems as a person with lived experience as a parent, an advocate, and a social worker.

As a result of my personal and professional experiences, I know that transforming children and family services systems into family well-being systems that serve children, youth, parents, and families as a whole cannot be done without collaborating with public and private partners, Tribal Nations, communities, and faith-based partners, including those with diverse perspectives.

I currently serve as the Director of Child Welfare at the Oregon Department of Human Services. Together with my team and community partners, we developed a strategic plan focused on well-being and prevention that has already yielded results. Despite the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have reduced the number of children in foster care by more than 20 percent over 2 years and are on a path towards long-term change.

I led similar change efforts as the head of the Social Services Administration in Maryland, where I served under the leadership of Republican Governor Larry Hogan. In both Maryland and Oregon, I successfully led the States' Family First Prevention Services Act plans from development through Federal approval. If confirmed, I will prioritize supporting States to fully implement this landmark law so that children, youth, and families do not have to wait any longer for the transformational change that it offers.

In addition to Family First, there are a number of other levers at the Federal level to support States that are working hard to be innovative and improve how they meet the needs of children, youth, parents, and families. However, the key word here is "support," as it is also important for the Federal Government not to put up unnecessary barriers.

Transforming children and family services systems into family well-being systems cannot be done without a focus on equity and inclusion. In these systems across the Nation, we see disproportionality at every decision point. This impacts rural communities, communities of color, Tribal Nations, and other vulnerable communities.

In these communities, we often see limited access to services and resources, impacts of poverty, and disparate outcomes. To build towards well-being, I have heard from those who have experienced the child welfare system, that many families and youth could have been supported earlier by meeting needs related to homelessness, child care, and access to other concrete supports, such as addressing family violence prevention, mental health, and substance use needs. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing to be a voice for those who have experienced these systems and leading transformation to better meet their needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my work and vision. I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Jones Gaston appears in the appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Ms. Jones Gaston. At this point I am going to put into the record a number of organizations that sent letters to Senator Crapo and I. By unanimous consent, we will put them into the record right at this point.

[The letters appear in the appendix beginning on p. 88.]

The CHAIRMAN. Now we have some formalities. I think you all have been advised on these. First—and we will just go right down the row—is there anything that you are aware of in your background that might present a conflict of interest with the duties of the office to which you have been nominated? Mr. Gordon?

Mr. GORDON. No.

Ms. CONTRERAS. No.

Ms. JONES GASTON. No.

The CHAIRMAN. Second, do you know of any reason, personal or otherwise, that would in any way prevent you from fully and honorably discharging the responsibilities of the office to which you have been nominated?

Mr. GORDON. No.

Ms. CONTRERAS. No.

Ms. JONES GASTON. No.

The CHAIRMAN. Third, do you agree without reservation to respond to any reasonable summons to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Congress if you are confirmed?

Mr. GORDON. Yes.

Ms. CONTRERAS. Yes, Senator.

Ms. JONES GASTON. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Finally, do you commit to provide a prompt response in writing to any questions addressed to you by any Senator of this committee?

Mr. GORDON. Yes.

Ms. CONTRERAS. Yes.

Ms. JONES GASTON. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. We are going to get into some questions, and Senator Crapo and I will start this off.

First, Ms. Jones Gaston, I think I heard you say, but I want to make sure we get it in the record, that you are already on the way to getting, I believe you said, an over 20-percent reduction in foster care placements in Oregon?

Ms. JONES GASTON. Yes, Mr. Chairman. In Oregon over the last 2 years, we have reduced the number of children in foster care by 20 percent, about 1,000 children.

The CHAIRMAN. Very good. And our State really likes the idea that we are getting out in front on this. This is an area, as you know, where we have had a lot of problems historically, and we want this turned around.

Now, not all the States in the country are as far along as we have come with your leadership. You have led two States through the process of development and implementation. So, as you and I talked about, we want to surge that progress. We want to have dra-

matic advancements in the number of States on your watch that pick up on Family First.

Tell us a little bit—you and I talked about it—about your kind of game plan to do that?

Ms. JONES GASTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all, it is to be able to talk with the team, if I am confirmed, that is within ACYF and ACF. And then also, listening to the States around what the experience has been, and where are the possible hurdles, and what is needed to be able to actually help them move forward and get approval for those plans that are actually already submitted and under consideration. And then working with the States that have not yet submitted to identify what the concerns are, what the issues might be, and identifying how we might be able to support having all of our States participating in the Family First opportunity.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, we talked also about increasing transparency so that everybody can work towards this goal of having a system that is really based on hard evidence that something really is working, in terms of implementing Family First. How do you see that going forward?

Ms. JONES GASTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Transparency is absolutely important. I think being able to have good open communication with the States and the families that we are working with, with yourself and members of Congress, in the partnership and collaboration—all of the work that we do absolutely depends on the ability to partner and collaborate and identify solutions and strategies for meeting the needs of children and families to move towards transparency. That includes data, information, evidence, making sure that we have the practices and services in place to actually meet the needs that children and families have in the way that they need them to be delivered, and supporting being able to have those added into our toolkit, per se, for providing the supports to families and children.

The CHAIRMAN. Good. I want to move on, but I also want to note that you worked with a Democratic Governor, you worked with a Republican Governor. Senator Crapo and I talk about this often. Human Services is about what we can make work, and what we have to look at anew because it is not coming through to our families and particularly our kids. So I just want to note that for the record.

And I would not have allowed you to leave Oregon unless it was to achieve more on what you have been building in Oregon. And I am very pleased that we are having a chance to consider your nomination today. I intend to support you fully.

Ms. JONES GASTON. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay.

Ms. Contreras, you too will be involved in Family First, and I think I have pummeled this subject with both of you previously. Tell us a little bit about the first steps you would take to address racial equity in this position. This has also been an important part of the committee's work on prenatal care, for example. We have just been stunned at how minority moms, Black moms in particular, have just not been able to get the kind of services that you see in affluent White suburbs. And we are very much committed

to turning around these issues where, with so many measures of racial equity, it is just something you talk about but you do not deliver on. And that is what we want to change.

So, tell us your first steps with respect to how you would proceed, and if you have any suggestions for us in terms of what we could do to achieve the goal.

Ms. CONTRERAS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for that question. And thank you for your leadership and the leadership of this body in passing Family First, and in being brave enough to say we need to move from intervention to prevention; that we need to support families and their well-being.

If confirmed, what my priority will be in this area is to make sure that as we move forward, as we are building prevention into everything we do at ACF, that that is done with an equity lens.

I think my approach, if confirmed, would be to, number one, make sure that we are talking to a lot of diverse partners on the ground—States, nonprofits, families themselves—and make sure that there are more people at the table.

Number two, that we are looking at ACF and who is in the room, and who is at the decision table; that we are making sure that those who are impacted, professionals who have been personally impacted by the child welfare system, are at the table, and that those professionals are bringing diverse perspectives and diverse backgrounds.

Three, in my home State—I come from a State with 22 Tribes in Arizona. There is a lot of opportunity for collaboration with Tribal Governments and Tribal communities to make sure that we are addressing racial disparities.

I met with a juvenile judge and an Attorney General of a Tribe not too long ago, and they were sharing more about the pilot program they have started, which is sharing data, which is not being afraid to share that data so that they can actually look at ZIP codes and look at where families need the most help, so that we can reduce the number of placements.

That is the kind of work that needs to happen. And if confirmed, I look forward to working with you to make sure that we are making equity a priority.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ms. Contreras. Thank you for your thoughtful answers.

Senator Crapo?

Senator CRAPO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Gordon, as Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources, you would play a critical role in ensuring the efficient use of our taxpayer resources. HHS has the largest budget of any Federal agency, totaling nearly \$1.7 trillion for fiscal year 2022. A budget of that size requires careful oversight. And we are currently emerging from an unprecedented public health crisis, which some have argued requires what could be described as “spend now and validate results later.”

I am concerned about that. And I just want to ask you to respond to your commitment to reviewing the Department’s programs to determine where we do have waste, fraud, and abuse of taxpayer resources, and what can be done to strengthen that review going forward.

Mr. GORDON. Thank you for that question, Senator. And you have my commitment to take with utmost seriousness the responsibility to make sure that dollars are spent as effectively as possible, and that we are always minimizing waste, fraud, and abuse. I have done that throughout my career, so I think there are multiple ways we can do that, including in the context of the pandemic.

I talked a little bit about performance management. This office is responsible for the Department's performance management and metrics. And I think setting metrics, being publicly accountable for results, making adjustments in real time, that is a meaningful approach across multiple dimensions.

I think using evidence in policymaking—I talked a little bit about the maternal MIECHV program, which requires the use of evidence. I think that is an approach we should use more often in government.

And lastly, with respect to waste, fraud, and abuse, it has been a commitment throughout my career to address that. When I arrived in Michigan, I asked for funding increases in only a few areas, but one of them was for the Department's Inspector General to address challenges with waste, fraud, and abuse in the State's Medicaid and SNAP programs. We need to do it in a way that is sensitive to legitimate claims, that does not put up undue barriers, but it is always a challenge. And ASFR plays a key role in marshaling the Department's resources against erroneous payments, and that is something I would be committed to act on if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed.

Senator CRAPO. Well, thank you. I appreciate that commitment and that focus, and I appreciate your record of being able to do that kind of thing. So, thank you.

Ms. Contreras, you mentioned there are a number of Tribes in Arizona. There are a number of Tribes in Idaho too. So I completely identified with your comment there and appreciate your focus on collaboration in that context.

I have long been a champion of the MIECHV program, which expires at the end of this fiscal year. It supports evidence-based home visiting services for at-risk families with young children. And home visiting programs have been proven to help prevent child abuse and neglect, improve maternal and child health, and promote child development.

I know you understand all of that. As you are aware, MIECHV is administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration, HRSA, in collaboration with the Administration on Children and Families, or ACF. My question to you is, as we work on reauthorizing the program, do you have any reforms or suggestions that you would recommend to us now to help even improve it?

Ms. CONTRERAS. Ranking Member Crapo, thank you for that question. When we are talking about home visits, it is a perfect example of the creation of a gateway for families to a universe of services, to a universe of supports for them. And that is really a model that we need throughout our work, where there are more gateways for young families and for parents who are looking for those supports and who need them.

As we move forward, if confirmed I certainly am committed to collaborating with HRSA—HRSA is an important partner—and to



making sure that we also reach our rural areas, which is important. I think the kinds of reforms—my approach would be to recommend that we are working together to, again, build in that equity lens so that there are no families left behind in terms of having accessibility to home visits, that we are doing our part to make sure that the entire suite of services that is available through ACF to support families and children is part and parcel of what they are introducing to families. It is really a part of a larger strategy that this administration is committed to, to again build prevention, to build family well-being. Home visits are an important part of that, and if confirmed, I would look forward to working with partners on that issue.

Senator CRAPO. Well, thank you. And I am about out of time, but, Ms. Jones Gaston, I did want to note, Senator Wyden mentioned that it was impressive that you have worked with both Republican and Democrat Governors and have a strong record.

The question I have for you I will submit for the record, but it focuses—in fact, this is a question that you will probably get too, Ms. Contreras. But it focuses on how critical it is for us to work broadly as we administer these programs for children, and how you feel about the importance of working with faith-based providers as they play a role in the child welfare system. But I will submit that for the record.

[The question appears in the appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Crapo—either of you, would you care to answer?

Ms. JONES GASTON. Thank you. I would be happy to, Ranking Member Crapo. I have had lots of experience throughout my career in partnering with faith-based organizations. I think when we are talking about the well-being of children and family and communities, we need everybody working together to create a safety network for our vulnerable populations, and faith-based partners are a part of that.

Senator CRAPO. I appreciate that. And I will not go on to Ms. Contreras, but I will put it in my questions for the record for you to respond to that as well. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Crapo, and your point with respect to faith-based providers very much respects and very much aligns with our views here as well. We are going to need everybody. There are just too many young people, too many families falling between the cracks, and I thank you for that.

Senator Cortez Masto, I believe is online, and then Senator Whitehouse will be next—two strong advocates for kids and families.

Senator Cortez Masto?

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member. Thank you to all of the nominees for your willingness to serve in these critical roles at the Department of Health and Human Services.

Ms. Jones Gaston, let me start with you. As you know, the pandemic has been incredibly difficult across the child welfare space. We have seen communities hit hard by the twin economic and public health crisis, and then you are still dealing with COVID-related obstacles, workforce challenges, and exacerbated health conditions.

This has been difficult not just for kids and their families, but also for the front-line child protective service workers who go above and beyond every day.

So my question for you is, what initiatives are there at the Federal level to support case workers with mental health and other services so that they are able to deal with the very difficult things they experience as part of their job?

Ms. JONES GASTON. Thank you for the question, Senator. And you are absolutely right. The impact of the pandemic has been really profound for the families that we are serving, as well as for the workforce that is serving these families.

First of all, thank you to the congressional body for the funding that was provided, and the flexibilities provided for the resources needed to be able to serve children and families and our young adults experiencing the variety of things that came up unexpectedly during the pandemic. And to our workforce, the gratitude I have for them continuing to show up every day and putting themselves at risk by continuing to make sure that we are working with children and families and keeping child safety at the forefront—it has absolutely been difficult. And I look forward to working with partners across the organization and members of Congress to really continue to look for ways to continue to strengthen our workforce, and to provide the services and supports that they need to be well in order to be able to do the important work of serving children and families. Thank you.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. So let me ask you this: given the pending reauthorization of IV-B, are there other opportunities within that act that may help address this issue for our front-line workers?

Ms. JONES GASTON. Thank you, Senator. The IV-B funding is incredibly helpful for States to be able to meet a variety of needs, including the services for children and families, the flexibilities of being able to do things that might not be covered by Medicaid or other funding streams, as well as thinking about what are the wellness things that are in place for our workforce in being able to help support them through this.

In Oregon we have been able to implement a trauma-informed response when workers experience trauma in the workplace with a child or a family that they are working with, so that there is immediate support going to them and to their colleagues to be able to work through their trauma, again to be able to do the important work that they do. And so I look forward to being able to explore a variety of different ways that we might be able to support that at the Federal level.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you.

And now, Ms. Contreras, it is great to see you again, and congratulations on the nomination. One of my top priorities here at the Federal level is to make sure that our Federal partners are working constructively with the States and counties on the front line to meet our children's needs.

I am hoping that you can speak to your experience at the State and local levels, and how it will inform the way you will approach your Federal role.

Ms. CONTRERAS. Thank you for that question, Senator Cortez Masto, and it is wonderful to see you as well. My experience at the State and local level is really what brought me here to this moment today. It has always been about who we are serving. And in this case with ACF, it is such a sacred duty that we have here to protect the safety and the well-being of families and children.

In my own experience being at the State Medicaid agency, we had a lot of collaboration. We had a chance to be very innovative, to use demonstration waivers that are available, and we did a lot of work with our Federal partners as well.

So for me, that experience really comes to bear, I guess in part because I have been an end-user of a State working with Federal funding, but then also when I had the chance to work at the Department of Homeland Security. Again, where are the gaps? Being able to listen to the community, being able to listen to staff who have ideas that they have been ready to have implemented, it is a very unique opportunity to figure out how you keep making things work better.

In this case with ACF, you have done great work in Congress to pass Family First, which gives a very unique and landmark opportunity to build new systems to support our States, to support the workforce that you just asked about, to support the partners on the ground and make sure that we do our part to make it as—I do not want to use the word “easy”; it is not easy work—but to make sure that we are providing technical assistance, we are providing resources, we are showing what are the best practices and the data that we are building the systems around. And so for me, that is my approach. That is the experience that I bring with me.

And if confirmed, it is what will help me to make sure that I am working together with Congress, and with our partners, and with the families and children and youth who are most impacted.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO. Thank you. My time is up. I will submit the rest of my questions for the record.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The questions appear in the appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator. And I just want to reference the point that the Senator just made with respect to State and local governments being involved in human services.

As the Senator knows, in Nevada and Oregon we are thousands and thousands of miles from Washington, DC. And so often, our constituents feel Washington, DC might as well be Mars for all the real connection it has with the nuts and bolts of their life challenges. So I really appreciate Senator Cortez Masto asking, as she has often, about relationships with the States, and the fact that you both are going to have them front and center. For westerners, it is just a lifeline. We are just so far from Washington. Thank you.

Okay; Senator Whitehouse?

Senator WHITEHOUSE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to the panel.

A little background, I suppose, is in order. I have been a vigorous advocate for health care delivery system reform for quite some time. When we were doing Obamacare, I was a very strong supporter of the ACOs and the CMMI.

I had a weekly meeting with reform advocates to make sure we got everything from a reform perspective that we could into that bill. And at the end of the day, we found that we really had gotten everything we felt we could into that bill. And however toxic the conversation became about Obamacare between Democrats and Republicans, those reform measures have been relatively non-controversial. And they have been extremely successful. In particular, in Rhode Island, two of the best ACOs in the country have flourished and done an amazingly good job. They are actually driving down per-member per-month costs, not up—you know, slowing the curve of increase, driving it down.

So I think my confidence in delivery system reform has been rewarded by results, and certainly in the Obama administration that became emblemized, if that is a word, by the so-called triple aim. And we are continuing to pursue that triple aim. We kind of came off focus a bit during the Trump years, but technical people at CMS and HHS continued progress, and it was a noncontroversial area, and actually some of the ACOs flourished there.

This work, to me, is a big deal as Medicare closes in on insolvency, because if we can save a lot of money in Medicare by having healthier patients, that seems like a pretty obvious strategy to follow. And so it is really important to me that Medicare and Medicaid continue their role of leading away from fee-for-service towards the triple aim, and towards examples that prove this.

That background connects to progress we have been trying to make in Rhode Island with respect to what is sometimes called end-of-life care, and that is sometimes called advanced-care. There are payment rules in Medicare that are idiotic and harmful as applied to the end-of-life care/advanced-care population, things like having to spend a couple of nights in the hospital before you can get into a nursing home, when you may be a week or two away from death and the reason you need to be in the nursing home was because your family just cannot cope with some of the things that are happening. Not allowing for in-home care in those circumstances is bad for the patients, bad for the families, and it runs up the bill.

So it is not the triple aim of good, good, good; it is stupid, stupid, stupid, and perhaps even stupid and cruel, stupid and cruel, and stupid. And we have been working on trying to solve this for a very, very long time. And we have been working with CMMI through now four, I want to say, Directors to try to get approval to let this go forward as a kind of pilot that CMMI is supposed to have. And it is not entirely Ms. Fowler's fault. She is obviously a veteran of this committee. But I am tired of Groundhog Day and having to start from scratch every time there is somebody new. And I am tired of an organization that seems to have no capacity to listen when something like this, that seems to be a huge win, is put right in front of it.

So this is, I guess—I think Mr. Gordon is going to oversee some of the CMMI stuff, so I guess I will ask him for a response in the form of a question. But my real audience is the Sherpas here to fire a flare into space saying that I am tired of not being listened to on this subject, and of having a blank wall to deal with when there is no real contest on the merits. It is just, “We don't want to listen

to you. We don't want to do it that way. We might think about doing it some other way some other time, and we are just not here to listen and not here to help."

I have been through too many rounds with CMMI for that to be acceptable any longer. And interestingly enough, actually the best engagement we had was with one of the Trump CMMI leaders. So let's see if we can improve on that, and I will let Mr. Gordon answer briefly, but I have used all my time, so please make it briefly.

Mr. GORDON. Thank you, Senator. I hear about your passion and your expertise around the issue. I had the good fortune early in my career, during the transition, to work with the CMS Administrator and the CMMI Administrator, and I would look forward to talking with them about these issues.

My own experience—not getting into the details of the rules involved, which I don't know—is that of course increasing access to home-based care can be better for people and better for budgets, and that alternative payment methods can yield better care and cost savings, and that going upstream with medical care, creating incentives for our health system not just to treat people in the doctor's office and the hospital, but to improve the conditions in which they live every day and to work with them on exercise, nutrition, housing, clean air, clean water, those too can yield better health outcomes and savings.

So I completely agree, and I am sure—

Senator WHITEHOUSE. If you give us a chance, we will prove that for this very vulnerable population.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Whitehouse.

We now have Senator Bennet. We are also glad to be joined by Senator Warren. TBD with respect to others, but let us go with Senator Bennet.

Senator BENNET. Thank you, Chairman Wyden. Can you hear me?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Senator BENNET. Thank you, Chairman Wyden, and thanks to Ranking Member Crapo as well for holding this hearing on nominations to fill these critical roles at the HHS. I want to thank Mr. Gordon, Ms. Contreras, and Ms. Jones Gaston for your willingness to serve and work to care for our Nation's children and families.

Ms. Contreras and Ms. Jones Gaston, both of you will have important roles overseeing programs that take care of our Nation's most vulnerable children. For years I have worked alongside Senator Wyden and Senator Grassley to write and pass the Family First Prevention Services Act. This is aimed to modernize our Nation's child welfare system and support kids and families at risk of entering the foster care system. And although States are moving forward to support these families, they are still encountering barriers, specifically on how the Prevention Services Clearinghouse is approving programs. Colorado has also shared its concerns on the slow timing and back-and-forth with regional offices simply to have plans approved.

Where do you see opportunities to enhance oversight and engagement with States and Tribes to ensure that children and families across the country are receiving the support we promised them to

stay together? Do you—why don't you go ahead and please answer that?

Ms. JONES GASTON. Thank you, Senator, for the question. It is absolutely critical that we find ways to be able to support States being able to implement that important legislation so that we are preventing maltreatment and preventing the utilization of foster care as our only path to serving children and families.

There has been a lot of information that has been gathered I know over the last year from some States in regards to the experience of the Clearinghouse. I think the other important information that has been gathered has been from the providers who are submitting information to the Clearinghouse for consideration.

So I am committed to working with yourself and with the team, if confirmed, to be able to find ways to get the evidence-based practices into our Clearinghouse; to make sure they are the services that are needed for the diverse populations that we serve across this country; and to work with the States to be able to really get the prevention plans submitted, approved, and implemented so that children and families are getting what was intended from the Family First Act.

Senator BENNET. Okay. We look forward to working with you on that. And, Ms. Contreras, I do not know whether you have an additional answer to that, but let me ask you a different question, and then you can add that up. My time is short.

Ms. Contreras, I applaud your interest in serving in one of the most difficult positions. And if you are confirmed, you've got a lot of hard work set out for you. One of your responsibilities will be to care for the 9,600 unaccompanied children that are under the custody of HHS. As I have mentioned before in this committee, the previous administration almost did everything in its power to dismantle our legal immigration system. It cut important services for kids in the government's custody. Hundreds of kids were separated from their parents under the last President's policies and were never reunified, which remains a challenge under the current administration.

In the past month, we have begun to see the number of unaccompanied kids in HHS custody start to increase again for number of reasons not under your jurisdiction, but you are ultimately responsible for caring for them once they are here.

I am disappointed that we have not seen a proactive public plan from the Biden administration on what they are doing to best serve these children. If confirmed, will you commit to establishing a public strategy on caring for unaccompanied children and sharing that with me and the rest of the Congress?

In the meantime, could you speak to this broader set of issues?

Ms. CONTRERAS. Senator Bennet, thank you for that question. If confirmed, my priority is the safety of children and the well-being of families. That includes all children. That includes our children who are in the unaccompanied children program.

I will share that I have represented unaccompanied children as their lawyer. I have trained ORR staff and providers in the past. This is a world that I know. And I know that there are many partners out there who want to work with us to make sure that we are

caring for children in a way that adopts the best practices from child welfare. And that will be my priority, if confirmed.

It is to, number one, make sure that we are watching the data in our planning. Number two, to make sure that we are trying to build systems that adopt the best child welfare practices. Number three, we are keeping these kids safe the whole way as we do that. And number four, we are then reunifying them with family, or placing them safely with a vetted sponsor as soon as we can.

Those are my goals. You have my commitment to working with you and all partners in achieving that.

Senator BENNET. My time is up, but do you think you have the funding to be able to fulfill the responsibility that you just described?

Ms. CONTRERAS. Senator, thank you for that question. If confirmed, I certainly do commit to following up with you on funding and sharing any input on that.

Senator BENNET. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. All right. Thank you for your outstanding work for kids all these years, Senator Bennet.

So, we have members—it is a hectic day—coming and going. We are going to lock in the next three: Senator Grassley, Senator Warren, and Senator Hassan.

Senator Grassley?

Senator GRASSLEY. Thank you very much. I want to explain that I was not here for your testimony because I was across the hall as ranking member of the Judiciary Committee.

I am going to start with Ms. Contreras. Congress passed the Family First Prevention Services Act in an effort to focus Federal child welfare resources in keeping families together. The expectation is that this will result in fewer children entering foster care. However, the primary goal should be to improve the safety and well-being of children who are at risk, not simply to lower the number of kids in care.

If confirmed, how will you work to ensure that the Department is tracking safety and health outcomes for children who are impacted by Family First?

Ms. CONTRERAS. Thank you for that question, Senator, and thank you for your leadership and this body's leadership on passing Family First, which is a very important piece of legislation that, when we live out its vision fully, is going to make a big difference and is making a difference now for families and children.

My priorities, if confirmed, are to make sure that we are collaborating with States, counties, and Tribal Governments; that we are collaborating so that we are providing technical assistance and resources to help them put those plans together, to help those plans get approved, to ensure that we are making the Clearinghouse a robust source for States of best practices, programs, and services that work for diverse families, programs, and services that are culturally competent; and collaborating across HHS and across government.

How can we work better within HHS, how can we work better with HUD to provide services, to collaborate, and at least to communicate to families on the ground? All of the ways that this Con-

gress has passed, and the administration is living out, to support families and children—those are my priorities.

If confirmed, I look forward to being a partner with you, with States, with Tribal Governments, and with our partners on the ground to make sure that we are supporting families and children and trying to keep them safely together.

Senator GRASSLEY. For Ms. Jones Gaston, across the country, including my State of Iowa, there is a shortage of foster parents. This has caused a very unsuitable placement for children who need to enter foster care. Many foster parents choose to stop fostering after only 1 year, and most say that they did not feel supported by the agencies.

So how would you, if confirmed, approach improving the retention rates of foster parents?

Ms. JONES GASTON. Thank you for the question, Senator Grassley. And first I would just like to acknowledge and thank you for your service to Iowa. As a child of Iowa, it is a pleasure to see you today.

Foster parents have a very difficult job. They are critical to our work in child welfare and partnering with us in caring for the children who come to us, oftentimes with experiences that include trauma and add to challenges that they have. And so it is critical that we support our foster families, that we recruit families that diversely represent the children and families that we are serving, and that we are looking for ways to be able to support them.

In my experience, I have been able to work really closely with the foster parent associations in each of the States that I have served—in Maryland and Oregon—and identify really a feedback loop so that as the agency was getting information directly from those that are serving with us, we were able to identify where are the places where we need improvement, what are the things that are working?

The other important piece is, we need partners. And so partnering and collaborating with the community, with organizations, to also wrap around the support that foster families and the children whom they are serving need, as well as their families, is really critical to being able to create, again, the safety network that is also inclusive of our resource families and foster parents.

Senator GRASSLEY. Last February—this will be my last question—last February, Secretary Becerra went before our committee. He was asked about being responsive to questions that we would ask him. He committed to Chairman Wyden that he will be prompt in answering questions by any Senator of this committee. Secretary Becerra told me in writing, quote, “I will provide prompt responses in writing to requests from any member of the committee.”

Unfortunately, this has not happened. On June the 10th, 2021, at a budget hearing with Secretary Becerra, I submitted questions for the record, including about rural health and my oversight into COVID-19 origins. In total, 20 Senators asked 181 questions. Last week, we got answers to these questions—237 days later. This is not a prompt response. I can understand it takes time to respond, but HHS needs to respond.



So I guess, instead of asking each of you separately, you see the problem we have, and I hope you can overcome this and be more responsive to our questions.

The CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman has expired. Senator Warren is next, and then Senator Hassan. And we also have a great champ for children who has come, Senator Brown. We will go with Warren then Hassan, the next two we just announced.

Senator Warren?

Senator WARREN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for your willingness to serve and for being with us here today. I wish I had time to talk with all of you about your work, but I want to focus in on one issue in particular.

Ms. Contreras, you are nominated to serve as Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, and that means that, if confirmed, you will oversee a number of important programs at HHS, including Child Care and Head Start.

Now, millions of American families right now rely on child-care providers so that parents can go to work. And millions of children are in child care, where they get a chance to play and learn and grow. But our child-care system is in crisis. Things were bad enough before the pandemic, with millions of parents unable to find quality child care that they could afford. But now, COVID has forced more than 10,000 child-care providers to close their doors, and thousands more to reduce capacity. Even with record job creations this past year, the child-care industry is still down 136,000 workers compared with early 2020. Seven thousand child-care jobs evaporated just during this latest Omicron wave.

So, Ms. Contreras, may I ask: a child care shortage means it is even harder for families to find a center with an open slot for a child. But does it also have an impact on what child care costs?

Ms. CONTRERAS. Thank you for that question, Senator Warren, and thank you for your leadership on this issue.

I agree with you that child-care costs are a challenge for American families. I have represented many struggling young mothers for whom child care was simply not within reach. When we look at the costs of child care, I think one thing that we have seen is, during the pandemic there were too many—there are too many—child-care providers who are struggling, and too many who, if not closed, as you mentioned, are facing closure.

I believe one study that I read showed that providers have seen nearly a 50-percent increase in their costs, in part due to the pandemic. And that is since the start of the pandemic. We have to do better.

You have my commitment, if confirmed, that I will be working with you as a partner, working with providers on the ground, to support their workforce and to support providers so that we are making sure that we are taking care of the people who are taking care of our kids.

Senator WARREN. Well, I very much appreciate that. You know, the numbers are just really awful in this area. HHS considers child care affordable when it costs no more than 7 percent of a family's income. And yet the median family—that's the family right in the middle—that is using child care right now is paying 25 percent of

their income. Think about that. More than three times what HHS deems as affordable.

So families are paying more for child care. And let me just ask: has the cost of providing that care gone up during the pandemic, Ms. Contreras?

Ms. CONTRERAS. Thank you, Senator. I think they go hand in hand. That is what we have seen, that the cost of child care and even the availability of it, are greater problems than they were before the pandemic. But also, we are seeing that providers are experiencing these very high increases in the costs to them.

And our job is to make sure we have a stable child-care sector for kids and for parents. And you have my commitment to work with you on that so that we are speaking with providers on the ground, that we are helping them to support their workforce, and that we are building stability into that sector.

Senator WARREN. So families are paying more. Child-care centers are spending more—things like masks and tests, their ratios of supervisors to children—and yet child-care workers are not making any more money. In fact, for many of them, they would make more money if they left and went to Walmart than they will working at a child-care center.

One survey found—and this has real consequences for families—one survey found that to save money on child care, 94 percent of parents had recently resorted to reducing work hours, switching jobs, or leaving the workforce altogether.

So let me ask one last question to see if we can do this quickly. There is a lot we need to do to invest in child care in this country. Are you worried that if more help does not come quickly, we are going to see more centers closing their doors and even fewer children and parents who have access to high-quality, affordable child care?

Ms. CONTRERAS. Senator, we do have to get to work to make sure that we have a stable sector, and we need to put the supports there. You have a partner, if confirmed.

Senator WARREN. Good. We need to make big investments in child care. That is part of what Build Back Better is all about, and it is time for us to get this done. Thank you. And thank you all for being here.

The CHAIRMAN. The Senator makes a number of important points. She and I have talked about it. In a sense—Democrats do not use this word very much—but also as supply-siders, we need to create a bigger supply, and then some of the other points that Senator Warren correctly points out. So we will be following up on that.

The next member, per tentative agreement, is Senator Hassan, then Senator Brown, Senator Casey, and then Senator Cassidy. And I think that has been agreeable on all sides.

Senator Hassan?

Senator HASSAN. Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. And I just want to start by thanking you and the ranking member for this hearing. And to all of our nominees, thank you so much for being willing to serve, and thank your families too, because this is a family effort, I know.

I want to start with a question to Ms. Jones Gaston. Good morning. One of our greatest societal responsibilities is to keep our children safe, a responsibility that all too often goes unmet because of systemic failures. Recognizing this, it is essential that child welfare agencies make improvements. In your current role as Child Welfare Director in Oregon, you have overseen major system reforms and set an example for what other States may want to consider to improve their own child welfare systems.

If confirmed, how will you help States improve their child welfare agencies so that no child falls between the cracks?

Ms. JONES GASTON. Thank you for that question. The systemic change is absolutely needed, and it is possible. And it cannot be child welfare agencies alone; it has to be in partnership with health, with education, with Medicaid, with community partners, to really build the supports around families and communities so that, ultimately, we are preventing maltreatment, so that children are safe and not harmed.

And then for the response system that the child welfare agency is, when there is a safety concern, it is being able to make sure that we have a workforce that is skilled, that we have partnerships and services available. Congress has provided a number of supports throughout the pandemic that we have been able to use flexibly in being able to meet some of the unexpected needs of families and children that we are serving. And it is paramount that we are also in partnership with other departments and organizations, and this body, as we continue to try and solve the complex challenges that children and families and communities are facing, ultimately with the focus of child safety and family well-being at the forefront. Thank you.

Senator HASSAN. Thank you. I think one of the issues that is kind of perpetual is that adults tend to focus on adults when we set policy. And we really need to put our kids first, and I would really look forward to working with you on that.

I want to follow up on Senator Warren's line of questioning with you, Ms. Contreras, about our child-care system, our deficits, what we need to do. And I just want to drill down on one area, because I agree with Senator Warren's analysis. I am hearing from constituents all over New Hampshire about the difficulty of finding child care, about the expense when they do, and about the difficulty that certain kinds of work schedules pose in terms of aligning a reliable, stable child care setting with somebody's work obligations.

But I want to drill down on what you think could be gained, if anything, if the Office of Child Care and Office of Head Start work together to increase access to early childhood education programs? Are there ways we can strengthen that partnership to really strengthen our overall child-care system?

Ms. CONTRERAS. Thank you for that question, Senator. Absolutely. Part of the approach for me, if confirmed, is to make sure that we are trying to break down silos throughout ACF, and throughout HHS, but in particular throughout ACF. We have incredible services and programs available to families and to kids on the ground, and we are not always presenting that through gateways where they are aware of all of the supports that are available.

When we talk about early ed and child care, our goal is to build systems, to support systems that have diverse providers, so that we are communicating with them and not just with the State, but with the providers directly, and trying to really build the supply. As was just mentioned, really trying to build accessibility and support providers in a way that they can support their workforce, those people who are taking care of our kids, so that we can make sure that they can afford the expenses of staying in business so that families have somewhere to go, and that they can afford that.

Senator HASSAN. Well, thank you. And I want to follow up with one final question on the same issue generally of child care, but we know the importance of early intervention to the overall development and success of young children with disabilities.

Unfortunately, the pandemic has resulted in many infants and toddlers with disabilities not being identified and with delay in getting necessary supports and services to children.

I recently introduced a bill that would increase funding for the early intervention services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to better support infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. I realize I am over time, so we should be very brief here and we can follow up, but if confirmed, how will you ensure that families are connecting with the right resources and supports for their young kids with disabilities?

Ms. CONTRERAS. Thank you for that question, Senator. Briefly, at home in my home State, I worked in our Medicaid agency as Assistant Director and at our State Department of Health Services overseeing some of the partnerships that were linked to this specifically. What we need to do is make sure we are talking to our State and local governments, that we are listening not just talking, to understand what they need to support the families and the kids in their State. And that is my commitment to you, if confirmed.

Senator HASSAN. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank my colleague and look forward very much to working with her on her bill. It sounds very important.

Senator Brown?

Senator BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to start with asking a question of your constituent, if I could, Ms. Jones Gaston, and thank you for our conversation the other day.

Family First created the QRTP, the Qualified Residential Treatment Program, to ensure children being cared for by families could access appropriate residential treatment. This policy reflects recommendations from individuals with lived experience in the foster care system who have experienced trauma from institutional phenomena.

CMS has issued guidance to clarify that the Medicaid IMD exclusion rule applies to QRTPs with more than 16 beds, as you know. There has been confusion in my State regarding which providers are eligible to receive Federal Medicaid dollars. Our office continues to get outreach from QRTPs asking for clarification, and that is where you come in.

So how can ACF and CMS work together to clear up any remaining confusion to provide clarity for States like Ohio and others to

ensure the integrity of the QRTP models so that youth and group care can get the evidence-based trauma-informed services they need, and perhaps bring in your experience implementing that model in Oregon and Maryland? Thank you.

Ms. JONES GASTON. Thank you, Senator. The issue is complex, and it is absolutely necessary for us to be partnering across CMS, child welfare, and within the departments.

In Oregon, the partnership that I have had with the Medicaid Director, as well as our health department, has been critical to trying to both identify the appropriate services and the service array that children with complex needs need, and also do the problem-solving around how we actually make sure that we are in compliance with the Federal requirements, as well as our State statutes.

My commitment is to work with CMS, if confirmed, and others, and to hear from States around what are the questions and the challenges that are being faced, and to find some resolution for being able to provide the clarity that is needed so that States can fully take advantage of Family First and, most importantly, children are able to get the services that they need in the manner that they need to get them.

Senator BROWN. Thank you. I plan to vote for your confirmation, and we will work on that, on those issues, together.

My other question is for Ms. Contreras. It is nice to see you, and thank you for the conversation earlier. Research shows that racial disparities occur at nearly every major decision-making point in our child-care system, from disproportionate to suspected maltreatment reports, to child protective services investigations, to out-of-home placements.

There are a variety of factors that contribute to this disparity, as we know, including higher rates of poverty in under-represented communities, and including structural racism. Last week, ACF published various resources regarding its commitments to advancing racial equity for all, including preventive services, as a means of improving family well-being, decreasing potentially traumatic interventions, and building some kind of family resilience.

The Family First Prevention Services Act has helped to encourage this important shift towards prioritizing prevention services. My questions, two questions together, and if you would, answer: how do you work to address these systemic disparities that exist in the child welfare system by improving prevention services through Family First? And how can Congress aid these efforts as we work on title IV-B reauthorization?

Ms. CONTRERAS. Thank you for the question, Senator. Prevention is the vision that this body passed through Family First, and I thank you for your leadership in passing Family First as a body.

When it comes to equity, as you mentioned, ACF recently did make a commitment around equity. The racial disparities that occur in child welfare systems, and in other systems around ACF, are issues that we need to address.

Number one, we need to pay attention to the data. We need to collect the data in the right way in working with State partners. And we need to pay attention to it. We cannot afford to look away. And number two, we need to support States in understanding what are some best practices. Here is what is happening in this jurisdic-

tion that is a program that is really working, whether that is working with grandparents, kinship, whether that is working with communities in other ways. Number three, we really need to make sure we are building a diverse workforce of people who have different experiences, different lived experience, so that they are at the table.

That brings new partnerships, new relationships, people who do not know they could have applied for grants in the past but are providing very exceptional services coming to the table.

From my perspective, it is not taking our eye off the ball. You also asked about prevention services and the reauthorization that is coming up. If confirmed, my commitment is along those same lines. It is prevention. It is, how do we help States understand all the services that are available? How do we help States understand what works? How do we support them in taking advantage of all these services at a time when, as we discussed earlier in this hearing, they are experiencing workforce shortages and have a lot of issues themselves from the pandemic?

You have my commitment, Senator, that I will be a partner with you in this work; that we will take racial disparities on; that we will look for creative ways from people who are working on this across the country; and that we will make prevention the center of what we are doing, because family well-being is the direction that we are committed to moving forward.

Senator BROWN. Thank you, Ms. Contreras. I plan to support your nomination, and we will work together. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Brown. And the nominees should know, when you say you will make kids the center of your work, that has been the center of Sherrod Brown's time in public service. So thank you so much, and I thank my colleague.

Okay. We have been calling some audibles, and what we are going to do now, with the agreement of the members, is we will have Senator Casey, Senator Thune, and Senator Cassidy. And I think Senator Casey is online.

Senator Casey, are you out there in cyberspace?

Senator CASEY. Yes, Mr. Chairman. Thanks very much. And I want to thank each of the nominees for their commitment to public service. It has never been more important to have committed individuals doing the work that you all are doing for children and families, and so much else.

But I wanted to start with a question that I will direct at both Ms. Contreras and Ms. Jones Gaston regarding your roles overseeing a number of vital programs that relate to both children and families.

As you know, children flourish when their needs across many domains are met. I outlined in early 2020 the five freedoms for America's children: the freedom to be healthy, the freedom to be economically secure, the freedom to learn, the freedom to be safe from harm, and the freedom from hunger.

And as you know, within the Administration on Children and Families there are a number of programs that support these needs for children, including Head Start, child-care programs, child welfare, foster care, family violence prevention, and so much else. And here is my basic question. In your roles, how would each of you

work to build bridges within HHS itself, as well as build bridges among States and community organizations that you fund, so that they can better coordinate programming for both children and families that they serve?

We will start with Ms. Contreras.

Ms. CONTRERAS. Thank you, Senator, for that question. If I could start with an example, because it is exactly what you are talking about, I have represented many trafficking survivors in my career. I will give you an example of the first trafficking survivor I served.

Her mother had serious mental health issues. Her father had serious substance abuse issues. She went into the foster care system. Ultimately, after several placements, she ran away from a group home, which is when she met her trafficker, whom she thought was her boyfriend, but quickly it became apparent he was not. And she was in a violent situation for a couple of years.

I think all the things that you are speaking to and the promise that lives in Family First is to follow her journey. How could we have supported dad's substance abuse? How could we have supported mom in her mental health issues? How could we have worked to make sure that she did not have a traumatic experience in a group home?

And the good news is, the homeless and runaway youth system that this Congress supports found her. The good news is, the trafficking grants that you have at ACF funded my organization to provide legal services to her. And the good news is, we are meeting kids, young adults, but our job and my priority, if confirmed, is that we are meeting them sooner, and that we are not forgetting that the real opportunity we have is to support those parents from day one when we can tell that they may be entering crisis. And, if confirmed, you have my commitment to work with you on that. Thank you again for that question.

Senator CASEY. Thank you.

Ms. Jones Gaston?

Ms. JONES GASTON. Thank you, Senator. Concrete supports are absolutely needed for meeting the needs, and the collaboration across agencies, organizations, and communities for meeting these needs. We know that almost half, if not a little more than half, of the families that become involved with child welfare become involved because of reasons around neglect. And those are oftentimes connected to consequences of the experience of poverty.

And so, we need to be able to work with the organizations and the agencies and the departments, as well as with the congressional members like yourself, to get those concrete supports to the families and children that need them so that we are preventing maltreatment, preventing the unnecessary involvement with a child welfare agency, and moving deeper into a foster care system. Young people who are experiencing homelessness, family violence—all of those issues are critical. And the concrete supports to be able to help resolve some of those challenges are needed.

The other thing that I would just mention briefly is that the partnership and hearing the voices of those young people, those parents, those families, is also critical to understanding what it is that is needed to be able to prevent maltreatments, prevent further

involvement with the child welfare systems, and the experiences that people are having related to homelessness and family violence.

And I look forward to partnering with you and members of this committee in continuing to look for solutions and supporting our families and children.

Senator CASEY. Well, thanks so much. What I will do is submit a question, as well, for the record to you regarding infant plans of safe care, and to Ms. Contreras regarding domestic violence and some of the legislation that we are all working on. But, Mr. Chairman, I want to turn it back over to you. Thank you very much.

[The questions appear in the appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Casey. And for our witnesses, Senator Casey also has had a long career of focusing on families and kids. So you are going to have a number of members on both sides of the aisle who are going to want to follow up with you.

Senator Thune?

Senator THUNE. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to our nominees for being here today.

Ms. Contreras, as you know, Federal employees on or near our southern border have been tasked with addressing historic levels of migrants. Many of them have been taken into custody after crossing illegally, outside of legal points of entry, which has put a tremendous strain not only on the men and women of the Border Patrol, but on the resources dedicated to the children who end up in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement.

I do not mean to suggest that the unaccompanied children who are often trafficked to the United States are not vulnerable, but you would think that the services of ORR contribute to the pull factor of the unprecedented immigration pressures that we are seeing at the border.

Ms. CONTRERAS. Thank you for that question, Senator. When it comes to ORR, the responsibility of the ACF remains similar to our responsibility elsewhere, and that is trying to protect the children, their safety, as they are in our care.

In regards to the ORR program, what I will be doing is trying to work to make sure that we are looking at the data. There are influxes that happen in the referrals to ACF, and we need to be prepared for that. And that will be my job, to make sure we are keeping them safe, and we are reuniting them with family, or placing them with embedded sponsors as soon as we safely can.

Senator THUNE. Well, and I hope you will look at the question of whether or not that is acting as an incentive, and one of the pull factors associated with the number of people who are currently coming.

At the same time that ORR is responding to the border crisis, you will also be tasked with assisting a large population of Afghan arrivals. If confirmed, how will you deconflict the competition for resources? And will you ensure that resources will not be steered from our Afghan security partners in favor of the situation at the border?

Ms. CONTRERAS. Thank you for that question, Senator. If confirmed to this position, it will be my approach to make sure that



we can keep moving forward on multiple fronts. That just comes with the job.

The ACF staff and the staff at ORR take the responsibilities of both very seriously, and it will be my commitment to you that we are supporting Afghan refugees, the families and the children that come into our care, and working with our partners to provide the services that they need, at the same time as we are fulfilling our responsibilities to unaccompanied children.

Senator THUNE. If confirmed, you are going to be tasked with overseeing the Office of Head Start. And as you know, late last year Secretary Becerra published an Interim Final Rule mandating that all staff and volunteers in Head Start facilities be vaccinated and need to wear a mask. But they went beyond that. The rule, in my view, absurdly—absurdly—mandates that children as young as 2 years old must also be masked while at the Head Start facility, including while outside on the playground.

I am wondering what your view on that is? Not even the World Health Organization recommends masking children under the age of 5, according to their analysis of science and data around this. They say it just does not have the impact on safety for children under 5.

If confirmed, what will you do about that? Can you rescind this policy? It has obviously become a big issue for a lot of parents, administrators, teachers, and kids around the country.

Ms. CONTRERAS. Thank you, Senator. Head Start is a very important part of the responsibilities of ACF. And if confirmed, it will be my priority to work with States and localities and the providers on the ground to hear what they are experiencing, to hear how we can support them and their workforce.

Because at the end of the day, the number one priority is, yes, we are protecting the health and safety of children and families and staff, but also that we are trying to help as many providers keep their doors open as possible in a safe way.

Senator THUNE. I would just urge you, as you do that, as you do examine that and you talk with providers and with the people, the stakeholder community, to really encourage allowing these decisions to be made by the States. I just do not know why the Federal Government is wading into having children as young as 2 years old have a requirement, even when they are outside, to wear a mask. It just does not make any sense, and even the World Health Organization, as I said, has come to that conclusion.

Ms. Jones Gaston, South Dakota has a sizeable Native American population. Therefore, given your current role as Child Welfare Director for the State of Oregon, I imagine that part of your job includes interacting with Tribal leaders and families about how best to address matters affecting the safety and well-being of children on Native American reservations.

Could you just share with the committee, if confirmed, how you would ensure Tribal Governments have a seat at the table, and more importantly, that the needs of families and children across Indian country are always given consideration?

Ms. JONES GASTON. Thank you for that question, Senator. In my time in Oregon, I have been able to happily partner with the nine federally recognized Tribes that are in Oregon. And they have had

a seat at the table with us in the development of the Vision for Transformation, in the development of our Family First Prevention Services Plan, and in fact are working side by side with us in our implementation of that plan. And we are actually, as the State, learning from their example in many ways about the way in which prevention services are provided to the community and to families.

And I will continue, if confirmed, to be committed to partnering with Tribal Nations and Tribal communities to make sure that the services and programs under my purview are available, open, and in conversation with Tribal Nations to make sure that the things that are moving forward are in support of the well-being of Tribal children, and families as well.

Senator THUNE. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank my colleague. I am just going to make a very brief closing statement. I want to thank both colleagues who are here, Senator Crapo and Senator Thune, because they have been part of the effort in this committee to focus in a bipartisan way.

Family First was a historic development. And we saw already from Ms. Jones Gaston the results, the 20-percent reduction in foster care placements, and the third kind of option in Oregon and around the country. You would not just have a kid in an unacceptable situation at home, or go into a placement, a foster care placement that was not going to work. You were going to do something different.

And Family First was a bipartisan breakthrough. The CHRONIC Care bill, which we have referenced here today, would modernize the Medicare guarantee—that is you, Mr. Gordon. We are going to be able to play a pivotal role in it, recognizing that acute care is not the only part of health care today, but we are dealing with chronic disease. And yesterday, Senator Crapo and I showed that the Finance Committee is going to try to move in a bipartisan way on mental health, which is urgent—urgent—business because, if we just go forward with business as usual on the mental health front, we could lose much of a generation.

So what you had to say today, and being responsive to members on both sides of the aisle today, is very welcome. We look forward to considering your nominations. I intend to vote for all three of you. I am happy to vote for all three of you. And I would just like to thank all the members today for their participation.

And regarding questions for the record, the deadline for members to submit QFRs will be this Friday, February 11th, at 5 p.m. That 5 p.m. deadline, I would say to colleagues, is firm.

We want to thank everyone for their cooperation. And with that, the committee is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:43 a.m., the hearing was concluded.]

## APPENDIX

### ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF JANUARY CONTRERAS, NOMINATED TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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, whom 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 have been 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; and 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.

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## SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

### STATEMENT OF INFORMATION REQUESTED OF NOMINEE

#### A. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. Name (include any former names used): January Esquivel Contreras. Former: January Fontes Esquivel, January Joy Esquivel.
2. Position to which nominated: Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
3. Date of nomination: January 7, 2022.
4. Address (list current residence, office, and mailing addresses):
5. Date and place of birth: January 15, 1971; Bergstrom Air Force Base, Austin, Texas.
6. Marital status (include maiden name of wife or husband's name):
7. Names and ages of children:
8. Education (list all secondary and higher education institutions, dates attended, degree received, and date degree granted):  
 Westwood High School, Mesa, Arizona.  
 Attended: August 1986–May 1988.  
 University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona.  
 Attended: August 1988–May 1993.  
 Bachelor of Arts, May 1993.  
 University of Arizona, College of Law, Tucson, Arizona.  
 Attended: August 1994–December 1996.  
 Juris Doctor, December 1996.
9. Employment record (list all jobs held since college, including the title or description of job, name of employer, location of work, and dates of employment for each job):

Title/Description of Job	Employer and Location	Start Date	End Date
Transition Advisor	Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services (ALWAYS), Phoenix, Arizona	7/2021	10/2021
Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer	Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services (ALWAYS), Phoenix, Arizona	11/2018	7/2021
Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer	Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services (ALWAYS), Phoenix, Arizona	10/2013	10/2017
Contract Attorney	Self-Employed, Phoenix, Arizona	7/2013	12/2014
Contract Policy Advisor	Fred Duval for Governor, Phoenix, Arizona	2/2013	12/2014
Lecturer	Barret Honors Summer Scholar Program, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona	5/2013	6/2013
Chief Operating Officer/Interim Director	Halle Center for Family Justice, Arizona State University, Phoenix, Arizona	12/2012	7/2013
Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman	U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Washington, DC	11/2009	4/2012
Senior Advisor to the Secretary	U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Washington, DC	3/2009	11/2009
Director	Arizona Department of Health Services, Phoenix, Arizona	7/2008	1/2009
Senior Health Advisor to the Governor	Office of the Governor, Phoenix, Arizona	7/2006	7/2008
Assistant Director and Legislative Liaison	Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System, Phoenix, Arizona	12/2004	7/2006
Assistant Attorney General	Office of the Attorney General, Fraud and Public Corruption Section, Phoenix, Arizona	9/2000	5/2003
Deputy County Attorney	Maricopa County Attorney's Office, Trial Bureau, Phoenix, Arizona	9/1997	9/2000
Customer Service Representative	Temporary agency placement at Bank of America, Phoenix, Arizona	1997	1997
Customer Service Representative	Temporary agency placement at Days Inn, Phoenix, Arizona	1995	1995
Broadcast Associate	Ventura County News Network, Oxnard, California	1993	1994
Sales Associate	Macy's, Ventura, California	1993	1993

10. Government experience (list any current and former advisory, consultative, honorary, or other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments held since college, including dates, other than those listed above):

City of Tucson Housing Department Domestic Violence/Human Trafficking Service Standards Work Group, 2021.

Arizona Supreme Court Task Force on Juvenile Sex Trafficking, 2017.

City of Phoenix Judicial Selection Commission, 2015–2017.

United States National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, Supporting Agency role, Deputy Secretary’s Designee, 2011.

White House Council and Women and Girls, Secretary’s Designee, 2009–2012.

Governor’s Children Cabinet, 2006–2009.

Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board, 2008–2009.

11. Business relationships (list all current and former positions held as an officer, director, trustee, partner (*e.g.*, limited partner, non-voting, etc.), proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, company, firm, partnership, other business enterprise, or educational or other institution):

Vitalyst Health Foundation: Board of Directors, 2019–present.

Technical Assistance Partnership of Arizona: Board of Directors, 2019–present.

Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services: Board of Directors, 2013–December 2021; Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer, 2013–2017 and 2018–2021.

Arizona Anti-Trafficking Network: Board of Directors, 2019–2021.

Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence: Board of Directors, 2012–2017.

Los Abogados Hispanic Bar Association: Board Member for 10+ years between 1996–2013; member, 1996–present.

Contreras Law Office, PLC: Principal, 2013–2015.

Mujer, Inc.: Board of Directors, 1999–2002.

12. Memberships (list all current and former memberships, as well as any current and former offices held in professional, fraternal, scholarly, civic, business, charitable, and other organizations dating back to college, including dates for these memberships and offices):

State Bar of Arizona: Member, 1997–present.

Fostering Arizona Advocates: Advisory board, 2016–present.

Hispanic National Bar Association: Member, 2021–present.

National Association of Counsel for Children: Member, 2021–present.

International Women’s Forum: Member, 2017–present.

International Women’s Forum—Arizona: Member, 2017–present.

Arizona Partnership to End Domestic Trafficking: Steering Committee, 2014–2018.

National Latino Children’s Institute, Summit Steering Committee, 2012, Summit Co-Chair and Summit Steering Committee, 2013–2014.

Hispanic National Bar Association Law Student Division, Regional President, 1995–1996.

Latino Law Student Association, Co-President, 1994–1995.

Mortar Board Honorary, 1991–1992.

Minority Action Council, 1989–1992.

Chi Omega, Member, 1989–1992.

13. Political affiliations and activities:

- a. List all public offices for which you have been a candidate dating back to the age of 18.

Attorney General, State of Arizona, 2018.

- b. List all memberships and offices held in and services rendered to all political parties or election committees, currently and during the last 10 years prior to the date of your nomination.

Arizona Democratic Party, precinct committeeman, 2017–present.

Arizona Democratic Party, State Committee Member, 2018–2020.

- c. Itemize all political contributions to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity of \$50 or more for the past 10 years prior to the date of your nomination.

See table.

Contribution Description	Date	Amount
Obama for America	2/23/2012	\$100
	8/28/2012	\$100
	11/1/2012	\$60
Kyrsten Sinema for Congress	8/21/2012	\$150
	11/2/2012	\$100
Carmona for Arizona	9/27/2012	\$250
	10/26/2012	\$100
Ron Barber for Congress	10/24/2014	\$50
Mary Rose Wilcox for Congress	3/31/2014	\$100
	5/20/2014	\$150
Kirkpatrick for Arizona	10/24/2014	\$50
Hillary for America	10/16/2016	\$250
	7/30/2016	\$100
	10/3/2016	\$50
Kirkpatrick for Senate	9/15/2016	\$400
Kyrsten Sinema for Congress	7/30/2016	\$50
Gallego for Arizona	6/29/2016	\$250
Hillary Victory Fund	10/16/2016	\$250
Kirkpatrick for Senate	5/27/2015	\$50
Gallego for Congress	8/31/2015	\$100
Kyrsten Sinema for Congress	8/31/2015	\$50
Tom O'Halleran for Congress	10/13/2016	\$55
Hillary for America	7/30/2016	\$100
	10/3/2016	\$50
Gallego for Congress	6/30/2019	\$100
Mark Kelly for Senate	6/9/2019	\$50
Biden for President	4/28/2020	\$250
	10/12/2020	\$100
Stanton for Congress	12/31/2020	\$100
Hirai for Congress	10/20/2020	\$100
Montanans for Bullock	11/3/2020	\$50
Register Her!	9/27/2021	\$100
Yassamin Ansari for City Council	2/21/2021	\$150

Contribution Description	Date	Amount
Arena 527	12/1/2020	\$50
Eric Kurland for Arizona	10/18/2020	\$50
Coral 4 AZ	10/18/2020	\$100
Gabriella for Recorder	10/12/2020 6/24/2020	\$50 \$100
Peten for People First	10/12/2020 9/26/2020	\$100 \$50
Mendoza for Arizona	9/26/2020	\$50
Stephanie Stahl Hamilton for State Senate	9/26/2020	\$50
Adam Ragan for TUSD	9/14/2020	\$50
Paul for Arizona	7/3/2020	\$100
AJ for State Senate	7/3/2020	\$50
Adelita for Supervisor	7/3/2020	\$100
Berdetta Hodge for Tempe School Board	6/27/2020	\$50
Arizona Coalition for Change	6/3/2020	\$50
Aaron Conner for Treasurer	5/24/2020	\$50
Whitney for Maricopa County	3/31/2020 8/23/2020	\$100 \$100
Vania Guevara for City Council	5/3/2019 2/6/2019	\$150 \$100
Vania Guevara for City Council	12/15/2017	\$250
Raquel Teran for Arizona Legislature	11/23/2017	\$100
Penzone for Sheriff	8/8/2016	\$100
Debbie Nez-Manuel for Arizona	12/7/2019	\$100
Francisca Montoya for Phoenix	1/30/2020	\$200
Jevin Hodge for Supervisor	5/13/2020	\$100
Adrian Fontes for County Recorder	2/28/2020	\$100
Rex Scott for Supervisor	11/23/2019	\$100

14. Honors and awards (list all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, military medals, and any other special recognitions for outstanding service or achievement received since the age of 18):

Rosa Carrillo Torres Humanitarian Award, Valle Del Sol, 2021.

Heart of Justice Champion, Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services, 2021.

Legal Aid Attorney of the Year, State Bar of Arizona, 2020.

YWCA Tribute to Leadership Award, 2020.

Judge Learned Hand Public Service Award, American Jewish Committee, 2017.

Mujer Leadership Luminaria, 2016.

Outstanding Woman in Business, Phoenix Business Journal, 2016.

Outstanding Mentor, Phoenix Business Journal, 2016.



- Shriver Center on Poverty Law, Racial Justice Institute Fellowship, 2016.  
 National Hispana Leadership Institute, Executive Leadership Fellow, 2013.  
 Top Forty Under 40, Phoenix Business Journal, 2008.  
 40 Hispanic Leaders Under 40, AZ Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, 2008.  
 Dean's Achievement Award, University of Arizona, College of Law, 1994.  
 Mary Anne Richey Scholarship, Arizona Women Lawyers Association, 1995.  
 Outstanding Senior Robie Medal, University of Arizona, 1993 Commencement.  
 Outstanding Senior, University of Arizona, 1993 Hispanic Convocation.  
 Outstanding Junior Woman of the Year, Mortar Board, 1992.  
 National Hispanic Scholarship Fund, 1991, 1992 (approximately).
15. Published writings (list the titles, publishers, dates, and hyperlinks (as applicable) of all books, articles, reports, blog posts, or other published materials you have written):
- Youth Today*, Vulnerable youth need justice, and legal aid needs community, September 23, 2021: <https://youthtoday.org/2021/09/vulnerable-youth-need-justice-and-legal-aid-needs-community/>.
- Arizona Mirror*, Prosecutors must be held accountable for charging protesters as gang members, March 1, 2021: <https://www.azmirror.com/2021/03/01/prosecutors-must-be-held-accountable-for-charging-protesters-as-gang-members/>.
- Arizona Mirror*, I worked at Homeland Security. Actions ignore constitutional basics, September 16, 2020: <https://www.azmirror.com/2020/09/16/i-worked-at-homeland-security-the-agencys-shocking-actions-ignore-constitutional-basics/>.
- Arizona Daily Star*, Epstein is dead, sex trafficking is not, August 14, 2019: [https://tucson.com/opinion/local/arizona-opinion-epstein-is-dead-sex-trafficking-is-not/article\\_cc60792d-73a7-50c2-8e6b-7b32d49902bc.html](https://tucson.com/opinion/local/arizona-opinion-epstein-is-dead-sex-trafficking-is-not/article_cc60792d-73a7-50c2-8e6b-7b32d49902bc.html).
- Arizona Daily Star*, We must live the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 2018: [https://tucson.com/opinion/local/january-contreras-we-must-live-the-declaration-of-independence/article\\_3be11533-37a4-5378-be51-00509c747faf.html](https://tucson.com/opinion/local/january-contreras-we-must-live-the-declaration-of-independence/article_3be11533-37a4-5378-be51-00509c747faf.html).
- Real Clear Policy*, Obamacare Lawsuit Threatens Arizonans' Health Care, January 27, 2018: [https://www.realclearpolicy.com/articles/2018/09/27/obamacare\\_lawsuit\\_threatens\\_arizonans\\_health\\_care\\_110827.html](https://www.realclearpolicy.com/articles/2018/09/27/obamacare_lawsuit_threatens_arizonans_health_care_110827.html).
- Arizona Republic*, Arizona Licenses Banned Deferred Action Immigrants, September 19, 2013 (link is no longer available).
- White House blog message, November 3, 2011: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2011/11/03/continuing-advance-our-work-combating-domestic-violence-and-other-crimes>.
- White House blog message, January 3, 2012: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2012/01/03/departement-homeland-security-releases-u-visa-law-enforcement-certification-resource->.
- 2010 Ombudsman Annual Report to Congress: [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/cisomb\\_2010\\_annual\\_report\\_to\\_congress.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/cisomb_2010_annual_report_to_congress.pdf).
- 2011 Ombudsman Annual Report to Congress: <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/cisomb-annual-report-2011.pdf>.
16. Speeches (list all formal speeches and presentations (e.g., PowerPoint) you have delivered during the past 5 years which are on topics relevant to the position for which you have been nominated, including dates):

Speech Forum	Date
City of Phoenix Human Trafficking Commission	5/2021
Coalition for Juvenile Justice Racial Disparities Conference	11/2019
State Bar of Arizona Human Trafficking Training	4/2019
Southern Arizona Homeless Youth Summit	4/2019

Speech Forum	Date
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth Conference	11/2016
State Bar of Arizona Domestic Violence Training	10/2016

17. Qualifications (state what, in your opinion, qualifies you to serve in the position to which you have been nominated):

For more than 20 years, I have served the public by leading nonprofit and government agencies and prosecuting crimes of abuse and exploitation to protect the safety and health of children, vulnerable adults, and families. As part of these roles, I have directly supported survivors of child abuse, child neglect, domestic violence, human trafficking, and youth homelessness. I have also developed and implemented rules, regulations, budgets, laws, policies, and programs to better serve the public. I have chosen to take on these roles because I believe deeply that every person and child should live in safety, be treated with dignity, and have an opportunity to build a secure future.

These same beliefs are what led me to build a legal aid center 8 years ago, from the ground up. While leading this organization, I worked with courts and agencies to empower families and individuals during their most difficult moments. This experience instilled in me a sense of urgency to strengthen support and protections for children and families, such as those passed in the bipartisan Family First Prevention Services Act. When a family in crisis can turn to an efficient and reliable safety net, they are better equipped to get back on their feet, and their children can be better supported and protected. When prevention is the focus and a crisis can be avoided altogether, the better off a child, a family, and our communities will be.

In my home State of Arizona, I was a member of Governor Janet Napolitano's Children's Cabinet and the Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board, which worked to strengthen access to quality child care, early education, and health services to empower families as they prepare children for success in school and life. I also served as the leader of the Arizona Department of Health Services and an Assistant Director of the State's Medicaid agency. In these leadership roles, I worked with committed colleagues to deliver high-quality services that make a difference in the lives of Arizonans in efficient and cost-effective ways. To achieve results, we remained guided by bipartisan collaboration and evidenced-based policy development; the same values needed to cut through bureaucracy in any government setting.

During the Obama-Biden administration, I led the Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, where we launched innovative programs and digital services to increase the value of the office to the public and stakeholders. The success we had would not have been possible without partnerships. If there is one thing I have learned throughout my career, it is that the most effective Federal agencies are good-faith partners to community leaders on the ground and to State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments. In my role at the OHS and in other roles prior and since, I have placed high value on input from community members, local leaders, front-line staff, first responders, law enforcement, and faith-based organizations who carry out a shared mission in their own communities in every corner of our country.

I am grateful to have been entrusted, time and again, with the responsibility of stewarding public resources and executing mission-critical services. Each time I am afforded this responsibility, I remain focused on the faces of those I am entrusted to serve, whether a child who is missing their family, a grandfather in need of access to his cancer treatment, or a trafficking survivor seeking safety and a new start. If entrusted with the responsibilities of the Assistant Secretary for the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, I will work collaboratively and with a sense of urgency each day to empower safe and thriving families and children. For me, there is no professional duty more worthy.

**B. FUTURE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS**

1. Will you sever all connections (including participation in future benefit arrangements) with your present employers, business firms, associations, or organizations if you are confirmed by the Senate? If not, provide details.  
Yes.
2. Do you have any plans, commitments, or agreements to pursue outside employment, with or without compensation, during your service with the government? If so, provide details.  
No.
3. Has any person or entity made a commitment or agreement to employ your services in any capacity after you leave government service? If so, provide details.  
No.
4. If you are confirmed by the Senate, do you expect to serve out your full term or until the next presidential election, whichever is applicable? If not, explain.  
Yes.

**C. POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

1. Indicate any current and former investments, obligations, liabilities, or other personal relationships, including spousal or family employment, which could involve potential conflicts of interest in the position to which you have been nominated.  
Any potential conflict of interest will be resolved in accordance with the terms of my ethics agreement, which was developed in consultation with ethics officials at the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Government Ethics. I understand that my ethics agreement has been provided to the committee. I am not aware of any potential conflict other than those addressed by my ethics agreement.
2. Describe any business relationship, dealing, or financial transaction which you have had during the last 10 years (prior to the date of your nomination), whether for yourself, on behalf of a client, or acting as an agent, that could in any way constitute or result in a possible conflict of interest in the position to which you have been nominated.  
Any potential conflict of interest will be resolved in accordance with the terms of my ethics agreement, which was developed in consultation with ethics officials at the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Government Ethics. I understand that my ethics agreement has been provided to the committee. I am not aware of any potential conflict other than those addressed by my ethics agreement.
3. Describe any activity during the past 10 years (prior to the date of your nomination) in which you have engaged for the purpose of directly or indirectly influencing the passage, defeat, or modification of any legislation or affecting the administration and execution of law or public policy. Activities performed as an employee of the Federal Government need not be listed.  
House Bill 2055, Arizona Legislature, advocated for passage of this bill, 2019.  
Senate Bill 1422, Arizona Legislature, advocated for passage of this bill, 2017.  
Signed on to letters supporting passage of Family First Prevention Services Act, 2016–2018.  
Signed on to letters in support of increased funding for victim support via the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), 2015–2020.  
Signed on to letter in support of funding for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC), 2017.
4. Explain how you will resolve any potential conflict of interest, including any that are disclosed by your responses to the above items. (Provide the committee with two copies of any trust or other agreements.)

Any potential conflict of interest will be resolved in accordance with the terms of my ethics agreement, which was developed in consultation with ethics officials at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Government Ethics. I understand that my ethics agreement has been provided to the committee. I am not aware of any potential conflict other than those addressed by my ethics agreement.

- Two copies of written opinions should be provided directly to the committee by the designated agency ethics officer of the agency to which you have been nominated and by the Office of Government Ethics concerning potential conflicts of interest or any legal impediments to your serving in this position.

I understand that my ethics agreement has been provided to the committee.

#### D. LEGAL AND OTHER MATTERS

- Have you ever been the subject of a complaint or been investigated, disciplined, or otherwise cited for a breach of ethics for unprofessional conduct before any court, administrative agency (*e.g.*, an Inspector General's office), professional association, disciplinary committee, or other ethics enforcement entity at any time? Have you ever been interviewed regarding your own conduct as part of any such inquiry or investigation? If so, provide details, regardless of the outcome.

No.

- Have you ever been investigated, arrested, charged, or held by any Federal, State, or other law enforcement authority for a violation of any Federal, State, county, or municipal law, regulation, or ordinance, other than a minor traffic offense? Have you ever been interviewed regarding your own conduct as part of any such inquiry or investigation? If so, provide details.

No.

- Have you ever been involved as a party in interest in any administrative agency proceeding or civil litigation? If so, provide details.

I have not been named as a party in personal litigation. I have been named as a party in litigation in my official capacity as Director of the Arizona Department of Health Services.

- Have you ever been convicted (including pleas of guilty or *nolo contendere*) of any criminal violation other than a minor traffic offense? If so, provide details.

No.

- Please advise the committee of any additional information, favorable or unfavorable, which you feel should be considered in connection with your nomination.

N/A.

#### E. TESTIFYING BEFORE CONGRESS

- If you are confirmed by the Senate, are you willing to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Congress on such occasions as you may be reasonably requested to do so?

Yes.

- If you are confirmed by the Senate, are you willing to provide such information as is requested by such committees?

Yes.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD TO JANUARY CONTRERAS

#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. RON WYDEN

#### MENTAL HEALTH

*Question.* One cross-cutting issue the Finance Committee is looking into is mental health. This week, we hosted the Surgeon General to hear specifically about his recent advisory on youth mental health. This is going to be a major priority for the committee moving forward, both in terms of continuing to implement the Family

First Prevention Services Act and looking forward to the reauthorization of title IV–B child welfare programs by the end of this Congress.

Can you address how you will prioritize youth mental health needs in your work implementing Family First, and within the title IV–B programs?

Are there other initiatives focused on youth mental health you plan to implement?

Answer. I believe ACF is uniquely positioned to play a key role in addressing the youth mental health crisis in this country. If confirmed, I would work to break down silos among various ACF programs, including child welfare, runaway and homeless youth, Community Service Block Grants, and early childhood to comprehensively address youth mental health and support whole family approaches to wellness. I would also support ACF’s leadership role on the HHS Behavioral Health Coordinating Committee Subcommittee on Youth and Children, including its focus on identifying opportunities to support resilience in children and youth affected by trauma and disasters, including the COVID–19 pandemic. The upcoming reauthorization of IV–B and the continued implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act provide important opportunities to focus on prevention and family well-being. In addition, if confirmed, I would work with SAMHSA, CDC, and others to target our resources and address mental health and the impacts of adverse childhood experiences and trauma, in particular, more effectively. I look forward to partnering with you on this issue.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. MARIA CANTWELL

*Question.* One of the harsh realities that the COVID–19 pandemic exposed is the lack of affordable child care options in the United States. During the pandemic, parents, mostly women, were forced to balance online learning, their own jobs, taking care of their children, and many other tasks.

This has led to women quitting the workforce in unprecedented numbers during the pandemic so that they can take care of the needs of their families. According to the National Women’s Law Center, women in the United States have lost more than 5.4 million net jobs since February, 2020.

In Washington State and many other parts of the country, child care was already difficult to find even before COVID–19. Some parents end up having to place their children on wait lists while others can’t find any affordable or available options.

It is estimated that the average cost of licensed infant care can consume about 20 percent of an average Washington family’s income. The child-care industry in my home State is also facing high staff turnover caused by low wages and other concerns.

The lack of child care does not just take a toll on women and families, but also on the economy. I have supported legislation to provide tax credits for working families who may need help paying the cost of child care. I was also pleased to see that the House-passed Build Back Better Act included a \$100-billion investment to support high-quality child care.

We must explore more options to improve child care access in the United States to make families’ lives easier, and also to help with the social and economic recovery from the COVID–19 pandemic.

In your opinion, what are the main causes of the child care shortage today? How has COVID–19 made the situation worse?

Answer. If confirmed, I want to partner with you to bring affordable, high-quality child care within reach for all families. The COVID–19 pandemic has placed a severe strain on our child-care system, which relied on razor-thin margins to stay open. Providers are faced with increased costs to pay for PPE, cleaning supplies, and ventilation, as well as staff shortages and turnover. These challenges mean it can be hard for families to find and afford the care they need.

*Question.* If confirmed, how would you work to improve affordable child-care access through your respective roles? What approach would you take to fix this issue?

Answer. A stable child-care sector is essential for both the healthy development of children and the ability of parents to fully participate in the workforce. If confirmed, I would listen to providers to understand their needs, and work across ACF programs and with Congress to strengthen support for child-care providers and families to address this issue.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY HON. ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS

*Question.* Family and domestic violence programs provide essential support to help people leave unsafe relationships and reestablish their lives. With Senator Murkowski, I am working to reauthorize the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, the main Federal funding stream for emergency shelter and assistance for victims of family violence, including children of victims of domestic violence. Our legislation includes improvements to allow these programs to address the large unmet demand for services.

Based on your prior experience, how will you work in this role to ensure that we are reaching victims of family violence and strengthening the services we provide to them?

*Answer.* Thank you for co-leading reauthorization of the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act. During my career, I have represented many victims of intimate partner violence and worked to provide the services victims and survivors need to increase safety and to rebuild their lives. ACF's family violence work is a critical part of the agency's mission, and if confirmed, I would look forward to enhancing the delivery of services to victims of domestic violence, including through ensuring that services are accessible to all victims and that they are delivered in a culturally competent manner.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. SHELDON WHITEHOUSE

*Question.* How can the Administration for Children and Families work to improve housing stability for families and young adults living in unstable or unsafe housing or who are homeless?

*Answer.* All families and young people deserve the security of having a safe place to call home. ACF plays a significant role in providing services to children and families experiencing homelessness. If confirmed, I commit to working within ACF, and with partner agencies such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development and other partners, to ensure our most vulnerable children, youth, and families, including those experiencing homelessness, are supported.

*Question.* Do you agree it is important to embed a focus on diversity, cultural competency, and equity in the programs administered by ACF? How will you incorporate these metrics into your evaluations of programs administered by ACF?

*Answer.* The Biden-Harris administration and Secretary Becerra are committed to advancing equity and support for underserved communities, as reflected in the executive order the President signed on his first day in office, "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government." I agree this focus is important, and if confirmed, I will strive to advance this goal in all ACF work so that we can deliver services and programming in the ways that best make a positive difference in the lives of the children and families we serve. I would also work to advance ACF's recent Information Memorandum, *Equity in Action: Prioritizing and Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities*, which outlines ACF's unequivocal commitment to address disparities.

*Question.* What is your position on increasing flexibility for States to provide benefits youth and young adults under the Chafee Foster Care for Successful Transition to Adulthood Program? What is your position on extending benefits to young adults exiting foster care as was provided through the Division X of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021? Do you see this initiative as requiring additional funding?

*Answer.* The supports offered by the Chafee program for older foster youth and those transitioning out of care can be the difference between former foster youth going to college or getting a job and youth ending up without a roof over their heads. No youth should exit foster care to homelessness. The increased resources and flexibilities Congress provided have been critical, and if confirmed, I would work to examine what worked among those flexibilities and hear from those young people about their experiences.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you expand the list of evidence-based programs that qualify for reimbursement under the Family First Prevention Act (title IV-E) program?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the title IV–E Prevention Services Clearinghouse has adequate resources to be able to review and rate programs that support child and family well-being in a timely manner. I believe this must include programs that are focused specifically on serving historically underserved communities. I will also support the continued development of evidence-based practices through support of quality evaluation.

*Question.* Are there any additional wraparound services that the Federal Government should provide to support families where a parent has a SUD?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work across ACF programs and with other entities within HHS, including SAMHSA, to support families impacted by substance use disorder. In addition, I am committed to fully implementing the Family First Prevention Services Act to deliver evidence-based supports to more parents struggling with substance use disorder.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps would you take to provide parents with the tools to protect their children from counterfeit pills and other narcotics?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work with other Operating Divisions within the Department, including FDA, SAMHSA, and the CDC, to counteract the impacts of illicit drug use on the children and families ACF serves.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO

*Question.* Local jurisdictions are working hard to get Family First programs off the ground. So many of the challenges they face don't need a statutory change, but rather willing agency partners. Will you commit to working with those States and counties to ensure that the administration is doing everything possible to support a smooth implementation process?

Answer. If confirmed, successful implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act will be a top priority. This law represents a unique opportunity to reorient our child welfare system toward prevention and family well-being. I am committed to working with States, counties, Tribes, and other partners to provide the guidance and technical assistance needed for all communities to benefit from this law.

*Question.* Recently, the Finance Committee heard from Dr. Vivek Murthy, the U.S. Surgeon General, about the children's mental health crisis. What do you see as your role in addressing kids' mental health needs? Based on your previous experience, where can we do better in breaking down silos between Federal programs and arming you with the resources you'll need?

Answer. If confirmed, I would work across ACF programs and with other Operating Divisions within the Department, including SAMHSA and the CDC, to integrate support for youth mental health and addressing childhood trauma into all of our work. ACF is uniquely positioned to reach families and young people where they are and connect them with the supports they need to address mental health needs. I look forward to partnering with you on this important issue.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. ELIZABETH WARREN

*Question.* Having founded the Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services, which provides legal representation to unaccompanied children and other vulnerable young people, you undoubtedly understand the importance of legal representation for unaccompanied children. Unfortunately, many unaccompanied children in immigration proceedings lack attorneys.

In an oversight hearing in the House of Representatives last year, Acting Assistant Secretary of ACF JooYeun Chang affirmed the importance of legal representation for unaccompanied children and committed to working with Congress to ensure legal representation for all unaccompanied children.

If confirmed as Assistant Secretary of ACF, do you similarly commit to working to ensure legal representation for all unaccompanied children, and to requesting robust funding from Congress for this purpose?

Answer. Ensuring equitable access to justice is the heart of my career. If confirmed, the safety and well-being of unaccompanied children referred to ACF's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) will be a top priority, and that includes doing every-

thing possible to provide access to legal representation for children referred to ORR. If confirmed, I will work with Congress as well as the non-profit sector to increase access to legal representation for unaccompanied children and be transparent with Congress about the resources required to do so.

*Question.* Following their release from ORR custody to the care of family members, unaccompanied children must prepare their legal cases and attend immigration proceedings, often while coping with significant trauma and a range of transitions. Post-release case management services, including social services supports, medical and mental health services, and family reunification support, can provide children with much-needed assistance.

If confirmed as Assistant Secretary of ACF, what steps will you take to ensure that all children have access to vital post-release services?

*Answer.* Children referred to ORR have often experienced significant trauma in their lives. Many children are fleeing unimaginable violence in their home countries and have endured a long journey to the United States by themselves. If confirmed, I am committed to protecting the safety and well-being of all children referred to ORR. The provision of post-release services is a critical part of the work that ORR does for care to unaccompanied children, and if confirmed, I will work with you and other partners to enhance the scope of those services, expand the provision of services to reach more children and families, and be transparent with Congress about the resources required to do so.

*Question.* To date, some unaccompanied children are leaving ORR care following placements in temporary facilities or emergency intake sites that lack comprehensive services. If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure that these children are quickly connected to post-release services upon reunification with a sponsor to ensure that they can obtain legal orientation, representation, and other social services supports?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work to protect the safety and well-being of all children referred to ORR, and that includes ensuring that all types of placements adhere to the law, are appropriate places for children, and follow child welfare best practices. Under my leadership, I would endeavor to expand ORR's traditional licensed bed capacity, including focusing on family-based foster care, in order to reduce ORR's reliance on emergency intake sites. So long as emergency intake sites are required, I will work to ensure they can provide comprehensive services to care for unaccompanied children. ACF has a legal and moral obligation to provide care to the children referred to ORR, and I take those obligations very seriously.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. MIKE CRAPO

*Question.* According to the Adoption Foster Care Analysis Reporting system, the foster care system has served over 600,000 children each year for the past 10 years. For many States, faith-based organizations provide the majority of child welfare services to these foster children. In order to best prioritize the well-being and safety of this vulnerable population, the Federal Government must continue to collaborate and support a wide variety organizations dedicated to providing these services.

Can you please speak to the important role that faith-based providers play in the child welfare system?

*Answer.* Faith-based providers are critical to the child welfare system. Throughout my career, I've worked closely with the faith community and understand how essential they are to our safety net. Our Nation's vulnerable children and families are best served with a robust network of providers ready to support them. If confirmed, I look forward to listening to and working closely with faith-based providers.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you communicate and collaborate with faith-based organizations and providers, so they can continue to help serve this vulnerable community?

*Answer.* Faith-based providers are critical to the child welfare system. Throughout my career, I've worked closely with the faith community and understand how essential they are to our safety net. If confirmed, I look forward to listening to and working closely with faith-based providers.



## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JOHN CORNYN

## UACS/ORR

*Question.* As Assistant Secretary for Children and Families at HHS, you would oversee the Office of Refugee Resettlement. ORR is charged with the care and placement of unaccompanied migrant children apprehended along the southwest border. In 2015, the HSGAC Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations published a report that identified a number of incidents in which children were placed with abusive sponsors.

In one incident, HHS placed a number of children into the hands of a ring of human traffickers who then forced them to work on egg farms in Ohio.

In another incident, a Guatemalan boy was placed with the *partner* of his maternal uncle. The uncle and his partner forced the boy to work without pay for 4 months, and threatened to accuse him of viewing child pornography if he did not continue working. No background check was run on the uncle.

Last year, the administration terminated a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between HHS and the Department of Homeland Security. Under that MOA, ORR had been required to request information from ICE about all potential sponsors and adult members of potential sponsor's households before making a placement.

While I understand that undocumented members of potential sponsors' households may be nervous about submitting to a background check, we really need to prioritize the safety of the children here. As Assistant Secretary, what actions would you take to ensure that potential sponsors and all adult members of their households are properly vetted?

*Answer.* The core of my career has focused on protecting the most vulnerable people in our society, including immigrant children. If confirmed, the safety and well-being of all unaccompanied children referred to ORR will be a top priority. Ensuring these children's safety and well-being is both the legal duty and moral obligation of ACF. ACF is required to release children to an appropriate and vetted sponsor without unnecessary delay and in a manner consistent with the law. When a child enters care, I will focus on placing the child safely with their parents, relatives, or other sponsors as expeditiously as possible and require all necessary background checks and other safeguards in the sponsor assessment process to protect the child's safety and ensure the appropriateness of the placement.

## FOSTER YOUTH

*Question.* You will be charged with carrying out policies impacting foster youth. These individuals are among the most vulnerable Americans, and we need to make sure the foster care system works for them, not the other way around.

Sadly, we have thousands of children in the foster care system who go missing each year. In 2019, there were a total of 423,997 children in foster care. Of that population, about 1 percent or 4,115 children were designated as "runaway." Some foster care advocacy groups do not think these data on runaways are accurate as some cases are preemptively closed out, even though many of those children are likely to return. However, the data is not conclusive and remains incomplete.

Fortunately, the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) will soon be updated to more accurately reflect where a child stands in the foster care system. I plan on sending the administration a letter regarding this change and how we can get this up and running as soon as possible. I am also working on draft legislation to create a feedback loop from States to ACF, which will provide technical assistance at the Children's Bureau to update best practices on preventing and mitigating runaway episodes as well as caring for missing and runaway foster youth.

How do you plan to address the issue of missing and runaway foster youth?

*Answer.* I strongly believe in the importance of data and evidence in driving decisions in the child welfare system and doing what is in the best interests of children. If confirmed, I will work with you to continue to ensure that AFCARS is collecting and reporting data that will help us to keep children safe and move us toward a system of child and family well-being. It is critical that we both account for children who have left their placements and understand why they have left so we can provide the support they need to stay safe. You have my commitment to work on this issue with you.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you prioritize accelerating the update to AFCARS and provide Congress with periodical progress reports?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to keeping you and the committee up to date about all programs within ACF. I understand the critical importance of AFCARS and would look forward to working closely with you on all needed updates to the system.

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QUESTION SUBMITTED BY HON. RICHARD BURR

*Question.* If you are confirmed, you will play a key role in the development of Federal policy related to youth in the child welfare system.

Senator Feinstein and I have introduced a bill to ensure that foster children placed in qualified residential treatment programs, or QRTPs, with more than 16 beds would not lose eligibility for Medicaid because of an antiquated law often called the "TMD exclusion."

QRTPs are required by law to have a trauma-informed treatment model designed to address the clinical needs of foster children with serious emotional or behavioral issues. In other words, these programs are legally required to provide a clinically-appropriate level of care for vulnerable foster children who are in serious need of such care.

Do you believe that children receiving treatment in QRTPs should lose their Medicaid coverage if that QRTP has more than 16 beds?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to listening to States, counties, and providers about challenges and opportunities related to the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act, including the Qualified Residential Treatment Program provisions. Given the complex interactions with Medicaid, I am committed to working with CMS and other parts of the Department to provide clear and responsive guidance to the field. My top priority will be ensuring that children receive the type of care they need in a setting that is most appropriate to the delivery of that care. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you on this issue.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. TIM SCOTT

*Question.* The recommended child care provisions in President Biden's Build Back Better agenda changes the law to mandate that faith-based providers comply with Federal laws, which will force providers to choose between their religious mission and Federal dollars.

If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that faith-based providers are able to fully participate in the child care system without having to compromise their religious missions in your capacity as Assistant Secretary for Family Support?

Answer. Faith-based providers are critical to the child welfare system. Throughout my career, I've worked closely with the faith community and understand how essential they are to our safety net. Our network of providers must be as robust as possible to meet the needs of kids and families. If confirmed, I look forward to listening to and working closely with faith-based providers.

*Question.* Additionally, President Biden's proposal will undermine the parent-driven mixed delivery system that is already in place by favoring grants and contracts to Head Start centers and public schools over certificates that allow parents to choose for themselves where to send their child. Parents, not government, know their children best and should have access to high-quality, affordable child-care options which include community-based centers, family child care homes, private providers, or faith-based providers.

If confirmed, will you commit to working on behalf of parents to ensure affordable access to child care options and opposing any proposals that would limit such options?

Answer. If confirmed, I look forward to working to increase access to high-quality, affordable child care options for all families.

## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JAMES LANKFORD

## UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

*Question.* The Biden administration walked back certain vetting requirements for sponsors of unaccompanied minors. Can you walk me through your understanding of these requirements and whether you agree with the Biden administration's decisions?

*Answer.* If confirmed, the safety and well-being of unaccompanied children referred to ORR will be a top priority. Ensuring these children's safety and well-being is both the legal duty and moral obligation of ACF. ACF is required to release children to an appropriate and vetted sponsor without unnecessary delay and in a manner consistent with law. When a child enters care, I will focus on placing the child safely with their parents, relatives, or other vetted sponsors, as expeditiously as possible and require all necessary background checks and other safeguards in the sponsor assessment process to protect the child's safety and ensure the appropriateness of the placement.

*Question.* A record number of unaccompanied minors crossed the border last year, and we've begun seeing reports that some of these minors after they are released from ORR custody are being placed in labor trafficking situations. Reuters had an in-depth investigation earlier this week about minors being trafficked to work on poultry farms. If confirmed, what will your plan be to address this situation?

*Answer.* I have spent a good part of my career representing victims of trafficking, and if confirmed, I will work to protect all the children served by ACF from the horrors of trafficking. I will work with experts within ACF as well as within other Departments to ensure we are implementing best practices to prevent and respond to trafficking and that we are leaving no stone unturned when it comes to protecting children in our care.

*Question.* ORR and DHS (ICE and CBP) have historically had a bad working relationship when it comes to the care and custody of unaccompanied minors. Do you believe ICE plays an important role in caring for unaccompanied minors? If confirmed, what steps will you take to fix this relationship?

*Answer.* Yes, I agree that inter-departmental relationships are critical when unaccompanied children are referred to ORR, including their timely transfer to ORR care and custody. If confirmed, I would work to establish strong channels of communication with the Department of Homeland Security to ensure that children referred to ACF can be quickly and safely moved to a setting that adopts child welfare best practices. As a former senior leader within DHS, I would bring that experience to bear.

*Question.* ORR often faces issues with "age-outs" and young adults who lie about their age to be placed in ORR custody. If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure that *only* minors receive care under ORR's custody?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I am committed to following the law while managing the unaccompanied children's program and that includes ensuring we are only serving individuals eligible for the unaccompanied children's program and following Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act requirements when making prompt age determinations.

*Question.* I am still waiting on a data request that my office placed in September for the number of children ORR was unable to locate after they were released. The latest data we saw indicated that ORR lost track of 1 out of every 3 kids released from sponsors. Again, that data is over 6 months old. Do you think the Biden administration's policies at ORR are to blame for this situation? What efforts will you take to improve this situation moving forward?

*Answer.* I am committed to being responsive to congressional inquiries and believe in the critical oversight role that Congress plays within our system of checks and balances. If confirmed, I will be responsive to congressional requests.

*Question.* During his time in the Obama administration, then-Deputy DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas called on Congress to reform the *Flores* settlement agreement to better address the flow of unaccompanied minors to the southwest border. If confirmed, do you commit to working with Congress to fix the *Flores* settlement agreement?

Answer. If confirmed, I will follow the law and am committed to partnering with Congress to ensure our ability to safely care for all unaccompanied children referred to ACF.

#### HUMAN TRAFFICKING

*Question.* Human trafficking and child exploitation have continued to be issues that families and children in our Nation face, particularly vulnerable children in foster care or who are experiencing. If confirmed, what will you do to prevent and combat child sexual exploitation and human trafficking?

What can we do on the front end to decrease the demand for human trafficking?

Answer. A focus of my career has been combatting human trafficking, and I will always carry with me the experiences of clients who have been victims of trafficking. If confirmed, I will work closely with each component of ACF to incorporate anti-trafficking efforts into our programs, particularly in child welfare. In addition, I would listen to survivors about what would have made a difference in their situation, and I would bring those lessons to ACF programs. Responding to human trafficking is essential, but we must also prioritize preventing this crime and the conditions that make survivors vulnerable in the first place. I look forward to working closely with you on this issue.

#### FAITH-BASED CHILD WELFARE

*Question.* Faith-based child welfare providers perform vital services for hundreds of thousands of foster children nationwide and are often the best at finding forever homes for children in need. According to HHS's AFCARS report, 407,493 children are in foster care, 117,470 of whom are waiting to be adopted.

Unfortunately, one day before the 2021 AFCARS report came out, HHS announced the rescission of waivers that were previously granted to faith-based adoption and foster care agencies in Michigan, Texas, and South Carolina, which put providers in these States in the untenable position of choosing between serving children or operating in accordance with the tenets of their faith.

Earlier this year, the Supreme Court unanimously validated the principle that religious adoption agencies have a right to be free from discriminatory exclusion from adoption and foster care programs because of their beliefs in *Fulton v. Philadelphia*. The Supreme Court found that "the refusal of Philadelphia to contract with Catholic Social Services for the provision of foster care services unless it agrees to certify same-sex couples as foster parents cannot survive strict scrutiny, and violates the First Amendment." However, HHS and the Biden administration appear to be ignoring the Court's clear direction that religious foster care agencies cannot be shut down because of their religious beliefs.

A number of my colleagues and I wrote to Secretary Becerra on this issue last year, but we have yet to receive a response

Do you agree that our primary goal should be safe, loving, and permanent placements for all children?

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree that faith-based adoption and foster care agencies should be able to continue to partner with the government to serve children and families without sacrificing their sincerely held religious beliefs?

Answer. Faith-based providers are critical to the child welfare system. Throughout my career, I've work closely with the faith community and understand how essential they are to our safety net. If confirmed, I look forward to listening to and working closely with faith-based providers.

*Question.* Do you agree that without faith-based providers, our Nation would be unable to properly care for the number of children in need of homes and families?

Answer. Faith-based providers are absolutely essential to our child welfare system.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you commit to maintaining the notice of non-enforcement for the 2016 grants rule and disavow its enforcement moving forward?

Answer. It is my understanding that this is an issue that spans across the Department. If confirmed, I will look into how the Department is addressing this issue and report back to Congress. I also commit to doing everything in my power, if con-

firmed, to ensure that grantees and their beneficiaries are not unfairly discriminated against.

*Question.* If confirmed, will HHS exclude from the title IV–E program religious adoption and foster care providers that cannot assist in the placement of children in same-sex households without violating their religious exercise when those households have alternative providers available to assist them in the State?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will follow the law. I will also work closely with faith-based providers so that children and families have a strong network of support.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JOHN BARRASSO

*Question.* Faith-based organizations play an important role in the child welfare system. The actions of the Biden administration are making it more difficult for these groups to participate in the process. This continues a troubling pattern of the Department of Health and Human Services discriminating against people and organizations of faith.

On November 18, 2021, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and Office for Civil Rights (OCR), announced it was withdrawing waivers previously granted under the Trump administration. Please explain your position on this decision.

Please describe how you will help faith-based groups participate in the child welfare process and identify previous professional experiences where you have specifically worked with faith-based groups.

Please describe how you will ensure faith-based organizations will not have to violate their own religious beliefs to participate in Federal programs.

*Answer.* Faith-based providers are critical to the child welfare system. Throughout my career, I've worked closely with the faith community and understand how essential they are to our safety net. If confirmed, I look forward to listening to and working closely with faith-based providers.

*Question.* Rural States and communities face unique challenges when delivering governmental services.

Please describe specific instances and experiences where you have improved the delivery of social services in rural communities?

Explain how, if confirmed, you will ensure the policies of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) will take into account the unique needs of rural States and people.

*Answer.* Ensuring equitable access to ACF programs for rural communities is critical. If confirmed, I would partner with rural communities to identify barriers to accessing ACF programs and would be committed to thinking creatively to solve those problems and meet the needs of children and families in rural communities. During my career, I have worked with rural communities and have seen firsthand the issues caused by long distances to service providers, lack of reliable Internet, and staffing challenges for many providers. In Arizona, I worked within and outside of government to increase support for access to health-care providers such as family physicians and health-care centers in rural counties. I would bring that experience to ACF if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed.

*Question.* As the former chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, ensuring American Indian and Alaska Native children receive the help and support they need is an important personal priority of mine.

Can you please identify previous professional experiences and actions where you worked with tribal communities?

Can you please identify specific policies and ways you plan on working with tribal communities if confirmed?

*Answer.* Thank you for raising the importance of working with tribal communities. If confirmed as the Assistant Secretary for the Administration for Children and Families, I will prioritize working with tribal communities to advance the well-being of Native American children and families. As an Assistant Director of Arizona's Medicaid agency, an advisor to Governor Janet Napolitano, and as the leader of the Arizona Department of Health Services, I consistently developed relationships with tribal leaders centered in meaningful consultation and government-to-

government relationships. If confirmed, I will work with tribal communities to reduce concerning disparities and support the delivery of ACF services and programs that can make a difference in tribal communities of every size. I will work closely with the ACF Administration for Native Americans to coordinate and personally participate in consultation sessions and roundtables with tribal leaders, visit tribal communities, and ensure that ACF is a responsive partner in supporting Native American children and families throughout the country.

*Question.* The Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF) previously issued a rule entitled “Vaccine and Mask Requirements to Mitigate the Spread of COVID–19 in Head Start Programs.”

Do you believe the scientific data supports the masking of young children to participate in Head Start?

If you believe the masking of young children is justified, please provide specific medical or scientific studies to support this position.

*Answer.* Head Start is a vital resource to many underserved communities around the country. If confirmed, keeping Head Start Centers open and safe will be a top priority. I would prioritize listening to the needs and concerns of Head Start providers and families to ensure ACF is providing the guidance and support they need to keep students safe and in classrooms, while also following Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance for masking.

*Question.* The COVID–19 pandemic has been particularly difficult on children who lost the ability to attend in-person school. Teachers are classified as mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect under State law, since they are in such frequent and close contact with children.

From a child welfare perspective, can you explain your position on the importance of in-person learning?

*Answer.* Schools and the supports that students receive in schools are an important part of the safety net for children and families. Children do best when they can safely access a full range of supports, including those provided by in-person learning.

*Question.* Human trafficking is a tragedy and must be stopped. The actions of the Biden administration are only making the situation worse, especially along our southern border. With that being said, the Administration for Children and Families plays an important role combating human trafficking.

Can you please identify specific policies you believe Congress should consider that would improve the ability of ACF to combat and provide assistance to victims of human trafficking?

*Answer.* A focus of my career has been combatting human trafficking, and I will always carry with me the experiences of clients who have been victims of trafficking. If confirmed, I will work closely with each component of ACF to incorporate anti-trafficking efforts into our programs, particularly in child welfare. A central way to combat trafficking is to address the housing and economic instability that make many survivors targets for trafficking predators. In providing assistance to survivors, housing and shelter, legal services, and mental health support are all services that I have seen help survivors move forward to build stability for themselves, and their families. Survivor-led services can be key in addressing trauma. In addition, I would listen to survivors about what would have made a difference in their situation, and I would bring those lessons to ACF programs. I look forward to working closely with you on this issue.

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE CRAPO,  
A U.S. SENATOR FROM IDAHO

Today’s nominees will have significant responsibilities overseeing programs that affect some of the most vulnerable populations in America.

As Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources, Mr. Gordon would have a critical role in stewarding resources across the breadth of HHS’s programs. I look forward to hearing his views on how HHS can improve its service delivery to provide more effective care in programs that affect nearly every American.

If confirmed, Ms. Contreras and Ms. Jones Gaston would oversee programs that protect and support children and youth. I am eager to hear how these nominees propose improving service delivery toward these particularly at-risk groups.

I urge all the nominees to be forthcoming in this discussion, in all questions for the record, and, should they be confirmed, in the roles to which they have been nominated. Congress is a critical partner to the work of the Department of Health and Human Services, and the programs you may oversee are of unique importance. Working in a bipartisan way with the members of the Finance Committee, we have the opportunity to evaluate and implement policies that better serve the American people.

Once again, I congratulate the nominees here today and look forward to this discussion.

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROBERT MICHAEL GORDON, NOMINATED TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL RESOURCES, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Crapo, members of the committee, thank you for considering my nomination to be the Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). I am honored by President Biden's decision to nominate me, and I look forward, if confirmed, to serving under the leadership of Secretary Becerra.

Before beginning, I would like to thank my family for their love and support. My wife Catherine and older son Silas are here today.

Government funding decisions each day make an enormous difference to millions of Americans in every corner of the country. For all of us, government must run as effectively and efficiently as possible. If confirmed, I will use data, evidence, and evaluation to make government deliver results, strengthen the integrity and transparency of taxpayer-funded programs, and advance equity.

This has been the work of my career, spanning 3 decades in Federal, State, and local governments, in leadership roles handling health and human services, and in key positions managing budget and finance. For more than 4 years, I served as a senior official at the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, including as Acting Deputy Director. While at OMB I played a key part in launching evidence-based initiatives at four Federal agencies. These included HHS's Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program, which now funds 19 service delivery models supported by solid evidence. Together with HHS leadership, including the official in the role for which I am nominated, I also worked to develop the Head Start recompetition, innovations in child welfare, and improvements in programs for the aging.

In this period, I also helped negotiate bipartisan budget agreements to keep the government open and the country from defaulting on its debts. And I had particular responsibility for program integrity investments to reduce waste, fraud, and abuse.

The private and nonprofit sectors offer important lessons for government. After leaving OMB and becoming the senior vice president of finance and global strategy for the nonprofit College Board, I worked as part of a team to reform procurement processes, cut organizational costs, and drive technology changes that improved services for students and schools alike.

That experience informed my work as the director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, an agency with 14,000 employees and a \$27-billion budget. I played a key part in the State's response to COVID-19, expanded access to health coverage, drove improvements in child welfare programs, increased use of effective approaches to mental health and substance use disorders, and cut technology costs while improving customer service.

One of my proudest accomplishments in Michigan was ending severe delays in delivery of Medicaid and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. When I arrived, the State had just rolled out a flawed new system which meant that more than 30 percent of Michiganders in some rural counties were not receiving needed help within the required 30 days. Legislators in both parties were angry, and rightly so. In partnership with extraordinary colleagues, we listened to front-line staff, improved technology, shifted work patterns, and held ourselves accountable with a public dashboard showing our progress each week. Within a few months, rural counties were performing as well as others, and we went on to simplify and

improve the delivery of benefits in ways that earned national praise. Should I be confirmed as Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources, I would apply the same performance focus at HHS.

As the response to COVID–19 continues, the work of HHS has never been more important. And it has never been more personal for me. Among more than 900,000 Americans who have died from COVID was my father, Alan Gordon. A psychiatrist who spent decades working on behalf of homeless individuals and ex-offenders, he inspired me to public service.

I would be honored to play my part, as HHS’s chief financial officer, in sustaining a robust COVID response—and in strengthening so many vital HHS programs—from cancer research to the Indian Health Services to Medicare. Should I be confirmed, I would work with President Biden, Secretary Becerra, and members of Congress to fund health and human services programs that work.

Thank you again for considering my nomination. I look forward to your questions.

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## SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

### STATEMENT OF INFORMATION REQUESTED OF NOMINEE

#### A. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. Name (include any former names used): Robert Michael Gordon.
2. Position to which nominated: Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources, Department of Health and Human Services.
3. Date of nomination: September 20, 2021.
4. Address (list current residence, office, and mailing addresses):
5. Date and place of birth: June 9, 1971; New York, NY.
6. Marital status (include maiden name of wife or husband’s name):
7. Names and ages of children:
8. Education (list all secondary and higher education institutions, dates attended, degree received, and date degree granted):
  - Yale Law School.  
Dates Attended: 9/1995–6/1998.  
Degree Received: Juris Doctor.  
Date Degree Granted: 6/1998.
  - Harvard University.  
Dates Attended: 9/1989–6/1994.  
Degree Received: Bachelor of Arts.  
Date Degree Granted: 6/1994.
  - Dalton School.  
Dates Attended: 9/1985–6/1989.  
Degree Received: H.S. Diploma.  
Date Degree Granted: 6/1989.
9. Employment record (list all jobs held since college, including the title or description of job, name of employer, location of work, and dates of employment for each job):  
See chart.

Employer	Title	Location	Dates of Employment
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities	Senior Counselor	Washington, DC (remote)	May 2021–present



<b>Employer</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Dates of Employment</b>
University of Michigan Law School	Public Service Scholar	Ann Arbor, MI	February 2021–present
University of Michigan Poverty Solutions	Senior Advisor	Ann Arbor, MI	February 2021–present
Self-Employment	Consultant*	Okemos, MI	March February 2021–present
Michigan Department of Health and Human Services	Director	Lansing, MI	January 2019–January 2021
The College Board	Senior Vice President, Global Strategy and Finance	Washington, DC	March 2015–January 2019
U.S. Department of Education	Acting Assistant Secretary, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development	Washington, DC	September 2014–March 2015
Self-Employment	Consultant*	Washington, DC (based)	April 2013–September 2014
U.S. Office of Management and Budget	Acting Deputy Director; Executive Associate Director; Associate Director, Education, Income Maintenance, and Labor	Washington, DC	January 2009–March 2013
Self-Employment	Consultant*	Washington, DC	August 2007–December 2008
New York City Department of Education	Managing Director for Resource Allocation	New York, NY	May 2006–June 2007
Center for American Progress	Senior Vice President; Senior Fellow	Washington, DC	January 2005–May 2006
U.S. Senate/Senator John Edwards	Legislative Director	Washington, DC	November 2004–January 2005
Kerry/Edwards 2004	Domestic Policy Director	Washington, DC	April 2004–November 2004
Edwards for President	Policy Director	Raleigh, NC	July 2003–March 2004
U.S. Senate/Senator John Edwards	Legislative Director/Counsel	Washington, DC	September 2001–July 2003
U.S. Supreme Court/Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg	Law Clerk	Washington, DC	July 2000–July 2001
Legal Aid Society/Juvenile Rights Division	Skadden Fellow/Staff Attorney	Bronx, NY	July 1999–June 2000
U.S. Court of Appeals, 2nd Circuit/Judge P. N. Leval	Law Clerk	New York, NY	August 1998–August 1999

Employer	Title	Location	Dates of Employment
U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division	Intern	Washington, DC	June 1998–August 1998
Bredhoff and Kaiser	Summer Associate	Washington, DC	July 1997–August 1998
Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Law	Intern	Washington, DC	June 1996–July 1996
Professors Paul Gewirtz, Jerry Mashaw, Jean Koh Peters, Yale Law School	Research Assistant	New Haven, CT	September 1996–May 1997
U.S. Attorney's Office, EDNY	Intern	Brooklyn, NY	July 1996–August 1996
U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Legal Counsel	Intern	Washington, DC	June 1996–July 1996
White House National Economic Council	Policy Analyst	Washington, DC	January 1995–July 1995
Corporation for National and Community Service	Special Assistant	Washington, DC	November 1994–January 1994
Chuck Robb for Senate	Speechwriter	Maclean, VA	September 1994–November 1994
Corporation for National and Community Service	Special Assistant	Washington, DC	June 1994–September 1994

\* Individual consulting clients listed under Question 11.

10. Government experience (list any current and former advisory, consultative, honorary, or other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments held since college, including dates, other than those listed above):

None other than above.

11. Business relationships (list all current and former positions held as an officer, director, trustee, partner (*e.g.*, limited partner, non-voting, etc.), proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, company, firm, partnership, other business enterprise, or educational or other institution):

I have served as a consultant or contractor to the following organizations (alphabetical within each time period):

2021

Boston Consulting Group.

Code for America.

Results for America.

Schmidt Futures/Federation of American Scientists.

2013–2014

America Achieves.

The College Board.

Teach for All.

The Next Generation, Inc. (Too Small to Fail).

Results for America.

2007–2008  
 Center for American Progress (Senior Fellow).  
 Freedman Consulting.  
 The Fund for Educational Excellence (Baltimore City Public Schools).  
 Gates Foundation.  
 New York City Department of Education.  
 Student Achievement Partners.

12. Memberships (list all current and former memberships, as well as any current and former offices held in professional, fraternal, scholarly, civic, business, charitable, and other organizations dating back to college, including dates for these memberships and offices):

See table.

Name of Organization	Dates of Membership	Position Held
Schmidt Futures	2021–present	Innovation Fellow
Michigan Public Health Institute	2019–2021	Board Member
Results for America	2017–2019	Board Member and Treasurer
Achievement Network, Limited	2017–2019	Board Member
Urban Institute	2018–2019	Nonresident Fellow
J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Early Childhood Accelerator Advisory Committee	2013–2014	Member
Technical Advisory Group of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading	2013–2014	Member
Brookings Institution	2013–2014	Guest Scholar
Center for American Progress	2005, 2007–2008	Senior Fellow
EdLabs	2007–2008	Creative Board Member
NGA Advisory Committee on Teacher Effectiveness	2007–2008	Member
Music National Service Initiative	2007–2008	Board Member
New York State Bar	1999–Present	Member

13. Political affiliations and activities:

a. List all public offices for which you have been a candidate dating back to the age of 18.

N/A.

b. List all memberships and offices held in and services rendered to all political parties or election committees, currently and during the last 10 years prior to the date of your nomination.

N/A.

c. Itemize all political contributions to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity of \$50 or more for the past 10 years prior to the date of your nomination.

See table.

<b>Contribution Description</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Elizabeth Pannill Fletcher for Congress	10/28/2018	\$50
Leslie Cockburn for Congress	10/28/2018	\$50
Committee to Elect Jared Golden	10/28/2018	\$50
Spanberger for Congress	10/28/2018	\$50
Friends of Dan Feehan	10/28/2018	\$50
Friends of Dan Feehan	10/28/2018	\$50
Harder for Congress	10/28/2018	\$50
Clarke Tucker for Congress	10/28/2018	\$50
Elect Carolyn Long	10/28/2018	\$50
Spanberger for Congress	10/28/2018	\$50
Cindy Axne for Congress	10/28/2018	\$50
Leslie Cockburn for Congress	10/28/2018	\$50
Amy McGrath for Congress	10/28/2018	\$50
Elizabeth Pannill Fletcher for Congress	10/28/2018	\$50
Elaine for Congress	10/28/2018	\$50
TJ Cox For Congress	10/28/2018	\$50
Williams for Montana	10/28/2018	\$50
Paul Davis for Kansas	10/28/2018	\$50
Aftab for Ohio	10/28/2018	\$50
Alyse for Alaska	10/28/2018	\$50
Brindisi for Congress	10/28/2018	\$50
Xochitl for New Mexico	10/28/2018	\$50
Linda Coleman for Congress	10/28/2018	\$50
Committee to Elect Jared Golden	10/28/2018	\$50
Committee to Elect Richard Ojeda	10/28/2018	\$50
Elizabeth Pannill Fletcher for Congress	10/21/2018	\$250
Lauren Underwood for Congress	10/21/2018	\$500
Committee to Elect Jared Golden	10/21/2018	\$250
Colin Allred for Congress	10/21/2018	\$250
Kristen Carlson for Congress Committee	10/21/2018	\$250
Friends of Dan Feehan	10/21/2018	\$250
Brendan Kelly for Southern Illinois	10/14/2018	\$250
Katie Hill for Congress	10/14/2018	\$250

<b>Contribution Description</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Elissa Slotkin for Congress	10/06/2018	\$250
Heidi for Senate	09/15/2018	\$250
Bredesen for Senate	09/15/2018	\$250
Spanberger for Congress	09/04/2018	\$250
Leslie Cockburn for Congress	09/04/2018	\$250
Tom Malinowski for Congress	09/04/2018	\$500
Katie Porter for Congress	09/04/2018	\$250
Colin Allred for Congress	7/10/2018	\$250
Indivisible Action	06/07/2018	\$12,500
Friends of Gina Raimondo	04/17/2018	\$500
Friends of Gina Raimondo	02/11/2018	\$1,000
Doug Jones for Senate Committee	12/06/2017	\$250
Doug Jones for Senate Committee	11/11/2017	\$250
Tom Perriello Campaign Committee	02/06/2017	\$250
Friends of Gina Raimondo	09/24/2017	\$500
Friends of Gina Raimondo	02/22/2017	\$500
Kelly Gonez for School Board	11/01/2016	\$1,100
Hillary Victory Fund	09/15/2016	\$2,200
Hillary for America	09/15/2016	\$2,200
Hillary Victory Fund	09/06/2016	\$250
Hillary for America	09/06/2016	\$250
Hillary for America	08/21/2016	\$250
Hillary Victory Fund	08/21/2016	\$250
Hillary for America	01/16/2016	\$1,000
Lesser Committee	11/18/2015	\$75
Friends of Gina Raimondo	03/01/2014	\$1,000
Friends of Gina Raimondo	07/18/2013	\$1,000
Obama for America	10/17/2012	\$1,000
Obama Victory Fund 2012	10/17/2012	\$1,000
Kate Anderson for School Board	2012	\$250

14. Honors and awards (list all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, military medals, and any other special recognitions for outstanding service or achievement received since the age of 18):

Skadden Fellow: 1998–1999.

Summa Cum Laude, Phil Beta Kappa, John Harvard Scholarship, Harvard University: 1993–1994.

15. Published writings (list the titles, publishers, dates, and hyperlinks (as applicable) of all books, articles, reports, blog posts, or other published materials you have written):

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“Making Tax Evasion Great: The \$100 Billion Giveaway,” *Democracy Journal*, March 9, 2017 (w/D. Kamin), <https://democracyjournal.org/briefing-book/making-tax-evasion-great-the-100-billion-giveaway/>.

“Constructing the Security State,” *Democracy Journal*, February 28, 2017, <https://democracyjournal.org/briefing-book/deconstructing-the-administrative-state-constructing-the-security-state/>.

“A Bipartisan Moneyball Agenda,” in *Moneyball for Government* (eds. J. Nussle and P. Orszag), 2014 (w/R. Haskins), <https://moneyballforgov.com/moneyball-for-government-the-book/>.

“How to Fix Head Start,” *The New Republic*, March 24, 2014 (w/S. Mead), <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/how-to-fix-head-start/>.

“New Motto for a Leaner Washington: Pay for What Works,” *The Atlantic*, February 24, 2014 (w/F. Hess), <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/02/new-motto-for-a-leaner-washington-pay-for-what-works/284029/>.

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“Reverse Robin Hood: Why Is John McCain Wrong on Health Care? Think Credit Cards,” *Slate*, May 19, 2008, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2008/05/why-is-john-mccain-wrong-on-health-care.html>.

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“The Big Lie,” *The Harvard Crimson*, April 12, 1991, <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1991/4/12/the-big-lie-pbmbore-than-one/>.

“Troops Stop Shooting Now!”, *The Harvard Crimson*, January 25, 1991, <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1991/1/25/troops-stop-shooting-now-pbto-the/>.

“Bush’s Ally in Albany,” *The Harvard Crimson*, September 21, 1991, <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1991/9/21/bushs-ally-in-albany-pbibt-is/>.

Commentaries for *Harvard Perspective* (not able to locate) and *Harvard Political Review* (not able to locate).

16. Speeches (list all formal speeches and presentations (e.g., PowerPoint) you have delivered during the past 5 years which are on topics relevant to the position for which you have been nominated, including dates):

I have records of the following speeches or hearing testimony in the past 5 years, and I have included the video or text link where available.

Michigan House of Representatives Oversight Committee hearing on separation agreement, April 29, 2021.

Michigan Joint Select Committee on the COVID–19 Pandemic hearing on epidemic orders, December 2, 2020.

Michigan Joint Select Committee on the COVID–19 Pandemic hearing on COVID data, September 23, 2020.

Michigan Senate Oversight Committee hearing on protections for agricultural workers related to COVID–19, September 17, 2020.



Michigan Joint Select Committee on the COVID–19 Pandemic hearing on nursing homes, September 16, 2020.

Michigan Joint Select Committee on the COVID–19 Pandemic hearing on contact tracing, August 13, 2020.

Michigan Senate Oversight Committee hearing on nursing homes, May 13, 2020.

Michigan Joint Appropriations Subcommittee meeting on behavioral health redesign, December 4, 2019.

“Changes Big and Small: What’s Needed in the Fight Against Poverty,” (<https://poverty.umich.edu/files/2020/07/PovertySolutions-ChangesBigAndSmall-PolicyReport-r2.pdf>) published by University of Michigan Poverty Solutions in April 2020, first given as a speech on October 31, 2019, discussed here, <https://www.michigandaily.com/campus-life/director-michigan-health-and-human-services-talks-food-insecurity-and-child-health/>) (as MDHHS Director).

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Speech on behavioral health redesign to the Community Mental Health Association of Michigan, October 22, 2019, [https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mdhhs/Folder3/Folder96/Folder2/Folder196/Folder1/Folder296/20191022\\_RG\\_CMHA\\_speech\\_prepared\\_for\\_delivery.pdf?rev=f471125559104258b1c4f77e9e505569](https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mdhhs/Folder3/Folder96/Folder2/Folder196/Folder1/Folder296/20191022_RG_CMHA_speech_prepared_for_delivery.pdf?rev=f471125559104258b1c4f77e9e505569).

Michigan House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services budget testimony for 2019, March 6, 2019.

Michigan Senate Advice and Consent Committee hearing, February 14, 2019.

17. Qualifications (state what, in your opinion, qualifies you to serve in the position to which you have been nominated):

What government chooses to fund—or not fund—has a lasting impact on Americans, especially those who are most vulnerable. Policymakers’ decisions can be the difference between someone having insurance or not, having a job or not, paying the bills or not. A year out of law school, I represented children in foster care and saw firsthand the difference that effective services could make. That knowledge has inspired me in a 30-year career in public service. If confirmed, the beliefs that all individuals deserve to be treated with dignity, and that evidence-based decision-making can advance that goal, would inspire my work as Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

I have extensive experience working for Federal, State, and local governments in leadership roles handling health care, human services, and budget and finance matters. For more than 4 years, I served as a senior official at the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), including service as Acting Deputy Director. For the first 2 years that I was at OMB, I handled large aspects of the HHS budget, including Head Start, CCDBG, and LIHEAP, and I worked closely with the HHS official in the role for which I am nominated. For the second 2 years, I regularly worked on Medicaid and Medicare. I also served in the presidential transition as co-lead of the HHS agency review team, examining operations across the department. I will arrive at HHS with a strong working knowledge of its responsibilities on day one.

Evidence-based policymaking has been core to my work for many years. While at OMB, I led the Obama administration’s evidence-based policymaking initiatives, tying government funding to evaluation. Sometimes, a program that sounds like good policy or good politics doesn’t work, and funding it is a poor use of taxpayer dollars. In my time at OMB, I was proud to play a part in launching the evidence-based maternal and infant home visiting program, in designing the Head Start recompetition regulation, and in developing other evidence-based programs on a bipartisan basis. Many of these initiatives continue to benefit Americans today.

Recently I served as the Director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), an agency with 14,000 employees and a \$27-billion budget. In that role, I oversaw Medicaid programs, Child Protective Services, food assistance, public health, including aspects of the State’s response to

COVID-19, and aging programs. One of my proudest accomplishments at MDHHS was to drive forward the reform of the State's child welfare system. When I arrived, that system had been under Federal court oversight for more than a decade, because of deaths in the State's custody and inadequacies in moving children toward permanency. Together with extraordinary colleagues, we held ourselves accountable for measurable results, moved State dollars into more evidence-based permanency practices, and canceled contracts with agencies that failed children. The State's safety performance improved. The Federal judge overseeing the case praised our progress as unlike any she had seen previously, and on her own initiative raised the possibility of ending Federal oversight of the case. Should I be confirmed, I would apply the same emphasis on measuring performance and driving dollars to effective strategies as Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources.

I bring additional experience with financial oversight from time as senior vice president of finance and global strategy for the nonprofit, The College Board. In this role, I served as the chief financial officer for The College Board, responsible for all budgeting, accounting, auditing, and procurement. As the Acting Assistant Secretary for Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development at the U.S. Department of Education (ED), I served in a role with similarities to the role at HHS, managing the department's internal budget process and advancing evidence-based policies.

As Americans continue to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, the work of HHS has never been more important. I bring to this work a personal perspective that millions of Americans sadly share. Late last year, both my parents contracted COVID-19. My father Alan Gordon, a life-long public servant, died of resulting complications. He continues to inspire my work today. I am honored by President Biden's nomination to be the Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources at HHS and believe my experience and expertise qualify me for the role. Should I be confirmed, I would look forward to the opportunity to work with President Biden, Secretary Becerra, and members of Congress to fund health and human services programs that work.

#### **B. FUTURE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS**

1. Will you sever all connections (including participation in future benefit arrangements) with your present employers, business firms, associations, or organizations if you are confirmed by the Senate? If not, provide details.  
Yes.
2. Do you have any plans, commitments, or agreements to pursue outside employment, with or without compensation, during your service with the government? If so, provide details.  
No.
3. Has any person or entity made a commitment or agreement to employ your services in any capacity after you leave government service? If so, provide details.  
No.
4. If you are confirmed by the Senate, do you expect to serve out your full term or until the next presidential election, whichever is applicable? If not, explain.  
Yes.

#### **C. POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

1. Indicate any current and former investments, obligations, liabilities, or other personal relationships, including spousal or family employment, which could involve potential conflicts of interest in the position to which you have been nominated.

Any potential conflict of interest will be resolved in accordance with the terms of my ethics agreement, which was developed in consultation with ethics officials at the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Government Ethics. I understand that my ethics agreement has been provided to the committee. I am not aware of any potential conflict other than those addressed by my ethics agreement.

2. Describe any business relationship, dealing, or financial transaction which you have had during the last 10 years (prior to the date of your nomination), whether for yourself, on behalf of a client, or acting as an agent, that could in any way constitute or result in a possible conflict of interest in the position to which you have been nominated.

Any potential conflict of interest will be resolved in accordance with the terms of my ethics agreement, which was developed in consultation with ethics officials at the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Government Ethics. I understand that my ethics agreement has been provided to the committee. I am not aware of any potential conflict other than those addressed by my ethics agreement.

3. Describe any activity during the past 10 years (prior to the date of your nomination) in which you have engaged for the purpose of directly or indirectly influencing the passage, defeat, or modification of any legislation or affecting the administration and execution of law or public policy. Activities performed as an employee of the Federal Government need not be listed.

In my position at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, I write, edit, and provide strategic advice with the aim of encouraging Congress to enact legislation that provides robust economic and social supports for lower-income Americans.

4. Explain how you will resolve any potential conflict of interest, including any that are disclosed by your responses to the above items. (Provide the committee with two copies of any trust or other agreements.)

Any potential conflict of interest will be resolved in accordance with the terms of my ethics agreement, which was developed in consultation with ethics officials at the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Government Ethics. I understand that my ethics agreement has been provided to the committee. I am not aware of any potential conflict other than those addressed by my ethics agreement.

5. Two copies of written opinions should be provided directly to the committee by the designated agency ethics officer of the agency to which you have been nominated and by the Office of Government Ethics concerning potential conflicts of interest or any legal impediments to your serving in this position.

I understand that my ethics agreement has been provided to the committee along with the accompanying transmittal documents.

#### **D. LEGAL AND OTHER MATTERS**

1. Have you ever been the subject of a complaint or been investigated, disciplined, or otherwise cited for a breach of ethics for unprofessional conduct before any court, administrative agency (*e.g.*, an Inspector General's office), professional association, disciplinary committee, or other ethics enforcement entity at any time? Have you ever been interviewed regarding your own conduct as part of any such inquiry or investigation? If so, provide details, regardless of the outcome.

No.

2. Have you ever been investigated, arrested, charged, or held by any Federal, State, or other law enforcement authority for a violation of any Federal, State, county, or municipal law, regulation, or ordinance, other than a minor traffic offense? Have you ever been interviewed regarding your own conduct as part of any such inquiry or investigation? If so, provide details.

No.

3. Have you ever been involved as a party in interest in any administrative agency proceeding or civil litigation? If so, provide details.

In my official capacity as Director of Michigan's Department of Health and Human Services, I was sometimes named in litigation.

In June 2011, the District of Columbia's Office of Planning filed a notice of infraction based on our having improperly replaced a broken window, without the permit that is required in the historic district where we resided. We were found to have unknowingly committed the infraction and fined \$1,750 in an order stipulating that the fine would be refunded if we obtained the right permit and installed the right window. We followed that course and received a full refund.

4. Have you ever been convicted (including pleas of guilty or *nolo contendere*) of any criminal violation other than a minor traffic offense? If so, provide details.  
No.
5. Please advise the committee of any additional information, favorable or unfavorable, which you feel should be considered in connection with your nomination.  
N/A.

#### E. TESTIFYING BEFORE CONGRESS

1. If you are confirmed by the Senate, are you willing to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Congress on such occasions as you may be reasonably requested to do so?  
Yes.
2. If you are confirmed by the Senate, are you willing to provide such information as is requested by such committees?  
Yes.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD TO ROBERT MICHAEL GORDON

##### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. MARIA CANTWELL

*Question.* The broad support for the premium tax credits provided in the American Rescue Plan demonstrates the need for more affordable options for those who are seeking health insurance. These subsidies directly lowered the out-of-pocket expenses for families across the country.

The House-passed Build Back Better Act contains provisions that would extend these premium tax credits to 2025, ensuring that no one has to spend more than 8.5 percent of household income on insurance premiums. Yet, there is a need to look at additional options to keep costs low for patients, States, and the Federal government. The Basic Health Plan is an option that has shown to produce these savings.

Thanks to language I fought for in the Affordable Care Act, we have two States that are using the Basic Health model to make coverage more affordable for people earning under 200 percent of the Federal poverty level. We've seen incredible outcomes in New York and Minnesota. Savings for the States, savings for the Federal Government, and savings for individuals.

In New York, approximately 800,000 people are enrolled in the Essential Plan that cost less than \$500 annually for a family of four buying separate coverage, saving \$1,000 in premiums compared to Silver plans on the exchange. The State saved nearly \$1 billion by transitioning individuals from State funded plans to the Basic Health Plan.

Now is the time to expand the Basic Health Plan option to encourage more States to administer the plan, just as we have improved access to affordable options in the American Rescue Plan.

Do you agree that there is a need to lower health-care costs for people in the United States? At the same time, do you think there is a need to explore options that would also lower health-care expenditures for the government?

*Answer.* Making sure that all Americans have access to quality, affordable health care is one of the Biden-Harris administration's top priorities. The Basic Health Program is an important option for States to provide comprehensive health coverage to low- and moderate-income families. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress, and in concert with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, on a bipartisan basis to address this. At the same time, I also look forward to looking at short- and long-term strategies—including delivery system reform—to make sure that our Federal health programs like Medicare remain a bedrock of our health-care system.

*Question.* If confirmed, would you work with me to secure sustained funding for the Basic Health Plan and help encourage more States to adopt the program?

*Answer.* The Basic Health Program is an innovative option for States to improve access to care and in line with the Biden-Harris administration goals of affordability and coverage for all. The American Rescue Plan made additional investments in the

Basic Health Program last year, and if confirmed, I would be happy to work with you on this issue.

*Question.* Home and community-based services have become extremely popular in Washington State and across the country. I have worked with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to increase support for home and community based care.

These services help millions of older adults and people with disabilities avoid high-cost institutional care, while letting them live in the comforts of a surrounding that they are familiar with. People want to stay in their own homes as they age, and home and community-based care can cost as little as one-third the amount of nursing home care.

This shows that there is a need to innovate health-care delivery for seniors and people with disabilities. One successful program to achieve this is the Money Follows the Person program, which I have led with Senator Portman. This program allows older adults and people with disabilities to leave institutional care settings to live in their community, yet has not received permanent funding.

In Washington, the Money Follows the Person program has been incredibly successful, helping more than 8,000 individuals transition from long-term care facilities back into their own homes since 2008. It was also able to save the State Medicaid program millions of dollars. We must support efforts to have sustained funding for this program so that States can effectively use these funds to expand the program.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it dangerous for immunocompromised people and seniors to live in crowded facilities. Home and community-based care became one of the solutions to solve this issue. If confirmed, would you work with me to secure funding for programs like Money Follows the Person?

*Answer.* Thank you for your leadership on this important issue. The Money Follows the Person (MFP) demonstration gives Medicaid beneficiaries more options for their care and allows them to choose to receive care in the community, rather than institutions. This demonstration has shown promising results, including improving participant quality of life and lowering the cost of care. It is my understanding that the administration supports a permanent extension of MFP. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you on extending this program.

*Question.* Home and community-based services cannot exist without a robust caregiving workforce. Home-care workers are often low-income, racial minorities, underpaid, and overworked. If confirmed, would you pledge to support programs that bolster the caregiving workforce in a fair and equitable manner?

*Answer.* Our caregiving workforce is critical to ensuring access to home and community-based services—and we know the needs will only grow as our population continues to age. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you to ensure this workforce has the support it needs to serve older adults and people with disabilities.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY HON. SHERROD BROWN AND HON. JAMES LANKFORD

*Question.* Every day, our offices receive calls from constituents who can't afford their prescription drugs. High out-of-pocket costs at the pharmacy counter are especially difficult for older Americans, who are often on fixed incomes and sometimes have to make the impossible decision between paying for groceries or their prescription medicines because they can't afford both. Policymakers—both Congress and the administration—can and must do more to address system challenges that inadvertently drive out-of-pocket costs up for seniors, including direct and indirect remuneration (DIR) fees which often lead to increased costs for seniors at the pharmacy counter and threaten the viability of pharmacies across the Nation.

CMS recently proposed a regulation that would address pharmacy DIR. If finalized, CMS's part D Rule for CY 2023 would reduce out-of-pocket costs for beneficiaries by \$21.3 billion over 10 years. While CMS has yet to take action in this space, we also look forward to working with you, HHS, and CMS to implement standardized pharmacy quality measures that help to provide more certainty to community pharmacies and the Medicare beneficiaries they serve.

Will you commit to working with our offices and the Senate Finance Committee to ensure this rule is finalized, and that the reforms applied to all Medicare beneficiaries?

*Answer.* Small and rural pharmacies are critical to our Nation's health-care system and have been especially important during the pandemic. We must do all we

can to ensure that Americans can access important health-care services, including from local pharmacies in their communities. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to ensure that community pharmacists have predictability and to lower drug prices for patients and families.

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QUESTION SUBMITTED BY HON. MIKE CRAPO

*Question.* As I understand it, you left your position with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services due to policy disagreements with Governor Gretchen Whitmer. Without opining on the specifics of that disagreement, I respect your willingness to resign a position if you disagree with a policy and believe that you cannot implement it in good faith. I also believe that Congress has an important role to play in conducting oversight and ensuring government accountability.

Will you commit to respond to all the members of this committee, fulsomely and in good faith, during your nomination process, the term in which you would act as Assistant Secretary, and afterward regarding questions on your tenure?

*Answer.* I deeply respect the oversight function of Congress. If confirmed, I am committed to being responsive to requests from all members of this committee and providing Congress with the information that it needs consistent with appropriate law and regulation, during my tenure and subsequently.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. CHUCK GRASSLEY

*Question.* Since the COVID pandemic began, I have engaged in oversight on two fronts: (1) the origins of the virus; (2) the connection between the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) with the Wuhan lab and coronavirus research. In my July 27, 2021, Senate floor remarks, I challenged the Federal Government's failure to oversee grants sent by NIH to EcoHealth which then sub-awarded the money to the Wuhan lab. If you are confirmed as Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources, you will oversee the HHS Office of Finance and Office of Grants. During the past 3 years, I've conducted oversight on what steps the HHS has taken to detect and deter foreign threats to taxpayer-funded research. This work includes determining whether or not the NIH complied with all Federal regulations in funding activity at the Wuhan Lab. If confirmed, will you ensure the HHS is fully transparent and compliant in all Office of Inspector General audits and congressional inquiries?

*Answer.* I deeply respect the oversight function of Congress and the HHS Office of Inspector General (OIG). If confirmed, I am committed to being responsive to inquiries from Congress and OIG consistent with appropriate law and regulation.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you commit to conducting, supporting, and responding to any investigation into taxpayer money involving China-related research?

*Answer.* The President, Secretary Becerra, and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) all support the need to identify the origins of the COVID-19 virus, including by cooperating with the intelligence community's recent investigation. If confirmed, I would be happy to work to ensure the Department is responsive to information requests from Congress.

*Question.* In confirmed, will you commit to determining with certainty that HHS money wasn't misused by the Chinese Government and related entities, including gain-of-function research?

*Answer.* I deeply respect the oversight function of Congress and the laws that govern foreign-sponsored research. If confirmed, I am committed to being responsive to inquiries from Congress and ensuring that grant dollars are used for their intended purpose.

*Question.* I am concerned about an action recently made by the Biden administration is a Notice of Funding Opportunity for Harm Reduction Program Grants by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This \$30-million grant program, which will begin in May, would provide funds to nonprofits and local governments to make drug use safer for those with a substance use disorder. Specifically, grant funds must be used to support certain harm reduction activities, including purchasing equipment like FDA-approved overdose reversal medication, syringes, but also safe smoking kits/supplies. In my review, this is the first time a grant solicitation has included anything about safe smoking kits/supplies. Without any expla-

nation or context, the administration seemingly endorsed the dispersal of drug paraphernalia by the Federal Government. If you are confirmed as Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources, you will oversee HHS grant compliance to Federal law. Do you support the use of “safe smoking kits/supplies” for the purpose of harm reduction policy to respond to the drug overdose crisis? Can you explain how the dispersal of these kits and supplies would not violate 21 U.S.C. 863, which makes it unlawful to transport drug paraphernalia?

Answer. I support evidence-based practical strategies that prevent deadly overdoses, reduce the spread of disease associated with drug use, and engage individuals that use drugs in treatment productively. If confirmed, I will work with the appropriate subject-matter experts on this issue and follow the law.

*Question.* Has HHS noticed funding or provided grant funding for “safe smoking kits/supplies” prior to FY 2022? If so, please provide the specific grant number or Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Answer. As a private citizen, I am not aware of all previous HHS grant opportunities.

*Question.* It has been reported that the Department of Justice (DOJ) is considering supporting the use of safe injection sites. Safe injection sites are public facilities for drug users to consume illicit drugs like fentanyl, methamphetamine, or heroin, under the supervision of medical staff. This position by the Justice Department could violate Federal law. 21 U.S.C. 856 prohibits any person from knowingly or intentionally maintaining a place for the purpose of illegal drug use. The Trump administration DOJ opposed safe injection sites for this reason, and the Third Circuit agreed with this position, finding that it is a Federal crime to open and operate a safe injection site for illegal drug use. Is the funding of “safe injection” for the purpose of harm reduction policy compliant with Federal law? Please cite the specific Federal statute if you believe it is compliant.

Answer. I am not aware of Department of Justice’s position or actions on this issue. However, the opioid overdose crisis plaguing our Nation requires a forceful response that is rooted in evidence about what works to save lives, reduce the spread of disease, and engage individuals in treatment productively. If confirmed, I will follow the law and commit to working with my Federal, State, Tribal, local, and territorial public health leaders to address this deadly epidemic.

*Question.* Should Federal dollars fund “safe injection” sites?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work together with the appropriate subject-matter experts and follow the law.

*Question.* It has been reported that the Department of Justice (DOJ) is considering supporting the use of safe injection sites. Safe injection sites are public facilities for drug users to consume illicit drugs like fentanyl, methamphetamine, or heroin, under the supervision of medical staff. This position is concerning for a number of reasons. First, reports show that safe injection sites do not reduce overall overdose deaths or opioid-related emergency calls. Safe injection sites have led to an increase in crime, discarded needles, and social disorder in the surrounding neighborhoods. Advocates in favor of safe injection sites assert that they provide connections for those with substance use disorders to find housing and treatment options. Additionally, “safe injection” sites have a poor record of moving drug users into treatment and recovery, with some referral rates as low as 1 percent. What outcome evidence is there, including treatment and recovery referral rates, for “safe injection” sites?

Answer. If confirmed, I will work across the Department to ground the Department’s programs in evidence.

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QUESTION SUBMITTED BY HON. RICHARD BURR

*Question.* As the ranking member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, I take my oversight responsibilities very seriously, particularly as Congress provided billions of dollars in funding for the response to COVID-19 over the last 2 years.

While you are currently before the Senate Committee on Finance, if you are confirmed, you will oversee financial resources for a wide range of agencies, programs, and initiatives under the HELP Committee’s jurisdiction.

As I have told Secretary Becerra, congressional oversight is not an option. There has to be accountability for the historic levels of funding that have gone out the door for this response. Until we get a full picture of how the funds provided by Congress so far have been spent, it is difficult to justify any potential requests for additional funds.

Do you commit to providing me regular reports in a timely manner that detail each account that the administration is using for spending on COVID-19 response, how much money is in each account, how much has been obligated, how much has been spent, and what specific activities those funds have been spent on?

Answer. I deeply respect the oversight function of Congress, including the responsibility for oversight of financial expenditures. Currently, the Department complies with Federal law requiring regular reports for spending on COVID-19 activities. These reports are delivered to the Appropriations Committee on a monthly basis, as required by law. If confirmed, I commit to thoughtfully reviewing and responding to your request, and will provide the committee with information to support its oversight functions.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. TIM SCOTT

*Question.* During his confirmation hearing last February, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Xavier Becerra stated the following: “I believe deeply in religious freedom, and I will make sure that as Secretary of HHS that you will know that I will not only respect the law when it comes to these issues of religious freedom, but I will enforce them as Secretary of HHS within my department.”

If confirmed, will you commit to supporting robust funding for the Office for Civil Rights’ Conscience and Religious Freedom Division to assist the Secretary in this regard?

Answer. I support ensuring all HHS offices have sufficient resources to fulfill their mission in an efficient and effective manner. If confirmed, I will work with others across the Department to protect the civil rights of all people who participate in HHS programs.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring the fair and equal access and treatment of faith-based organizations with regard to agency grant opportunities without them having to compromise their religious missions?

Answer. Faith-based providers are critical to the child welfare system. In my current role, I work closely with the faith community and understand how essential they are to our safety net. If confirmed, I look forward to listening to and working closely with faith-based providers.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JAMES LANKFORD

HYDE

*Question.* If confirmed, you will be responsible for the financial resources and budget at HHS. As you know, Congress has continued to maintain the Hyde Amendment on a bipartisan basis each year in annual funding bills since 1976. If confirmed, will you continue to uphold and enforce the restrictions of the Hyde amendment—that no Federal funding can pay for abortions except in the case of rape, incest, or to protect the life of the mother—as enacted by Congress, as well as other prolife protections currently in Federal law?

Answer. If confirmed as Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources, I will follow the law.

*Question.* Will you commit to not attempting to weaken the Hyde Amendment and similar prolife policies or strip them from future budgets or appropriations bills?

Answer. If confirmed, I will follow the law.

*Question.* Congress has also continued to include conscience protections for individuals who have a religious or moral objection to participating in an abortion. Specifically, the Weldon Amendment, which has been included in funding bills since 2004, restricts Federal funding from going to agencies or programs that discriminate against health-care providers that do not provide, pay for, provide coverage of or



refer for abortions. Unfortunately, this administration has walked back enforcement of the Weldon Amendment, including rescinding enforcement action on California for violating Weldon. If confirmed, will you continue to uphold and enforce the Weldon Amendment and other conscience protections enacted by Congress to ensure that no health-care providers are discriminated against with Federal dollars?

Answer. If confirmed, I will follow the law.

*Question.* A report from the Obama administration in 2010 reinforced the importance of faith-based partnerships. Among the recommendations put forward in the report was to draw more on the local expertise and relationships of faith-based organizations as a way of filling gaps in the provision of essential services. Faith-based organizations are excellent, effective, and efficient at meeting the needs of our most at-risk populations. The report also highlighted the need to ease overly burdensome reporting and regulation requirements placed on social service agencies. Do you agree that it is important to continue pursuing ways to engage and expand faith-based partnerships as a way of effectively addressing some of the most critical social service needs in our country?

Answer. Faith-based providers are critical to the child welfare system. In past roles, I have worked closely with the faith community and understand how essential they are to our safety net. If confirmed, I look forward to listening to and working closely with faith-based providers.

*Question.* The Supreme Court has, in multiple decisions, reiterated that religious organizations cannot be discriminated against in the distribution of a public benefit for which they otherwise qualify because of their religious beliefs or identity. Will you commit to ensuring that no policy in HHS will disqualify a religious organization from receiving aid or participating in grant programs simply because of the organization's religious beliefs or because the organization receives statutory protections for religious freedom like those in title VII and title IX?

Answer. If confirmed, I will follow the law.

#### BUDGET/GRANTS

*Question.* The office of ASFR oversees arguably some of the most important offices at HHS, particularly those overseeing the agency's budget. Something that I think every person on this committee can agree on is that HHS's budget could use some additional transparency, especially after the several billions thrown its way over the course of the pandemic. I authored the Taxpayers Right to Know Act which was enacted in 2020, and OMB is in the early phases of discussing implementation. This provision will create a searchable list of every program in the Federal Government, how many employees are dedicated to that task, how much we spend on the program, and how it is evaluated, or if it is evaluated at all.

Are you aware of these new requirements, and what you can do to help facilitate the implementation of Taxpayer's Right to Know Act within the thousands of multi-layered programs at HHS should you be confirmed? What value do you see in having HHS's spending inventoried for all to see?

Answer. I am aware of these requirements. As a senior official at the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, including as Acting Deputy Director, I worked to advance transparency in congressional budget justifications and supported the ongoing work of Federal agencies to track and report performance and financial data through implementation of the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act and the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act. I have also strongly supported increased evaluation of program effectiveness, using a broad range of tools. I value the importance of improving transparency in government programs so taxpayers have access to information to understand how Federal funds are expended. If confirmed, I will work to advance transparency and evaluation so taxpayer dollars are spent effectively and taxpayers have access to information about how public funds are expended.

*Question.* The need to fully understand how grant dollars are used has been something I have highlighted for years. In Oklahoma, we have several state-of-the-art facilities that often are the recipients of research grants through one of the many HHS sub-agencies. Though you have yet to be installed in office, through your background in several administrations and other large public agencies, I am hoping you can provide some insight into how HHS makes decisions on who gets grants, who makes these decisions, how often or if the decision-making panel changes, and how

or if HHS works with the applicants who are not awarded the grant they applied for to see if there are other funding sources available to them.

Answer. From my time at OMB my understanding is HHS, like all Federal agencies, must design and execute a merit review process for applications for competitive grants or cooperative agreements. That review process must be guided by the program objectives and review criteria in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. An agency must first select objective reviewers who are knowledgeable in the field of endeavor. HHS has department-wide policies that agencies are required to implement to avoid conflict of interest. Program leadership makes recommendations for funding to the grants official and must include a statement explaining why unfunded applications were not selected. The grants office conducts a risk assessment as required by regulation on each recommended application and, in consultation with the program office, makes the final decision to fund an application. With respect to applicants not receiving an award, my understanding is agencies must notify unsuccessful applicants in writing within a month of the decision. Agencies may after the announcement work with those applicants on other funding sources in a fair and equitable manner that does not give an unfair advantage to any potential applicant of another grant. In addition, I understand all competitive HHS funding opportunities are posted to *Grants.gov* as much in advance of the application closing date as possible. If confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to work with you and others on ideas consistent with the law for improving this process.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JOHN BARRASSO

*Question.* Lower-population States at times feel the participation requirements in certain programs at the Department of Health and Human Services require too much administrative burden compared to the level of Federal support. In other words, the State is forced to devote large sums of staff time and expense to receive relatively small amounts of Federal financial help.

Do you believe there are ways the department could streamline or reduce the administrative burden placed on States, especially those with smaller populations to participate in HHS programs?

If so, can you identify policies you believe Congress could examine to achieve this goal.

Answer. From my time in State government, I am personally aware of the burdens which Federal requirements can place on States, and I can appreciate that smaller States may face particular challenges. If confirmed, I look forward to working within the Department and with Congress and States to find ways to reduce administrative burden while preserving or even strengthening the effectiveness and transparency of public spending.

*Question.* You have previously stated the importance of reducing waste, fraud, and abuse in Federal programs. This is something we all support.

Can you discuss an experience in your career where you reduced wasteful spending in a government program?

Answer. When I arrived at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, the Department's technology budget—which funded systems that delivered Medicaid payments to hospitals, tracked children in foster care, and enrolled individuals in SNAP and Medicaid—faced a \$45-million structural deficit. To address that imbalance without sacrificing vital services, with colleagues I eliminated scores of government positions in technology middle management. I stopped spending on a failed new approach to managing public assistance caseloads. I undertook a benchmarking exercise to identify excesses of costs over value, and then personally engaged vendor executives to renegotiate contracts. I also improved controls in the agency's approval processes. These steps and others greatly improved the Department's financial position.

*Question.* Can you also discuss ways HHS can better collaborate with State Governments to achieve this shared goal, especially regarding HHS programs that are jointly funded by States and the Federal Government?

Answer. It is critical that HHS works together with States to protect the integrity of Medicaid and other programs funded by the Federal Government and States. Reducing waste, fraud, and abuse has been a priority for me as a senior official at OMB and as the Director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Serv-

ices. HHS has a critical opportunity and responsibility to collaborate with State Governments to ensure we are protecting taxpayer dollars, improving the efficiency of our programs, and reaching the intended populations. If I am confirmed, I would continue this focus and partner with Congress and States to ensure strong oversight of Federal and State-supported programs like Medicaid to reduce waste, fraud, and abuse.

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF REBECCA E. JONES GASTON, NOMINATED TO BE COMMISSIONER, ADMINISTRATION ON CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Crapo, members of the committee, thank you for considering my nomination to be the Commissioner of the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families. I am honored by President Biden's decision to nominate me for this role and, if confirmed, look forward to serving children, youth, and families under his and Secretary Becerra's leadership.

Before I begin my testimony, I would like to thank my family. Here with me today are my children's godmothers, friends who have become family. And watching virtually are my son and daughter; my mother; and many of my family, friends, mentors, and colleagues. With me in spirit are my ancestors and my birth parents. I would not be here today without the love and support of all of these people.

I was adopted at a very young age after a number of foster care placements and grew up in a small Iowa farming community. Throughout my career in human services and child welfare, I have infused my lived experience, and the lived experience of others, into my work, because I believe that those who have been served by children and family services systems should have a role in changing these systems.

If confirmed as the Commissioner of the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, I would prioritize shifting the focus of child welfare systems from placement to prevention by promoting cross-system partnerships and shared outcomes, and helping States implement the Family First Prevention Services Act; leading from the ground up by keeping the perspective of States and those with lived experience at the fore; and ensuring equity and inclusion are at the center of all that we do.

I have been working in human services and child welfare for almost 25 years. During that time, I have transformed child welfare systems under both Democratic and Republican Governors. I have worked across the Nation to recruit foster and adoptive parents; have implemented innovative policies and programs; and have sat side-by-side with families and youth being served by these systems as a person with lived experience, and as a parent, advocate, and social worker.

As a result of my personal and professional experiences, I know that transforming children and family services systems into family well-being systems that serve children, youth, parents, and families as a whole cannot be done without collaborating with public and private partners, Tribal Nations, and community and faith-based partners, including those with diverse perspectives.

I currently serve as the Director of Child Welfare at the Oregon Department of Human Services. Together with my leadership team and key community partners, we developed a strategic plan focused on well-being and prevention that has already yielded results. Despite the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have reduced the number of children in foster care by more than 20 percent over 2 years and are on the path toward long-term change.

I led similar change efforts as the head of the Social Services Administration in Maryland, where I served under the leadership of Republican Governor Larry Hogan. In both Maryland and Oregon, I successfully led the States' Family First Prevention Services Act plans from development through Federal approval. If confirmed, I will prioritize supporting States to fully implement this landmark law, so children, youth, and families do not have to wait any longer for the transformational change that it offers.

In addition to Family First, there are a number of other levers at the Federal level to support States that are working hard to be innovative and improve how they meet the needs of children, youth, parents, and families. However, the key word here is support, as it is also important for the Federal Government not to put up unnecessary barriers.

Transforming children and family services systems into family well-being systems cannot be done without a focus on equity and inclusion. In these systems across the Nation, we see disproportionality at every decision point. This impacts rural communities, communities of color, Tribal Nations, and other vulnerable communities. In these communities, we often see limited access to services and resources, impacts of poverty, and disparate outcomes.

To build towards well-being, I have heard from those who have experienced the child welfare system that many families and youth could have been supported earlier by meeting needs related to homelessness, child care, and access to other concrete supports, such as addressing mental health and substance use needs. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing to be a voice for those who have experienced these systems and leading transformation to better meet their needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my work and vision with you today. I look forward to answering your questions.

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## SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

### STATEMENT OF INFORMATION REQUESTED OF NOMINEE

#### A. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. Name (include any former names used): Rebecca Ellen Jones Gaston, Rebecca Jones Gaston, Bekki Jones Gaston, Bekki Jones, Rebecca Jones.
2. Position to which nominated: Commissioner for the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
3. Date of nomination: January 7, 2022.
4. Address (list current residence, office, and mailing addresses):
5. Date and place of birth: October 25, 1969; Mankato, Minnesota.
6. Marital status (include maiden name of wife or husband's name):
7. Names and ages of children:
8. Education (list all secondary and higher education institutions, dates attended, degree received, and date degree granted):  
 Roland-Story High School, Story City, Iowa.  
 August 1984–May 1988.  
 High School Diploma, May 1988.  
 Georgetown University, Washington, DC.  
 August 1988–May 1994.  
 Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, May 1994.  
 University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.  
 August 1995–May 1997.  
 Master's of Social Work, May 1997.
9. Employment record (list all jobs held since college, including the title or description of job, name of employer, location of work, and dates of employment for each job):

Company/Agency	Position	Dates of Employment
Oregon Department of Human Services Salem, OR	Director, Child Welfare	October 2019–present

<b>Company/Agency</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Dates of Employment</b>
ICF Capacity Building Center for States Fairfax, VA	Consultant	July 2019 August 2019
Maryland Department of Human Services Baltimore, MD	Executive Director, Social Services Administration	January 2016–November 2019
Jones & James Waldorf, MD	One time Consulting, Stra- tegic Plan for the Center for Law and Social Policy	Summer 2014
Casey Family Programs  HQ—Seattle, WA Washington, DC office	Technical Assistance Unit	
	Director	2013–December 2015
	Project Manager	June 2012–2013
	Manager	March 2007–2012
Adoption Exchange Associa- tion White Marsh, MD	National Campaign and Ful- fillment Director, AdoptUsKids	March 2003–March 2007
U.S. Army Tempe, AZ	One-time Diversity workshop	Summer 2005 (est.)
National Association of Former Foster Children of America (NAFFCA) Washington, DC	Director, Group Home Pro- grams	July 2002–March 2003
National Center on Perma- nency for African American Children (Howard Univer- sity) Washington, DC	Program Coordinator	December 2000–July 2002
Child and Family Services Agency Washington, DC	Social Worker	March 1999–December 2000
Family and Child Services Washington, DC	Social Worker	January 1998–March 1999
Center for Adoption Support and Education Burtonsville, MD	Social Worker—Clinical Counselor or Group Leader	1998–2009 (volunteered and assisted with events ad hoc until 2015)
Adoptions Together Silver Spring, MD	Social Worker	1997–1998
Marion Adoption Plymouth Meeting, PA	Contract Student Social Worker	June 1996–May 1997

Company/Agency	Position	Dates of Employment
University of Pennsylvania Security Office Philadelphia, PA	Safety Assistant	1995–1997
DC Halfway House Washington, DC	Residential Counselor	1994–1995 (est.)
Red Top Cab Arlington, VA	Dispatch Operator	1994–1995
CACI Alexandria, VA	Records Reviewer	1994 (est.)
Community Services, Inc. Alexandria, VA	Residential Counselor	1994–1995 (est.)
Georgetown University Washington, DC	Administrative Assistant Work Study Student	1990–1995 1988–1990

10. Government experience (list any current and former advisory, consultative, honorary, or other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments held since college, including dates, other than those listed above):

None other than listed above.

11. Business relationships (list all current and former positions held as an officer, director, trustee, partner (*e.g.*, limited partner, non-voting, etc.), proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, company, firm, partnership, other business enterprise, or educational or other institution):

Black Administrators in Child Welfare: Board Member, 2021–present (unpaid and non-fiduciary).

American Public Human Services Association: Committee Member for National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators, 2018–present (unpaid and non-fiduciary).

Child Welfare League of America: Conference Committee Member, 2018–present.

Center for Adoption Support and Education: Board Member, 2015 (unpaid and non-fiduciary).

National Training Institute: Advisory Board-Adoption Competency Project, 2014–2019 (unpaid and non-fiduciary).

Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute: Foster Youth Internship Selection Committee, 2003–2021 (unpaid and non-fiduciary).

12. Memberships (list all current and former memberships, as well as any current and former offices held in professional, fraternal, scholarly, civic, business, charitable, and other organizations dating back to college, including dates for these memberships and offices):

National Association of Social Workers: Periodic member since 1997, not currently a member.

National Association of Black Social Workers: Periodic member since 1997, not currently a member.

Graduate Black Student Association: Member, 1995–1997.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.: Member, March 1990–present; Basileus (chapter president, Omicron Pi Chapter), 1991–1992 (not currently active).

Black Student Association: Member, 1988–1994.

13. Political affiliations and activities:

- a. List all public offices for which you have been a candidate dating back to the age of 18.  
N/A.
  - b. List all memberships and offices held in and services rendered to all political parties or election committees, currently and during the last 10 years prior to the date of your nomination.  
N/A.
  - c. Itemize all political contributions to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity of \$50 or more for the past 10 years prior to the date of your nomination.  
N/A.
14. Honors and awards (list all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, military medals, and any other special recognitions for outstanding service or achievement received since the age of 18):  
Casey Family Programs, Outstanding Employee Award (2014 and 2015).  
University of Pennsylvania, Emily Brown Porreca Memorial Award (1997).  
University of Pennsylvania, Samuel Sylvester Award and Certificate of Merit (1997).  
Georgetown University, Louis Maghill Award (1994).
15. Published writings (list the titles, publishers, dates, and hyperlinks (as applicable) of all books, articles, reports, blog posts, or other published materials you have written):  
Oregon Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Division, “Vision for Transformation” (November 2020).  
Maryland Department of Human Services, Social Services Administration, “Integrated Practice Model for Child Welfare and Adult Services: A Framework for Maryland’s Human Services Workforce” (January 2019).  
CWLA Special Issue Vol. 82 No 2, 2003, article, “A Model of Culture-Centered Child Welfare Practice,” by Oronde Miller and Rebecca Jones Gaston.
16. Speeches (list all formal speeches and presentations (e.g., PowerPoint) you have delivered during the past 5 years which are on topics relevant to the position for which you have been nominated, including dates):

Speech Forum	Date
Panel Discussion with Our Children Oregon	9/2021
Presentation to the Oregon Senate Committee on Human Services, Mental Health and Recovery	2/2021
Child Welfare League of America Annual Conference	4/2019
American Bar Association, National Conference on Access to Justice for Children and Families	4/2019
American Public Human Services Association, ISM Technology Annual Conference	9/2018
Child Abuse, Neglect and Dependency Options, Annual Maryland Court Conference	10/2016– 10/2019

17. Qualifications (state what, in your opinion, qualifies you to serve in the position to which you have been nominated):  
I was born in Minnesota and was adopted following a number of foster care placements. For most of my childhood, I grew up with my adoptive family in a small Iowa farming community of approximately 2,500. My life experiences have been shaped by the loss and grief of family separation, and the immeasurable love for my children and family and the hope I hold for vulnerable com-

munities. I have also been shaped by the intersectional experiences of a rural upbringing with an urban coming of age, as well as lived experiences both leading and being a part of foster care systems in America.

If there is one thing that is clear to me it's that my purpose is to be a voice for all children and families, particularly for those who experience the worst societal outcomes. And that is what I have been doing for almost 25 years—work that is informed by both my personal and professional commitments and experiences. I was trusted to help to lead transformation efforts at child welfare agencies and social services agencies under both Democratic and Republican Governors, and I have sat side by side with families in the system as a person with lived experience, and as a parent, an advocate, social worker, and therapist.

My extensive experience leading child welfare agencies, recruiting foster and adoptive families across the Nation, and providing leadership and technical assistance to jurisdictions—through foundations and through executive level roles within State Governments from coast to coast, as well as my own lived experience as a child in foster care and an adoptee—qualify me for the Commissioner of the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families. I have a deep understanding of what it will take to transform child welfare systems across the Nation into family well-being systems, and I am eager to get to work to ensure these systems best serve children and families.

Currently, I lead Oregon's child welfare system. When I came to Oregon, the child welfare agency was in need of true transformation—lawsuits, leadership changes, staffing and infrastructure challenges, and data that pointed to a real need for strategic revisioning of how to become a family well-being system and one primed for true partnership with Tribes, communities, and families. Working with my leadership team, those who experience the system, Tribes, private- and public-sector partners, I developed a strategic plan focused on preventing children and families from entering the system at all. Now, Oregon's child welfare agency is well on its way towards transformation. For example, despite the onset of COVID-19 4 months after I started leading the agency, we have been able to dramatically decrease the number of children under our care, in part by partnering with those most impacted to create buy-in for the hard work ahead.

I led similar change as the head of the Social Services Administration in Maryland, where I served under the leadership of Republican Governor Larry Hogan. In both Oregon and Maryland, I developed the State child welfare agency's Family First Prevention Services Plan and got both approved. If confirmed, I look forward to helping other States do the same so children and families do not have to wait any longer to reap the benefits of this landmark law. Moving any child welfare system to a family well-being model requires centering equity and inclusion and collaborating with all those who are touched by the system—most importantly children and families. Those who experience the child welfare system should have a role in changing it and often know best how to do so.

Prior to my roles in Oregon and Maryland, I was the national campaign director for AdoptUSKids, the first national ad campaign for recruiting foster and adoptive families. I made sure that this campaign was informed by foster and adoptive families. I am proud of our work to ensure that children do not languish in the system. Prior to this role, I was the director of Casey Family Programs and worked with child welfare agencies across the Nation to implement innovative strategies and Federal policies and programs.

## **B. FUTURE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIPS**

1. Will you sever all connections (including participation in future benefit arrangements) with your present employers, business firms, associations, or organizations if you are confirmed by the Senate? If not, provide details.  
Yes.
2. Do you have any plans, commitments, or agreements to pursue outside employment, with or without compensation, during your service with the government? If so, provide details.  
No.
3. Has any person or entity made a commitment or agreement to employ your services in any capacity after you leave government service? If so, provide details.



No.

4. If you are confirmed by the Senate, do you expect to serve out your full term or until the next presidential election, whichever is applicable? If not, explain.  
Yes.

### C. POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

1. Indicate any current and former investments, obligations, liabilities, or other personal relationships, including spousal or family employment, which could involve potential conflicts of interest in the position to which you have been nominated.

Any potential conflict of interest will be resolved in accordance with the terms of my ethics agreement, which was developed in consultation with ethics officials at the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Government Ethics. I understand that my ethics agreement has been provided to the committee. I am not aware of any potential conflict other than those addressed by my ethics agreement.

2. Describe any business relationship, dealing, or financial transaction which you have had during the last 10 years (prior to the date of your nomination), whether for yourself, on behalf of a client, or acting as an agent, that could in any way constitute or result in a possible conflict of interest in the position to which you have been nominated.

Any potential conflict of interest will be resolved in accordance with the terms of my ethics agreement, which was developed in consultation with ethics officials at the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Government Ethics. I understand that my ethics agreement has been provided to the committee. I am not aware of any potential conflict other than those addressed by my ethics agreement.

3. Describe any activity during the past 10 years (prior to the date of your nomination) in which you have engaged for the purpose of directly or indirectly influencing the passage, defeat, or modification of any legislation or affecting the administration and execution of law or public policy. Activities performed as an employee of the Federal Government need not be listed.

In my tenure as Executive Director, Social Services Administration at the Maryland Department of Human Services and in my tenure as Child Welfare Director at Oregon Department of Human Services, I have been involved in a number of legislative and public policy issues at the State level on behalf of my respective Departments and Administrations. In these roles, I have also been involved in informing and educating at the Federal level on human services policies of concern to Maryland and Oregon.

4. Explain how you will resolve any potential conflict of interest, including any that are disclosed by your responses to the above items. (Provide the committee with two copies of any trust or other agreements.)

Any potential conflict of interest will be resolved in accordance with the terms of my ethics agreement, which was developed in consultation with ethics officials at the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Government Ethics. I understand that my ethics agreement has been provided to the committee. I am not aware of any potential conflict other than those addressed by my ethics agreement.

5. Two copies of written opinions should be provided directly to the committee by the designated agency ethics officer of the agency to which you have been nominated and by the Office of Government Ethics concerning potential conflicts of interest or any legal impediments to your serving in this position.

I understand that my ethics agreement has been provided to the committee.

### D. LEGAL AND OTHER MATTERS

1. Have you ever been the subject of a complaint or been investigated, disciplined, or otherwise cited for a breach of ethics for unprofessional conduct before any court, administrative agency (*e.g.*, an Inspector General's office), professional association, disciplinary committee, or other ethics enforcement entity at any time? Have you ever been interviewed regarding your own conduct as part of

any such inquiry or investigation? If so, provide details, regardless of the outcome.

No

2. Have you ever been investigated, arrested, charged, or held by any Federal, State, or other law enforcement authority for a violation of any Federal, State, county, or municipal law, regulation, or ordinance, other than a minor traffic offense? Have you ever been interviewed regarding your own conduct as part of any such inquiry or investigation? If so, provide details.

No.

3. Have you ever been involved as a party in interest in any administrative agency proceeding or civil litigation? If so, provide details.

I have not been involved in any administrative proceedings or civil litigation in my personal capacity. I have been named in litigation in my official capacity as Director of the Oregon Department of Human Services.

4. Have you ever been convicted (including pleas of guilty or *nolo contendere*) of any criminal violation other than a minor traffic offense? If so, provide details.

No.

5. Please advise the committee of any additional information, favorable or unfavorable, which you feel should be considered in connection with your nomination.

N/A.

#### **E. TESTIFYING BEFORE CONGRESS**

1. If you are confirmed by the Senate, are you willing to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Congress on such occasions as you may be reasonably requested to do so?

Yes.

2. If you are confirmed by the Senate, are you willing to provide such information as is requested by such committees?

Yes.

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#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD TO REBECCA E. JONES GASTON

#### QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. RON WYDEN

#### MENTAL HEALTH

*Question.* One cross-cutting issue the Finance Committee is looking into is mental health. This week, we hosted the Surgeon General to hear specifically about his recent advisory on youth mental health. This is going to be a major priority for the committee moving forward, both in terms of continuing to implement the Family First Prevention Services Act and looking forward to the reauthorization of title IV-B child welfare programs by the end of this Congress.

Can you address how you will prioritize youth mental health needs in your work implementing Family First, and within the title IV-B programs?

Are there other initiatives focused on youth mental health you plan to implement?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I am committed to moving our child welfare system from a system of placing children outside of the home to one that focuses on prevention and family well-being. A family well-being system is only possible if we address the mental health and well-being of parents, caregivers, and children. I would focus on swift implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act and supporting more States to submit successful plans that can fully take advantage of the law's focus on parental well-being. In addition, I would look forward to working with you on the reauthorization of IV-B and a deeper focus on evidenced-based prevention strategies.

## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. MARIA CANTWELL

*Question.* One of the harsh realities that the COVID-19 pandemic exposed is the lack of affordable child-care options in the United States. During the pandemic, parents, mostly women, were forced to balance online learning, their own jobs, taking care of their children, and many other tasks.

This has led to women quitting the workforce in unprecedented numbers during the pandemic so that they can take care of the needs of their families. According to the National Women's Law Center, women in the United States have lost more than 5.4 million net jobs since February, 2020.

In Washington State and many other parts of the country, child care was already difficult to find even before COVID-19. Some parents end up having to place their children on wait lists while others can't find any affordable or available options.

It is estimated that the average cost of licensed infant care can consume about 20 percent of an average Washington family's income. The child-care industry in my home State is also facing high staff turnover caused by low wages and other concerns.

The lack of child care does not just take a toll on women and families, but also on the economy. I have supported legislation to provide tax credits for working families who may need help paying the cost of child care. I was also pleased to see that the House-passed Build Back Better Act included a \$100-billion investment to support high-quality child care.

We must explore more options to improve child care access in the United States to make families' lives easier, and also to help with the social and economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

In your opinion, what are the main causes of the child care shortage today? How has COVID-19 made the situation worse?

If confirmed, how would you work to improve affordable child-care access through your respective roles? What approach would you take to fix this issue?

*Answer.* A stable child-care sector is essential for both the healthy development of children and the ability of parents to fully participate in the workforce. While child care would not be under my direct purview if confirmed as Commissioner, this issue greatly affects the children and families who ACYF supports, and I would look forward to supporting ACF and congressional efforts on this issue where possible.

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 QUESTION SUBMITTED BY HON. ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.

## CAPTA

*Question.* I have long supported CAPTA's so-called "plans of safe care," which Congress created as a tool to support infants whose parents or caregivers are affected by substance use disorder and to prevent these infants from being placed into foster care if they may safely remain with their families. I am engaged in ongoing discussions with constituents, stakeholders and policy-makers in Congress and the administration about how we can continue to strengthen this vital support for vulnerable infants, and I would like to ask for your commitment to join those conversations and help us make plans of safe care the best tool they can be to protect infants.

How will you work on this issue?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I am committed to moving our child welfare system toward a family well-being system. The Plans of Safe Care provisions within the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act provide an important tool to bring together a care team to help support a family struggling with substance use disorder and provide the necessary services to keep a child safe and keep the family together. I have worked extensively on plans of safe care in both Maryland and Oregon, and if confirmed, I would look forward to working closely with you and other partners on this issue.

## QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. SHELDON WHITEHOUSE

*Question.* How can the Administration for Children and Families work to improve housing stability for families and young adults living in unstable or unsafe housing or who are homeless?

*Answer.* All families and young people deserve the security of having a safe place to call home. ACF plays a significant role in providing services to children and families experiencing homelessness. If confirmed, I commit to working within ACF, and with partner agencies such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development and other partners, to ensure our most vulnerable children, youth, and families, including those experiencing homelessness, are supported.

*Question.* Do you agree it is important to embed a focus on diversity, cultural competency, and equity in the programs administered by ACF? How will you incorporate these metrics into your evaluations of programs administered by ACF?

*Answer.* As you know, the Biden-Harris administration and Secretary Becerra are committed to advancing equity and support for underserved communities, as reflected in the executive order the President signed on his first day in office, “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government.” If confirmed, I will strive to advance this goal in all ACF’s work. The Children’s Bureau, for example, reviews States’ child welfare practices through its Child and Family Services Reviews. I intend to explore how to use this and other vehicles at our disposal to assist States in assessing and addressing equity issues in their child welfare systems. I would also work to advance ACF’s recent Information Memorandum, Equity in Action: Prioritizing and Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities, which outlines ACF’s unequivocal commitment to address disparities.

*Question.* What is your position on increasing flexibility for States to provide benefits youth and young adults under the Chafee Foster Care for Successful Transition to Adulthood Program? What is your position on extending benefits to young adults exiting foster care as was provided through the Division X of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021? Do you see this initiative as requiring additional funding?

*Answer.* The supports offered by the Chafee program for older foster youth and those transitioning out of care can be the difference between former foster youth going to college or getting a job and youth ending up without a roof over their heads. The increased resources and flexibilities Congress provided have been critical, and if confirmed, I would work to examine what worked among those flexibilities and hear from those young people about their experiences.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you expand the list of evidence-based programs that qualify for reimbursement under the Family First Prevention Act (title IV–E) program?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the title IV–E Prevention Services Clearinghouse has adequate resources to be able to review and rate programs in a timely manner. I believe this must include programs that are focused specifically on serving historically underserved communities. I will also support the continued development of evidence-based practices through support of quality evaluation.

*Question.* Are there any additional wraparound services that the Federal Government should provide to support families where a parent has a SUD?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work across ACF programs and with other entities within HHS, including SAMHSA, to support families impacted by substance use disorder. In addition, I am committed to fully implementing the Family First Prevention Services Act to deliver evidence-based supports to more parents struggling with substance use disorder.

*Question.* If confirmed, what steps would you take to provide parents with the tools to protect their children from counterfeit pills and other narcotics?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I will work with other Operating Divisions within the Department, including FDA, SAMHSA, and the CDC, to counteract the impacts of illicit drug use on the children and families ACYF serves.

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 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO

*Question.* Local jurisdictions are working hard to get Family First programs off the ground. So many of the challenges they face don’t need a statutory change, but

rather willing agency partners. Will you commit to working with those States and counties to ensure that the administration is doing everything possible to support a smooth implementation process?

*Answer.* If confirmed, successful implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act will be a top priority. This law represents a unique opportunity to reorient our child welfare system toward prevention and family well-being. I am committed to working with States, counties, Tribes, and other partners to provide the guidance and technical assistance needed for all communities to benefit from this law.

*Question.* Recently, the Finance Committee heard from Dr. Vivek Murthy, the U.S. Surgeon General, about the children’s mental health crisis. What do you see as your role in addressing kids’ mental health needs? Based on your previous experience, where can we do better in breaking down silos between Federal programs and arming you with the resources you’ll need?

*Answer.* The Family First law and upcoming reauthorization of title IV–B provide many opportunities to address the mental health needs of young people and families involved in the child welfare system. If confirmed, my priority will be to move our child welfare system toward a system of family well-being that focuses on keeping families together.

*Question.* Child welfare programs are seeing increases in cases where children have very acute social and behavioral challenges. These cases require intensive services that are often not available in a home setting. In Nevada, Clark County is facing a crisis in finding facilities to provide the necessary treatment for them. This lack of providers too often has resulted in kids spending time in inappropriate care settings while they wait for treatment. What can the Federal Government do to partner with counties to ensure that these children and their families receive the intensive services they need and deserve in the most clinically appropriate treatment setting?

*Answer.* As we increase our focus on keeping families together, it is possible that the children who end up in out-of-home placements will have acute and specialized needs. I believe that our goal should be to provide children with the care they need when they need it and in the most appropriate setting to deliver that care. If confirmed, I will work to address the needs of all children involved in the child welfare system.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. ELIZABETH WARREN

*Question.* Tribal Nations provide critical child welfare services and adjudicate child welfare matters. However, as they attempt to exercise their sovereignty to protect Tribal families, they often face barriers to accessing Federal funding and are subjected to policies that interfere with their ability to establish effective programs.

It is of the utmost importance that the Federal Government protect Tribal sovereignty and advance Tribal self-determination. And as President Biden stated in a Presidential Memorandum, “History demonstrates that we best serve Native American people when Tribal Governments are empowered to lead their communities, and when Federal officials speak with and listen to Tribal leaders in formulating Federal policy that affects Tribal Nations.”

How do you believe the Federal Government could remove barriers to Federal funding and other barriers that interfere with Tribal Nations’ abilities to establish effective programs?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I would ensure that ACYF remains strongly committed to working in partnership with Tribes, Tribal organizations, and urban Indian organizations. The Biden-Harris administration is committed to regular, meaningful, and robust consultation and collaboration, and at ACYF, I would work to ensure ACYF respects the unique government-to-government relationship that exists between the U.S. Federal Government and Tribal Governments. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Tribal leaders on identifying barriers that limit access to Federal funding and other resources and working collaboratively to identify and implement solutions that remove those barriers.

*Question.* The Federal Government has a trust responsibility to protect American Indian and Alaska Native children, and as the Senate stated in a resolution it adopted (S. Res. 707, 115th Congress), Tribal Nations have the inherent sovereign

authority to be involved in child welfare decisions. Today, numerous Tribal Nations are developing promising child abuse prevention strategies that are reducing the risk of child abuse and helping children stay safely at home rather than being placed in foster care.

There are nine federally recognized Tribal Nations in Oregon. How did you support Tribal child welfare programs through your position as Child Welfare Director of Oregon's Department of Human Services?

Answer. In Oregon I worked closely with Tribal Governments and Tribal leaders to improve delivery of child welfare services and ensure we were supporting them in a culturally competent manner that accounted for their unique needs. Recognizing the sovereignty of Tribal Governments and establishing relationships based on transparency and accountability were critical to this work, and if confirmed, I am committed to bringing that same focus to ACYF.

*Question.* How would you support Tribal welfare programs if you are confirmed as ACYF Commissioner?

Answer. If confirmed, I will listen to the needs of Tribes and look forward to providing robust technical assistance and support that recognizes the unique needs of Tribes while respecting the government-to-government relationship. In Oregon, I have worked closely with the nine federally recognized Tribes to increase access to prevention services, keep families together, and deliver services in a culturally competent manner.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. MIKE CRAPO

*Question.* According to the Adoption Foster Care Analysis Reporting system, the foster care system has served over 600,000 children each year for the past 10 years. For many States, faith-based organizations provide the majority of child welfare services to these foster children. In order to best prioritize the well-being and safety of this vulnerable population, the Federal Government must continue to collaborate and support a wide variety organizations dedicated to providing these services.

Can you please speak to the important role that faith-based providers play in the child welfare system?

Answer. I have closely worked with faith-based providers throughout my career and firmly believe that when it comes to the well-being of children, we need everyone at the table. Faith-based providers are a critical part of the child welfare system, and if confirmed, I would work closely with the faith sector.

*Question.* If confirmed, how will you communicate and collaborate with faith-based organizations and providers, so they can continue to help serve this vulnerable community?

Answer. As I have in Oregon, I would seek to collaborate with the faith-based sector, listening to their needs and ideas to better serve children and families. It is important that ACYF provides clear guidance to all partners, including faith-based organizations. If confirmed, you have my commitment to partnering with and working closely with faith-based organizations.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JOHN CORNYN

FOSTER YOUTH

*Question.* You will be charged with carrying out policies impacting foster youth. These individuals are among the most vulnerable Americans, and we need to make sure the foster care system works for them, not the other way around.

Sadly, we have thousands of children in the foster care system who go missing each year. In 2019, there were a total of 423,997 children in foster care. Of that population, about 1 percent or 4,115 children were designated as "runaway." Some foster care advocacy groups do not think these data on runaways are accurate as some cases are preemptively closed out, even though many of those children are likely to return. However, the data is not conclusive and remains incomplete.

Fortunately, the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) will soon be updated to more accurately reflect where a child stands in the foster care system. I plan on sending the administration a letter regarding this

change and how we can get this up and running as soon as possible. I am also working on draft legislation to create a feedback loop from States to ACF, which will provide technical assistance at the Children's Bureau to update best practices on preventing and mitigating runaway episodes as well as caring for missing and runaway foster youth.

How do you plan to address the issue of missing and runaway foster youth?

Answer. I strongly believe in the importance of data and evidence in driving decisions in the child welfare system and doing what is in the best interests of children. If confirmed, I am looking forward to working with you to continue to ensure that AFCARS is collecting and reporting data that will help us to keep children safe and move us toward a system of child and family well-being. It is critical that we both account for children who have left their placements and understand why they have left so we can provide the support they need to stay safe. You have my commitment to work on this issue with you.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you prioritize accelerating the update to AFCARS and provide Congress with periodical progress reports?

Answer. If confirmed, I commit to keeping you and the committee up to date about all programs within ACYF. I understand the critical importance of AFCARS and would look forward to working closely with you on all needed updates to the system.

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QUESTION SUBMITTED BY HON. RICHARD BURR

*Question.* If you are confirmed you will play a key role in the development of Federal policy related to youth in the child welfare system.

Senator Feinstein and I have introduced a bill to ensure that foster children placed in qualified residential treatment programs, or QRTPs, with more than 16 beds would not lose eligibility for Medicaid because of an antiquated law often called the "IMD exclusion."

QRTPs are required by law to have a trauma-informed treatment model designed to address the clinical needs of foster children with serious emotional or behavioral issues. In other words, these programs are legally required to provide a clinically appropriate level of care for vulnerable foster children who are in serious need of such care.

Do you believe that children receiving treatment in QRTPs should lose their Medicaid coverage if that QRTP has more than 16 beds?

Answer. If confirmed, my priority will be to ensure that ACYF is doing everything to ensure that all children receive the care they need, when they need it, and in the setting that is best able to provide that care. In Oregon, I have worked closely with the State Medicaid agency to support providers in implementing and understanding the Family First Prevention Services Act and other policies where Medicaid and child welfare intersect. If confirmed, I would continue that collaboration at the Federal level with an eye toward getting clear and comprehensive guidance to States, counties, and providers, and working to solve any barriers that prevent children from receiving the best care and support possible.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. TIM SCOTT

*Question.* In December, Congressman Ralph Norman and I led a letter with 102 of our colleagues regarding the rescission of waivers from faith-based providers in South Carolina, Texas, and Michigan. Miracle Hill in South Carolina had their waiver revoked. This is a shame, especially since Miracle Hill does important work to recruit foster families in accordance with their religious beliefs and place children in need of a home in their care. To further this point, studies suggest that 82 percent of families cited faith or church support as a factor that facilitated successful fostering.

If confirmed, will you commit to protecting religious adoption and foster care providers by ensuring they are able fully participate in the adoption and foster care systems without violating their religious exercise?

If confirmed, will you commit to reinstating the waiver to Miracle Hill in South Carolina in order to ensure that this organization can continue their critical work of finding children a home?

If not, will I at least receive a written response to the 20 questions that were posed by members of Congress in the letter?

Additionally, if Miracle Hill's waiver is not reinstated, can you explain why the Supreme Court in *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia* unanimously concluded that faith-based child welfare providers should be able to provide adoption and foster care services in accordance with their beliefs, but the Biden administration is choosing to ignore this important decision from our Nation's highest court?

If confirmed, when discrepancies arise, will you commit to consulting career professionals in the Conscience and Religious Freedom Division before taking action with regard to cases involving religious institutions or providers?

Answer. I have closely worked with faith-based providers throughout my career and firmly believe that when it comes to the well-being of children, we need everyone at the table. Faith-based providers are a critical part of the child welfare system, and if confirmed, I would work closely with the faith sector.

If confirmed, I will follow the law. I deeply respect the oversight function of Congress and this committee. I am committed to ensuring that the Department is responsive to oversight requests, like your letter, and provides Congress with the information that it needs consistent with appropriate law and regulation.

If confirmed, I will work with the career subject matter experts within ACYF and the Department to come to the best decisions possible for the children and families ACYF is entrusted with serving.

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QUESTION SUBMITTED BY HON. BILL CASSIDY

*Question.* The passage of the Family First Prevention Services Act in 2018 brought numerous opportunities for States and Tribes to access Federal resources to safely support families, in lieu of unnecessary family disruption and placement in foster care. There also are considerable avenues through Medicaid to support these types of services. States, Tribes, and numerous stakeholders have elevated the need for better coordination and communication among the agencies in HHS—namely CMS and ACF. It's been years, and still these challenges exist. In your role as the ACYF Commissioner should you be confirmed, how will you move this effort forward to provide meaningful, responsive information to jurisdictions to ease these challenges?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to listening to States, counties, and providers about challenges and opportunities related to the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act, including the Qualified Residential Treatment Program provisions. Given the complex interactions with Medicaid, I am committed to working with CMS and other parts of the Department to provide clear and responsive guidance to the field. My top priority will be ensuring that children receive the type of care they need in a setting that is most appropriate to delivery that care. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you on this issue.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JAMES LANKFORD

FAITH-BASED CHILD WELFARE

*Question.* Faith-based child welfare providers perform vital services for hundreds of thousands of foster children nationwide and are often the best at finding forever homes for children in need. According to HHS's AFCARS report, 407,493 children are in foster care, 117,470 of whom are waiting to be adopted.

Unfortunately, one day before the 2021 AFCARS report came out, HHS announced the rescission of waivers that were previously granted to faith-based adoption and foster care agencies in Michigan, Texas, and South Carolina, which put providers in these States in the untenable position of choosing between serving children or operating in accordance with the tenets of their faith.

Earlier this year, the Supreme Court unanimously validated the principle that religious adoption agencies have a right to be free from discriminatory exclusion from



adoption and foster care programs because of their beliefs in *Fulton v. Philadelphia*. The Supreme Court found that “the refusal of Philadelphia to contract with Catholic Social Services for the provision of foster care services unless it agrees to certify same-sex couples as foster parents cannot survive strict scrutiny, and violates the First Amendment.” However, HHS and the Biden administration appear to be ignoring the Court’s clear direction that religious foster care agencies cannot be shut down because of their religious beliefs.

A number of my colleagues and I wrote to Secretary Becerra on this issue last year, but we have yet to receive a response

Do you agree that our primary goal should be safe, loving, and permanent placements for all children?

Answer. Yes.

*Question.* Do you agree that faith-based adoption and foster care agencies should be able to continue to partner with the government to serve children and families without sacrificing their sincerely held religious beliefs?

Answer. I have closely worked with faith-based providers throughout my career and firmly believe that when it comes to the well-being of children, we need everyone at the table. Faith-based providers are a critical part of the child welfare system, and if confirmed, I would work closely with the faith sector.

*Question.* Do you agree that without faith-based providers, our Nation would be unable to properly care for the number of children in need of homes and families?

Answer. Faith-based providers are absolutely essential to our child welfare system.

*Question.* If confirmed, will you commit to maintaining the notice of non-enforcement for the 2016 grants rule and disavow its enforcement moving forward?

Answer. It is my understanding that this is an issue that spans across the Department. If confirmed, I will look into how the Department is addressing this issue and report back to Congress. I also commit to doing everything in my power as, if confirmed, to ensure that grantees and their beneficiaries are not unfairly discriminated against.

*Question.* If confirmed, will HHS exclude from the title IV–E program religious adoption and foster care providers that cannot assist in the placement of children in same-sex households without violating their religious exercise when those households have alternative providers available to assist them in the State?

Answer. If confirmed, I am committed to working closely with faith-based providers to ensure that children have the supports they need and in the settings that are best positioned to provide those supports.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JOHN BARRASSO

*Question.* Faith-based organizations play an important role in the child welfare system. The actions of the Biden administration are making it more difficult for these groups to participate in the process. This continues a troubling pattern of the Department of Health and Human Services discriminating against people and organizations of faith.

On November 18, 2021, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and Office for Civil Rights (OCR), announced it was withdrawing waivers previously granted under the Trump administration. Please explain your position on this decision.

Please describe how you will help faith-based groups participate in the child welfare process and identify previous professional experiences where you have specifically worked with faith-based groups.

Please describe how you will ensure faith-based organizations will not have to violate their own religious beliefs to participate in Federal programs.

Answer. Faith-based providers are critical to the child welfare system. In my current role, I work closely with the faith community and understand how essential they are to our safety net. If confirmed, I look forward to listening to and working closely with faith-based providers, and will follow the law.

*Question.* Rural States and communities face unique challenges when delivering governmental services.

Please describe specific instances and experiences where you have improved the delivery of social services in rural communities?

Explain how, if confirmed, you will ensure the policies of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) will take into account the unique needs of rural States and people.

*Answer.* Ensuring equitable access to ACF programs for rural communities is critical. If confirmed, I would partner with rural communities to identify barriers to accessing ACF programs and would be committed to thinking creatively to solve those problems and meet the needs of children and families in rural communities. During my career I have worked with rural communities and have seen firsthand the issues caused by long distances to service providers, lack of reliable Internet, and staffing challenges for many providers. I would bring that experience to ACF if I am fortunate enough to be confirmed.

*Question.* As the former chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, ensuring American Indian and Alaska Native children receive the help and support they need is an important personal priority of mine.

Can you please identify previous professional experiences and actions where you worked with tribal communities?

*Answer.* While with Casey Family Programs, I was the project lead for the California Disproportionality Project that had teams from 14 counties comprised of Tribes and county staff focused on strategies to reduce disproportionality and disparity of Tribal communities and African American communities. Additionally, in Oregon, the relationship with Tribes has been a priority including ensuring membership of Tribes within all the advisory groups, as well as the ICWA advisory. In my current role, I have also supported the passage and implementation of the Oregon Indian Child Welfare Act as well as the implementation efforts of prevention and Family First with the Tribes.

*Question.* Can you please identify specific policies and ways you plan on working with Tribal communities if confirmed?

*Answer.* If confirmed, I look forward to working with Tribes to support the implementation of prevention and Family First as well as the reduction of the disproportionality and disparity of Tribal families. Upholding the government-to-government relationship is a priority and engaging with Tribal leadership to guide and inform what is needed is the process for which I intend to work.

*Question.* The Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF) previously issued a rule entitled “Vaccine and Mask Requirements To Mitigate the Spread of COVID-19 in Head Start Programs.”

Do you believe the scientific data supports the masking of young children to participate in Head Start?

If you believe the masking of young children is justified, please provide specific medical or scientific studies to support this position.

*Answer.* Head Start is a vital resource to many underserved communities around the country. Many children served by State child welfare systems participate in Head Start. If confirmed, I am committed to working closely with the Office of Head Start to collaborate on ensuring the well-being of children in Head Start centers. While Head Start would not be under my direct purview, if confirmed as Commissioner, I would look forward to supporting ACF and congressional efforts on this issue where possible, while also following Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance for masking.

*Question.* The COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly difficult on children who lost the ability to attend in-person school. Teachers are classified as mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect under State law, since they are in such frequent and close contact with children.

From a child welfare perspective, can you explain your position on the importance of in-person learning?

*Answer.* Schools and the supports that students receive in schools are an essential part of the safety net for children and families. Children do best when they have access to a full range of supports, including those provided by in-person learning.

*Question.* Human trafficking is a tragedy and must be stopped. The actions of the Biden administration are only making the situation worse, especially along our southern border. With that being said, the Administration for Children and Families plays an important role combating human trafficking.

Can you please identify specific policies you believe Congress should consider that would improve the ability of ACF to combat and provide assistance to victims of human trafficking?

*Answer.* A focus of my career has been combatting human trafficking, and I will always carry with me the experiences of clients who have been victims of trafficking. If confirmed, I will work closely with each component of ACF to incorporate anti-trafficking efforts into our programs, particularly in child welfare. In addition, I would listen to survivors about what would have made a difference in their situation, and I would bring those lessons to ACF programs. I would also look to partner with law enforcement. I look forward to working closely with you on this issue.

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. RON WYDEN,  
A U.S. SENATOR FROM OREGON

This morning the Finance Committee meets to discuss three nominations for important roles in the Biden administration.

First up, January Contreras is President Biden's nominee to serve as Health and Human Services Assistant Secretary for Children and Families. This role is all about overseeing programs that deal with caring for some of the most vulnerable people in the country—particularly young people.

A big part of that job over the last few years has been the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act, which is a once-in-a-generation overhaul of our child welfare system that this committee wrote on a bipartisan basis. Family First is designed to help families stay together whenever it's safe and possible, instead of breaking them up as a matter of course. Implementing that law has required a lot of close collaboration between the Federal Government and the States. It's been a challenge, particularly under the previous administration.

Fortunately, Ms. Contreras is well-versed in the Family First law. Across her decades in public service, Ms. Contreras has championed the safety and well-being of women, children, and families. Most recently, she's led Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services, a legal aid organization for children and young adults who have experienced abuse, neglect, family separation, homelessness, and human trafficking. I look forward to discussing all these issues with her.

Now, I always say that the best nomination hearings are the ones with nominees from Oregon, and today is no exception. Our second nominee today is Rebecca Jones Gaston, President Biden's nominee to serve as HHS Commissioner for Children, Youth, and Families.

Ms. Jones Gaston is a uniquely qualified nominee because she brings nearly 25 years of experience in the field of human services and child welfare. She currently serves as Child Welfare Director for Oregon's Department of Human Services. She is a crusader on behalf of vulnerable people. Recently, she has been spending her time providing older youth with additional COVID support services and has been at the helm of implementing the Family First law in Oregon. I can tell you, she's got a lot of fans back home across our State, and she has made Oregon families healthier and safer.

Before she came out west to Oregon, Ms. Jones Gaston served as the Executive Director of the Maryland Social Services Administration. In fact, she helped design and implement Maryland's plan for Family First with Governor Larry Hogan. That means she's worked with officials on both sides of the aisle and she's proven she knows how to get things done. In my view, President Biden couldn't have picked a better nominee. If and when she's confirmed, Oregon's loss will be the country's gain.

Finally, Robert Gordon is President Biden's nominee to serve as HHS Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources. Mr. Gordon has worn a lot of hats during his career in public service.

Most recently, he served as Director of the Department of Health and Human Services for the State of Michigan, playing a central role in the State's pandemic response and managing an agency of 14,000 employees and a \$27-billion budget.

Previously, he held senior roles in the U.S. Department of Education and at the Office of Management and Budget, where he championed evidence-based policymaking to use taxpayer dollars wisely. Earlier in his career, Mr. Gordon served as a senior official at the New York City Department of Education; a senior aide on Capitol Hill; a law clerk for Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg; and a White House aide, helping create the AmeriCorps program.

All in all, Mr. Gordon is a highly experienced public servant. When you're working on finances at HHS, the core of your job is upholding the guarantee of Medicare, Medicaid, and the Children's Health Insurance Program—ensuring that those programs and many others under the HHS umbrella remain strong for future generations.

I want to thank all of our witnesses for joining the committee today and for their willingness to serve. I look forward to questions.

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ALL IN FOSTERING FUTURES  
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February 10, 2022

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

It is my pleasure to recommend Rebecca Jones Gaston, the nominee for the Federal Commission for the Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Department of Health and Human Services. I have had the privilege of working with Ms. Jones Gaston during the last 5 years and believe she would be outstanding in this position. It is an area that needs strong knowledge and a true dedication on the issues that come before this office. She is deeply committed to children and families.

In addition to her 24 years of experience as a social worker she has her own lived experience as an adoptee who believes in transforming systems. As a Director in Oregon, she led a significant transformation collaborating with partners throughout the entire state. This ability to collaborate with unusual partners will enhance all she does at ACYF. She works with sincere motivation to serve communities and citizens. Her dependability and drive are character traits that cannot be taught and are crucial to any leadership position. She is a leader in the public human services system and has built strong systemic and personal relationships as well.

Again, I am honored to support Rebecca Jones Gaston for this position. Please contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Lynn A. Johnson  
President

AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION  
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 202-777-2742  
<https://www.apha.org/>

October 6, 2021

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
 Chair  
 U.S. Senate  
 Committee on Finance  
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
 Ranking Member  
 U.S. Senate  
 Committee on Finance  
 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association, a diverse community of public health professionals that champions the health of all people and communities, I write to express our support for the nomination of Robert Gordon for assistant secretary for financial resources at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. He has both the knowledge and public health experience to serve in this critical role as we continue to address the COVID-19 pandemic and the other health challenges we face as a nation.

Mr. Gordon currently serves as senior counselor at the Center on Budget & Policy Priorities and senior advisor for Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan. From 2019-2021, he served as the Director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services where he helped lead the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, oversaw the state's Medicaid and aging programs and led efforts to improve maternal-infant health and address the opioid epidemic. He also has significant experience serving in several other important senior federal government roles including as an acting assistant secretary at the U.S. Department of Education and as acting deputy director and executive associate director at the Office of Management and Budget.

We are confident that he has the leadership skills and experience needed to serve as assistant secretary for financial resources at HHS. We look forward to working with him and the rest of the dedicated staff at HHS to address the many public health challenges that we face as a nation. Please feel free to contact me with any questions regarding our support for his nomination.

Sincerely,

Georges C. Benjamin, M.D.  
 Executive Director

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AMERICAN PUBLIC HUMAN SERVICES ASSOCIATION  
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February 8, 2022

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
 Chair  
 U.S. Senate  
 Committee on Finance  
 219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
 Ranking Member  
 U.S. Senate  
 Committee on Finance  
 219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo,

The American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) is pleased to submit this letter of recommendation on behalf of Rebecca Jones Gaston in support of her nomination for Commissioner of the Administration for Children, Youth and Families (ACYF).

APHSA is a bipartisan national membership association representing state and local health and human services agencies and the subject matter experts that help execute their mission to improve outcomes for people nationwide. Building on our longstanding relationships with health and human services leaders, we focus on generating pragmatic solutions that advance the well-being of individuals, families, and

communities. Through our affinity group, the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA), APHSA advances policy and practices priorities of child welfare system leaders to construct child and family well-being systems.

Ms. Jones Gaston has served as an active member of APHSA and key leader of NAPCWA during her tenure as a state child welfare administrator. In these roles, Ms. Jones Gaston has been a bold and visionary leader, accelerating national dialogues on policy and practice solutions to advance prevention frameworks, grounded in equity and lived expertise among leaders across the health and human services system.

As a national leader in advancing cross-system solutions that address the safety, permanency, and well-being goals for those served by public agencies, Ms. Jones Gaston is regarded as a forerunner in leveraging federal policy opportunities, like the Family First Prevention Services Act, to develop approaches to advance family well-being models that prevent child welfare involvement for families experiencing economic hardships, housing instability, lack of access to appropriate clinical services, or other poverty-related factors. Under her leadership, the state of Oregon has launched a significant transformation built on trauma-informed, family- and community-centered, and culturally responsive programs and services. Ms. Jones Gaston is highly respected by her state child welfare administrator peers and national research and advocacy alike, as a champion for family well-being frameworks that reduce the traumatic impacts of the child welfare system on families, with the technical skills to make necessary alignments in financing, procurement, and state policy.

Equally, Ms. Jones Gaston has the clinical and programmatic backgrounds to effectively implement child maltreatment response programs, including integration of trauma-informed services for children who do experience maltreatment or abuse across human services, law enforcement, medical and legal communities. Her experiences overseeing reporting and child protection operations, to ensure safety and permanency options for all children and youth, with family and community strengths-based and equity approaches will bring significant value to the HHS/ACF leadership team.

Most importantly, Ms. Jones Gaston brings her authentic voice and passion for leading from the ground up. She will ensure that federal efforts will be designed with the perspectives of states, community-based organizations, and those with lived expertise at the forefront. Ms. Jones Gaston will bring both her own lived expertise in the child welfare system as an adoptee, in addition to her many years of professional expertise in creating a system that works for children, youth, and families because they have a seat at the policymaking tables.

Sincerely,

Tracy Wareing Evans  
President and CEO

Sheila Poole  
Commissioner, New York State Office of Children and Family Services  
Chair, National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators

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ARIZONA COALITION TO END SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
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February 2, 2022

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate

Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

I write on behalf of the Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (ACESDV) to offer strong support for the confirmation of January Contreras as Assistant Secretary for the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. January Contreras is precisely the long-time advocate and leader we need to advance the mission and life-saving services of ACF.

ACESDV is the federally designated coalition in Arizona and is the state's center of expertise and education on the issues of sexual and domestic violence. ACESDV has provided training and technical assistance, provided legislative advocacy, and developed a committed network of domestic and sexual violence programs and social service providers to strengthen the safety net for people impacted by sexual and domestic violence.

January Contreras knows our work well because she was formerly a respected member of the ACESDV Board of Directors. In addition, our community knows her work well defending the safety and legal rights of victims and survivors through the legal aid center she founded, Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services (ALWAYS). Prior to this work, January also delivered meaningful change at the federal level when she led an initiative at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that resulted in new training and strengthened protections for immigrant victims of crime, with a particular focus on battered immigrant women. Her history of supporting survivors of domestic violence, human trafficking, and sexual assault will make her an especially effective Assistant Secretary at ACF because she knows what families and individuals face when violence enters their lives.

As a coalition, we understand that people who are experiencing violence are often subjected to multiple forms of oppression and face multiple barriers and challenges in achieving safety in their lives. This reality is precisely why a leader such as January Contreras is the right person to lead ACF. January's work representing survivors of violence has led her to understand the intersection between domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and the many challenges that increase vulnerability such as poverty, housing instability, lack of child care, and language barriers.

January's leadership and work has made a difference here in Arizona. We wholeheartedly support her confirmation to serve as the Assistant Secretary for the Administration for Children and Families so that she can do the same for the many people in our nation seeking to live violence-free lives.

Sincerely,

Jenna Panas, CEO  
Chief Executive Officer  
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Jenna@acesdv.org

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February 11, 2022

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance

219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

I am writing in support of Rebecca Jones Gaston's confirmation as ACYF Commissioner. I am the Vice President of Maryland Operations for Arrow Child & Family Ministries. We are a human services organization in Texas and Maryland providing foster care (including treatment foster care), residential intervention, community based programs, and special education service: to over 1500 children and families across our programs. I worked closely with Ms. Jones Gasto in her role as Executive Director of the Social Services Administration for the Department of Human Services of Maryland. Ms. Jones Gaston made impactful changes for child welfare in Maryland. During her tenure, the FFPSA legislation passed. Ms. Jones Gaston immediately engaged various groups of stakeholders to position Maryland for early adoption of the requirements, as they aligned with work already underway for our State. She understands the importance of youth and family voice being prevalent in conversations regarding the creation and provision of services. She actively created opportunities for private providers, State agencies, community members, and court representatives to gather with youth and families to work on changes and improvements for child welfare with a greater lens on the intersection of services that impact families. I greatly appreciated and admired Ms. Jones Gaston's inclusive efforts paired with her high standards for everyone involved in serving children and families.

It is my humble opinion that Ms. Jones Gaston is an exemplary candidate to serve as Commissioner for ACYF. Under her leadership, we experienced a time of progress and improvement in services for children. To know that we have an opportunity to expand her impact across our nation brings me a tremendous sense of hope for our children and their families.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer Renault

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BROWN UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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October 4, 2021

The Honorable Ron Wyden, Chairman  
The Honorable Mike Crapo, Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-6200

Dear Senators Wyden and Crapo,

I am delighted to write in support of Robert Gordon's nomination to be Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources at the Department of Health & Human Services. I have become very familiar with Robert's work and qualifications during my time as Dean of the Brown University School of Public Health.

I met Robert for the first time in a September 2019 session in Detroit on the social determinants of health. He turned the discussion towards the challenges facing government policymakers as they seek to incorporate evidence into their decision-making. While Robert knew a lot about the research on health, he also spoke concretely about putting evidence into action—improving the collection and use of data, building programs that reward effective investments, and creating partnerships among government, community organizations, and universities. He spoke to these approaches in detail, from a broad range of experiences: federal and state government; nonprofit organizations and philanthropies; policy, operations, and finance; and health care, human services, and education.

As the pandemic got underway, Robert and I began to speak regularly, at a time when I was advising Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, along with leaders of other states, on their response to the pandemic. During this moment of crisis, I again found him deeply interested in understanding the evolving evidence about the



pandemic, how it spreads, and how government action could respond. He understood the need not only to address best practice in theory, but also to tackle best practice in the complicated real world. He understood the shortcomings of the data we had and the need to both make decisions with limited data but also to begin to build the data infrastructure to help guide future decisions.

We spoke about crafting public health orders that would have the greatest possible impact on saving lives with the minimal possible invasion of individual freedom. What was clear to me in these conversations was that he understood that his job was to protect the health of all Michiganders and to do it in a way that was respectful of their beliefs and preferences. I believe that Michigan's actions in the Fall of 2020 did, in fact, save many lives, and they became a model for other states.

Robert is a model public servant—humble, focused on the work and the people he serves. While at times the pandemic shined a light on all health leaders, Robert was always clear to me that he does his best work outside of that light. He is someone who believes deeply that while we can disagree on the size and role of government, all Americans agree that the government needs to function effectively. And he is committed to that.

It is without hesitation that I support Robert's nomination, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Ashish K. Jha, M.D., MPH  
Dean

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CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY  
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<https://www.clasp.org/>

November 30, 2021

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

I am writing on behalf of the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) to express strong support for the confirmation of Robert Gordon as Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. As an organization that advocates for people with low incomes at the national and state levels, CLASP has had the opportunity to work closely with Robert during his service in Michigan and, prior to that, at the Office of Management and Budget during the Obama administration. He brings a unique combination of deep programmatic experience, demonstrated effectiveness at delivering results, commitment to core principles of public service and to the individuals and families who benefit from HHS programs, and in-depth knowledge of public sector finance and budgets.

During Robert's 2 years as Director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, he led several important reforms in the delivery of core public benefits to Michigan residents with low incomes. Among the examples that best illustrate his effectiveness, focus on results, and ability to keep people and their needs front and center as he leads a large organization:

- Michigan was a national leader in the implementation of Pandemic EBT (P-EBT), an opportunity offered by the US Department of Agriculture during the pandemic for states to reach children with nutrition assistance when they were missing meals at school or in child care settings. Michigan was the first state to receive approval to issue P-EBT benefits to nearly a million children, just weeks after the federal legislation was passed, and provided a model to others in figuring out how to implement this program.
- Robert led an effort within Michigan to identify opportunities to reduce bureaucracy and red tape in order to get help to families and individuals. One major success of this effort was the streamlining of the application and renewal forms, saving both caseworkers and participants time, and reducing churning.

Another was Michigan's adoption of a policy allowing post-secondary students with low incomes who are enrolled in career-focused programs to receive nutrition assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). When the Trump Administration finalized their public charge regulation, which created a huge chilling effect, discouraging immigrants and their families from accessing public, Robert made sure that Michigan DHHS was proactively sharing accurate information to ensure that people were not being unnecessarily discouraged from receiving critical benefits.

- Under his leadership, Michigan DHHS introduced an Equity Impact Assessment tool to ensure that decisions are made with awareness of their impacts on marginalized people of color and with the goal of reducing disparities.

Robert's record of accomplishment during the Obama administration reflected the same qualities of creativity, consistent commitment to placing families and individuals at the center of his work, and deep understanding of public sector programs and budgets. He helped to launch several important initiatives to help children get a good start in life, including the Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting program and investments in preschool which are an important forerunner to the large expansions under consideration today.

At this time of a pandemic and recession that have had tragic consequences for so many families' and individuals' health and economic security, and at a time when HHS is central to mounting a vigorous public response across many dimensions, the position of Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources is crucial. Robert will bring to this role far more than deep knowledge of public sector budgeting and financial management, though he has that. He will also bring personal experience on the front lines of state service delivery, a record of demonstrated accomplishment at both federal and state levels, a core commitment to public service and to families, and deep programmatic as well as fiscal knowledge. All of those will serve the Department and the United States well at this crucial moment.

We look forward to the Senate's prompt confirmation of Robert Gordon as Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources and would be delighted to provide any additional information that might be helpful.

Sincerely,

Olivia A. Golden  
Executive Director

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CENTER FOR SECURITY IN POLITICS

February 2, 2022

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

It has come to my attention that President Biden has nominated Ms. January Contreras as Assistant Secretary, Administration for Children and Families at the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). I write to offer my unqualified support of Ms. Contreras as you consider her confirmation.

I have known and worked with January for twenty years and believe her to be a person of the highest level of integrity, moral character and professional competence. January was a prosecutor in my office when I served as Arizona Attorney General. January went on to make extraordinary contributions as my health policy advisor and a member of my cabinet as the Director of the Arizona Department of

Health Services when I served as Governor of Arizona. January also worked with me in the Obama Administration at the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as a Senior Advisor during the 2009 H1N1 pandemic and subsequently as the leader of the Office of the Ombudsman for Citizenship and Immigration Services. In each of these roles, she consistently demonstrated a commitment to collaboration, transparency and accountability. Since that time, she and I have kept in close touch and I have watched her post government career as she has continued to support women, children and families through her work with her not-for-profit and her service in multiple leadership roles in Arizona.

January is a seasoned government and nonprofit executive who will lead the Administration for Children and Families with discipline, focus and vision. She understands how the government works and should work, she embraces its service requirements and knows how to deliver effectively and efficiently on a critical mission for the people most impacted. Children and families will be well served with January as Assistant Secretary. I recommend her without reservation and would be pleased to provide further information should it be required.

Very truly yours,

Janet Napolitano  
 Professor, Goldman School of Public Policy, University of California, Berkeley  
 President Emerita, University of California  
 Former Secretary of Homeland Security

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CHILDREN'S ACTION ALLIANCE  
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February 3, 2022

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
 Chairman  
 U.S. Senate  
 Committee on Finance  
 219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
 Ranking Member  
 U.S. Senate  
 Committee on Finance  
 219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

It is with great enthusiasm that I provide this letter of recommendation in support of the confirmation of January Contreras to be Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services. I have known January for almost two decades as an attorney, advocate, and community leader in Arizona. Through her work and tireless advocacy, she has deservedly earned the reputation as one of our state's strongest, most respected leaders on behalf of children and families. I currently have the honor to lead a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that is one of Arizona's longest standing and most prominent voices for children and families at both our State Capitol and at the federal level. For many years, January has been someone our organization has consistently partnered with to help vulnerable youth.

We have worked with her through the legal services nonprofit organization she founded, Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services (ALWAYS), where she served as the Executive Director and personally represented victims of domestic violence, human trafficking, and children and young adults experiencing homelessness, foster care, and family separation. We have also worked with her through the many task forces, coalitions, and advisory boards she has served on. One of those was her service on the community advisory board for the Fostering Advocates Arizona (FAAZ) Young Adult Leadership Board, a committee we facilitate that is centered in the lived expertise of young people who have experienced foster care.

January and her organization, ALWAYS, worked with several FAAZ members and other transitioning youth to help stabilize their finances when they had been exploited by someone close to them; to help them obtain restraining orders when they were victims of domestic violence; and to assist them in getting medical coverage through our state's Medicaid program. In other instances, we have worked with Jan-

uary in our efforts to expand children's access to health care and child care and to increase the availability of affordable housing.

I also had the opportunity to work with January from about 2005 to 2010 when I served in the Arizona legislature and she served as Senior Health Advisor to then-Governor Janet Napolitano and later as the Acting Director of the Arizona Department of Health Services. In those capacities, January demonstrated herself to be someone who could work with elected officials on both sides of the political aisle and to be an effective communicator and problem-solver.

I can say with great confidence that January is a person with integrity and strong character who has demonstrated throughout her career a commitment to public service and is someone who cares deeply about the people she serves. I am thrilled to see her have the opportunity to bring her leadership and experience in improving the lives of children and families to the current administration.

Sincerely,

David Lujan  
President and CEO

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COLLEGE BOARD  
250 Vesey Street  
New York, NY 10281  
<https://www.collegeboard.org/>

October 20, 2021

Senators Wyden and Crapo,

Robert Gordon is one of the most conscientious, talented, and effective leaders I've ever worked with. I recommend him wholeheartedly for the role of Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources at the United States Department of Health and Human Services, where he'll be an outstanding administrator, a trusted colleague, and a model public servant.

I had the privilege of working with Robert most closely during his time as Senior Vice President of Global Strategy and Finance at the College Board, where he served from 2015 to 2019. He not only demonstrated the impeccable judgment and financial acumen required to oversee a large annual nonprofit budget and its assets, but also brought discipline and mission-driven focus to every aspect of our work. He was creative and diligent about identifying opportunities for savings and improved efficiency to drive greater investment in our core mission, including his successful effort to introduce a stronger procurement process and budgetary oversight. He also oversaw College Board's accounting division, consistently producing clean audits and commanding the complete trust of our audit committee, external auditors and colleagues. Robert's finance expertise is complemented by a deft sense of diplomacy in working with a wide range of partners and constituents, and he was widely sought for his advice and expertise by colleagues across the organization, from front-line staff to our Board of Trustees. He welcomed all of those inquiries with perfect grace and attentiveness.

Robert's impact on the College Board extends far beyond his impeccable financial insight. He quickly became a trusted voice on operational improvement and process modernization, driving a major overhaul of technology systems and a migration to an Agile workflow. His ability to manage complex projects involving a wide variety of stakeholders was invaluable in streamlining the College Board's work and strengthening our capacity to serve students. He always kept our mission front-and-center in his own work and in the minds of his colleagues. His impact on our operations and our culture continues to pay dividends for the people we serve. The College Board's ability to adapt and thrive through the acute challenges of the pandemic, serving our members through one of the toughest periods in the modern history of education, owes much to Robert's dedicated pursuit of operational excellence and financial resilience.

The College Board is a large and diverse organization, and Robert was always intentional about consulting different voices before making major decisions. His ability to win respect and incorporate the views of his colleagues made him a favorite among College Board leadership, widely admired for his integrity and sense of responsibility to his colleagues. Simply put, people trusted that Robert's decisions were well-considered, fair, and always in service to our core mission.

Robert seeks out positions not for their rewards, but for their challenges. Before coming to the College Board, he developed deep expertise in budgeting and policy during his time at the New York City Department of Education, at the Center for American Progress, and in four years of dedicated service to the Office of Management and Budget. In every one of those roles, he has led by example. Robert is frugal, hardworking, and an eager listener.

It's no exaggeration to say that Robert Gordon is one of the finest minds I've ever known, and I will be proud as both a friend and a citizen to see him take on the crucial responsibility of managing and strengthening the financial resources of the Department of Health and Human Services. He is a credit to his country and his profession, and I hope you'll grant him the opportunity to serve.

I would welcome the chance to answer any questions you might have, and I appreciate your time and care in your own work on behalf of the American people.

Respectfully,

David Coleman  
CEO  
dcoleman@collegeboard.org

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DAVE THOMAS FOUNDATION FOR ADOPTION  
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1-800-ASK-DTFA  
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February 8, 2022

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

I am honored and delighted to provide this letter of support for the confirmation of Ms. Rebecca Jones Gaston as Commissioner for the Administration on Children, Youth and Families. I can think of no more qualified candidate for this critical leadership role serving our nation's most vulnerable children and families.

The Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption is a national non-profit public charity dedicated exclusively to moving North America's children waiting in foster care to be adopted into safe, nurturing and permanent homes. We do this through the implementation of evidence-based programs, research, education and advocacy. For example, our Wendy's Wonderful Kids® program, an evidence-based child-focused recruitment model serving children at risk of aging out of care, is now being funded through extensive public/private partnerships and taken to scale across the United States. It has resulted in more than 11,000 permanent placements of older youth, sibling groups, children with emotional and physical challenges and youth previously opposed to the notion of family and adoption across all 50 states and D.C.

It is through this program that I met Ms. Jones Gaston nearly 20 years ago when she served as the National Campaign Director of the AdoptUSKids initiative. Similarly, we engaged and collaborated during her role in the state of Maryland and now as we work toward a cost- and life-saving public/private partnership to scale Wendy's Wonderful Kids in the state of Oregon.

In each role and throughout two decades, I have been both impressed and energized by her commitment to collaboration; her deep understanding of the complex federal and state child welfare policies, funding and practices; her focused strategic vision and her willingness to aggressively address systemic barriers that continue to plague prevention efforts to keep children out of foster care and the obstacles that too often contribute to many lingering in or aging out of care without the birthright of every child—a family and a home.

Significantly, Ms. Jones Gaston brings a deep and personal understanding of the child welfare system dynamics through her lived experience as an adoptee and her resulting sensitivity to and respect for the voices of children and families currently at-risk of entering the system or now in care.

Ms. Jones Gaston is precisely the leader that the Administration on Children, Youth and Families requires, particularly now as the dynamics of child abuse prevention, racial equity and social justice for children and families converge in federal initiatives, policy and practice. She understands the urgency and I am certain will respond in a way that is transformative, inclusive and visionary—all qualities that our children and families deserve and that we all should demand.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide a letter of support. If there is any further information that I can provide, know that your call is always welcome.

With Respect,

Rita L. Soronen  
President and CEO  
(614) 595-1564

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FOSTERCLUB, INC.  
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CFC: 76187

February 8, 2022

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Crapo, and Members of the Senate Committee on Finance,

FosterClub would like to express our strong support of Rebecca Jones Gaston, nominee for the Federal Commissioner for the Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Department of Health and Human Services. Ms. Jones Gaston is an impressive leader who is highly qualified for the position. We urge the Committee to confirm Ms. Jones Gaston swiftly.

FosterClub is the national network for young people who experience foster care. In partnership with Lived Experience Leaders (young people who have lived in foster care), FosterClub drives change in the child welfare system and provides direct support to children and youth who experience the foster care system.

FosterClub's collaboration with Rebecca Jones Gaston began during her tenure at Casey Family Programs, a long-time funder and partner of FosterClub's work. Through this partnership, a transformation has taken place to engage people with lived experience in efforts to reform the child welfare system; today, lived experience is helping to transform public policy, improve best practices, and deliver services to children, youth, and families.

Ms. Jones Gaston brings her own lived experience as an adoptee into her work. Along with her own experience, Ms. Jones Gaston prioritizes the engagement of individuals with lived experience in child welfare into the transformation of the current child welfare system.

FosterClub supported Lived Experience Leaders who provided critical insight to Members of Congress on their experiences in foster care and the need for significant change within the system, leading to the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018. Under Ms. Jones Gaston's leadership, we are confident lived experience voices will continue to play a central role in implementation of FFPSA and other critical policies at the federal level.

Child welfare provides a critical safety net for many young people. FosterClub believes improvements to the foster care system are strengthened when young people who have been disproportionately impacted, notably Black, Indigenous, and the LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit community, are centered in that improvement. Ms. Jones Gaston's focus on equity and inclusion and commitment to lived experience voices will ensure young people who do enter foster care receive the best care possible

while in foster care, and the support to reunify with their families, connect with relatives and when neither are possible, find family through adoption.

Ms. Jones Gaston has a track record of success in child welfare that is inclusive of partnership with lived experience voices. We need strong leadership who listen to and value the voices of young people who have firsthand experience in foster care. By partnering with young people, we can all work towards a future where every young person has what they need to thrive.

Our team at FosterClub urges a speedy confirmation of Rebecca Jones Gaston.

Sincerely,

Celeste Bodner  
Executive Director

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JOHNS HOPKINS BLOOMBERG SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

October 9, 2021

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chair  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
239 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

I am writing with my full support for the nomination of Robert Gordon to be the Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. I am Professor of the Practice in Health Policy and Management at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. My recommendation is based on my experiences serving with Mr. Gordon in the Obama Administration, as well as my observations of his leadership during the pandemic.

I had the privilege of serving as the Principal Deputy Commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration from March 2009 to January 2011. During this period, I interacted with Mr. Gordon in his role at OMB. I found him to be thoughtful and inquisitive about a wide range of agency issues, asking important questions while respecting the expertise of senior agency officials. He had a reputation then, as now, as a doer and not a talker—someone who worked by the book to move important efforts forward.

We reconnected as he took a senior position in Michigan state government. I was impressed as he assembled a terrific management team and tackled some complicated and longstanding issues facing the state, including lead poisoning and Medicaid reform. He pursued innovative projects to expand access to health care while controlling costs.

Then came the pandemic—an enormous challenge for all health officials. Robert worked with his team to lead one of the most effective responses in 2020, using available evidence to guide the state's approach. He was very focused on successfully implementing key policies.

Robert's strengths will serve him well as Assistant Secretary. I am sure he will be laser focused on implementation effectiveness and efficiency, recognizing the potential for innovative approaches to achieve more for the American people at less cost. He cares deeply about getting his job done the right way. For these reasons, I am enthusiastic about his nomination, and I would urge the Senate to confirm him for this position promptly.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D.

Professor of the Practice in Health Policy and Management  
Vice Dean for Public Health Practice and Community Engagement

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MICHIGAN ELDER JUSTICE INITIATIVE  
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Fax: 517-574-5301

October 6, 2021

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Nomination of Robert Gordon to serve as an Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services

Dear Senators Wyden and Crapo:

I am the Director and Managing Attorney of the Michigan Elder Justice Initiative, a legal services and ombudsman program that advocates for low income older adults and people with disabilities. Because I have had the opportunity to observe Robert Gordon's extraordinary leadership skills, passionate commitment to improving the health and well-being of vulnerable individuals, and unquestionable integrity, I write in enthusiastic support of his nomination to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

I first became familiar with Mr. Gordon when he was appointed to serve as the Director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) in 2019. Within weeks of beginning his demanding new job, Mr. Gordon tackled one of the Department's biggest challenges: thousands of applicants, including my clients, faced months long delays before their paperwork could be processed and they could obtain the critical benefits they needed. Mr. Gordon was entirely transparent about the Department's failings, made a commitment to do better, and tracked progress toward eliminating the backlog on a public website. He met with managers, caseworkers, and clients and talked to legislators, union representatives and national experts. As a result of these efforts, communities across the state met the state's target for the timely processing of applications about 95% of the time throughout his tenure, even though caseloads surged during the pandemic. No prior state official in my experience had ever personally engaged in such a comprehensive, thoughtful, focused, public and determined effort to acknowledge and correct a problem that imperiled the health and quality of life of beneficiaries across the state.

Once beneficiaries became eligible for benefits, Mr. Gordon wanted to be sure they were able to retain them. By introducing a simplified and straightforward renewal application, MDHHS achieved astonishing results with 15% more families retaining benefits and 50% fewer beneficiaries coming into the office with questions about the process.

In short order, Mr. Gordon introduced numerous other bold, sensible policies that lightened the burdens on beneficiaries and caseworkers alike. One change allowed caseworkers to accept residents' own statements about their housing and utility expenses, instead of requiring them to produce burdensome paperwork. Another innovation enabled older adults and people with disabilities to use a standard medical deduction instead of submitting proof of expenses. A third initiative shortened the waiting period for cash assistance. MDHHS also extended eligibility for food assistance to many low-income college students and enabled pregnant mothers to apply for nutrition benefits online along with other programs.



When the state was engulfed by COVID, Mr. Gordon worked relentlessly to adjust policies to better protect residents, make the most informed and thoughtful decisions possible, and retain his unwavering focus on the well-being of Michiganders. His earnestness, dedication, and profound concern for those who were suffering were palpable. Mr. Gordon also recognized the hardships MDHHS's approximately 14,000 employees endured during this period and scheduled frequent virtual town hall meetings to offer thanks and support to them. One MDHSS staff member described those events to me: "[Mr. Gordon] was incredibly sincere when talking about our COVID work and expressing concern for employees' well-being. You could see how pained he was by the deaths of so many people, and how proud he was of employees working long hours and having an impact. He came across as an incredible person. I thought he was unlike any director we've ever had."

Even in this enormously difficult and exhausting time, Mr. Gordon sought to be transparent, innovative, and effective. Michigan was the first state to deliver federal pandemic food benefits to children, supporting about 800,000 Michigan kids in a time of desperate need. MDHHS permitted online grocery purchasing, changes to Medicaid enabled residents to get meals and health care at home, and healthcare workers got a raise they needed and deserved.

While there are many other achievements I could share, my favorite experience with Mr. Gordon was early in his tenure at MDHHS when my colleague, Salli Pung, the State Long Term Care Ombudsman, and I spent a day touring nursing homes with him. Mr. Gordon had not yet had much experience with long term care and eagerly accepted our invitation to visit both poor quality and high quality facilities. Throughout the day, Mr. Gordon showered us with questions and his lively, curious, perceptive mind was on full display. While his colleagues who accompanied us hung behind, Mr. Gordon charged off to talk directly to resident, genuinely curious about their experiences and how Medicaid could improve their lives. Although he never identified himself as the Director of the Department, he came away with precious insights from beneficiaries about how policies don't always translate into practical realities and how Medicaid could more effectively use the power of its purse.

Mr. Gordon is a rare public servant. He combines true brilliance and fundamental decency, lofty accomplishments and deep humility. While he has a disciplined commitment to evidence-based, systemic solutions, he never loses sight of the struggles and realities of the individuals those systems are designed to serve. If he is confirmed, I am confident all of these qualities will serve him and the Americans who depend on HHS extraordinarily well.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my experience with Mr. Gordon. If I can be of any further assistance, I would be glad to do so. Sincerely,

Alison Hirschel  
Director and Managing Attorney  
hirschel@meji.org

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MICHIGAN FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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[www.michfed.org](http://www.michfed.org)

October 20, 2021

Senator Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
Washington, DC

Senator Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
Washington, DC

Dear Senator Wyden and Senator Crapo, and members of the United States Senate Committee on Finance,

It is my pleasure to strongly recommend Robert Gordon for the position of Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

I am Janet Reynolds Snyder, executive director of the Michigan Federation for Children and Families (the Federation), and immediate past president for the National Association of State Associations for Children.

The Federation is a statewide nonprofit association whose 55 member agencies, all private nonprofit community-based organizations, contract with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to provide supportive services to children and their families throughout Michigan's 83 counties. For over 50 years, the Federation has provided a collective and expert voice on behalf of its members in working alongside state departments and legislative leaders, with shared responsibility, to continuously partner with Michigan communities so families can lead lives of greater health and opportunity.

As Director of the MDHHS, Mr. Gordon oversaw many large state programs including, but not limited to, Children's Services, Children's Protective Services, Medicaid, Food Assistance, Senior Services, and more, plus Michigan's response to COVID-19. At the time Mr. Gordon accepted the role of MDHHS Director, Michigan entered its 12th year of federal court oversight of our state's child welfare system as a result of a class action lawsuit (*Dwayne B. v. Snyder*). In addressing the lawsuit settlement requirements, Mr. Gordon acted swiftly to engage with providers and other stakeholders to take action, increasing the level of safety of children in our care and in doing so earned praise from The Honorable Nancy G. Edmunds of Michigan's Eastern District of the United States District Court, for the progress that was made.

Without question, Mr. Gordon's professional expertise is beyond comparison, demonstrated by his strong leadership and ability to engage and partner with colleagues and with families and communities throughout the United States.

In my role at the Federation, one of my first experiences with Mr. Gordon was shortly after he was appointed MDHHS Director when he reached out to introduce himself to me and ask about the priorities of Federation member organizations. Mr. Gordon then offered to meet with our agency executives to discuss child welfare priorities and initiatives. This meeting took place shortly thereafter and generated a robust dialogue regarding ways to achieve our shared goals for families in Michigan.

Mr. Gordon's interest in authentic engagement with youth and communities was highlighted during a visit at one of Michigan's residential treatment centers for youth. Mr. Gordon was interested in understanding more about residential treatment services available for youth and the centers where services are provided. He arranged to visit youth at one of our member agencies, Highfields in Onondaga, MI. During an afternoon, he joined them at meals, sat and listened, and truly engaged in meaningful ways with the youth and staff at Highfields. Taking time to connect shows a great deal about the interest Mr. Gordon has in others and, specifically, his commitment to successful outcomes for youth and their families.

Through his actions, Mr. Gordon earned respect from private, nonprofit, child and family serving organizations throughout the state. He is known as a leader with high ethics and standards, one who shows respect for others, and leads by demonstrating his deep commitment for successful outcomes for children and families. Mr. Gordon is a person of great integrity and would approach the position of Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources at the Department of Health and Human Services with expert knowledge, honesty, and strong moral principles, adding great value to President Biden's vision.

Understanding that a letter of recommendation is a snapshot of talents and achievements, I would be happy to further elaborate on my time working with Mr. Gordon. If you would like additional information or other specific examples, please feel free to contact me at 734.476.3845 or janet@michfed.org.

Thank you and with warm regards,

Sincerely,

Janet Reynolds Snyder, MBA  
Executive Director

## MICHIGAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND MICHIGAN SENATE

October 5, 2021

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
239 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

We write in support of Robert Gordon's nomination to the position of Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources at the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

We came to know Mr. Gordon during his tenure as Director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). MDHHS is our state's largest department, and leading it is an unusually challenging job even under ordinary circumstances. Mr. Gordon's time leading MDHHS intersected largely with the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing him to take on unprecedented challenges and responsibilities.

Mr. Gordon demonstrated a high degree of acumen in handling complex policies and operations, a strong commitment to serving the state's most vulnerable residents, and modesty in recognizing that he was new to Michigan and had much to learn about our state. He demonstrated his strong leadership skills and expertise every day while responding to the pandemic, improving state services, and addressing the needs of individuals with behavioral health challenges and children in foster care. Despite his tremendous workload, he was always responsive with the Legislature, appearing regularly at meetings and candidly answering questions.

We all feel he showed a high degree of skill, integrity, and leadership under the most difficult circumstances. He is a dedicated and able public servant, and it is with our highest recommendation that we support his nomination.

Please contact our offices should you have any questions regarding our recommendation of Mr. Gordon.

Sincerely,

Julie Brixie  
State Representative  
69th District

Donna Lasinski  
House Minority Leader  
52nd District

Yousef Rabhi  
Minority Floor Leader  
53rd District

Abdullah Hammoud  
State Representative  
15th District

Matt Koleszar  
State Representative  
20th District

David LaGrand  
State Representative  
75th District

Jeremy Moss  
State Senator  
11th District

Jeff Irwin  
State Senator  
18th District

Adam Hollier  
State Senator  
2nd District

## NATIONAL HEAD START ASSOCIATION

October 12, 2021

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo,

The National Head Start Association (NHSA) is pleased to recommend Dr. Robert Gordon for the position of Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources of the Department of Health and Human Services. Of the many accomplished experts with whom NHSA has been fortunate to collaborate with over the past several decades, Dr. Gordon possesses a unique understanding of administering early childhood education and care programs as a critical part of the economy and how, if well supported, it can transform the lives of individuals and communities.

As you know, we are facing an extraordinary opportunity to rethink how we prepare our nation's youngest learners and their families for the future. As the Head Start workforce across the country prepares to implement this vision, strong leadership is critical. Dr. Gordon brings a wealth of insight on how to meet ever-changing community needs and how to build doorways to opportunity for all people. And his focus on the importance of early childhood education deserves particular focus, because he knows the effects are so long lasting.

Hailing from a family of economists who have all built their careers around how to bring real, practical benefits for society, Dr. Gordon has dedicated his career and life's work to ensuring Americans meet their potential. For him, it all comes back to improving people's lives through equity and, without a doubt, he has the knowledge, experience, and wisdom to realize this vision for our country's future. On behalf of the Head Start community nationwide, NHSA respectfully urges his consideration.

Sincerely,  
Yasmina Vinci  
Executive Director

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 NATIONAL NETWORK FOR YOUTH

February 7, 2022

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

On behalf of the National Network for Youth, I write to urge you to swiftly confirm January Contreras as the Assistant Secretary at the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Ms. Contreras has proven qualifications and expertise, as well as a passion for ensuring America's children, youth, and families are safe, resilient, healthy, and economically secure.

The National Network for Youth (NN4Y) is the nation's leading network of youth and young adult homelessness providers. NN4Y envisions a world where every young person has a safe place to call home, with multiple opportunities to achieve their fullest potential. Together with our partners, NN4Y transforms systems

through centering youth, training and technical assistance, policy advocacy, and public education.

NN4Y is enthusiastic about the diversity of expertise Ms. Contreras has in her over 20 years of experience devoted to women, children, and families. She served as a public interest attorney and advocate for many years in Arizona. She also worked tirelessly to support the well-being of children as a member of Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano's Children's Cabinet and the Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board. When she joined the Obama Administration in 2009, she continued to make a difference as a designee to the White House Council on Women and Girls and through her work to enhance protections for immigrant victims of crime at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

It is through January's next role that Ms. Contreras first interacted with NN4Y. When Ms. Contreras returned to Arizona in 2013, she exhibited her passion for youth and families by establishing Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services (ALWAYS). ALWAYS provides legal counsel and representation for young people facing physical violence, sexual assault and exploitation, homelessness, immigration challenges, or family separation. ALWAYS provides no-cost legal services for current and former foster youth, youth who are homeless or have run away, and unaccompanied minors who have crossed the Southern border. Through this work, Ms. Contreras has been part of the solution to the barriers that young people experiencing homelessness face. We met in 2015 when she reached out to learn more about NN4Y's advocacy and to share some of the experiences she'd observed through ALWAYS. Ms. Contreras's collaborative approach and broad expertise are vital as the Director of ACF, which administers a plethora of programs impacting children, youth, and families.

Now more than ever, children, youth, and families in vulnerable situations need our attention. The coronavirus outbreak has created even more challenges as they work to achieve safety, stability, and achieve upward economic mobility. Ms. Contreras would bring an exceptional understanding of these challenges because she has been working alongside youth. Ms. Contreras has delivered legal services directly to youth who experience homelessness under ACF sex trafficking and street outreach grants, she has presented at ACF's Runaway and Homeless Youth Training and Technical Assistance Center Conference on legal aid partnerships, and the organization she founded has been highlighted as a model program by the American Bar Association's Homeless Youth Legal Network. Each of these experiences are valuable to understanding how the position which she is nominated for relates to ACF colleagues, grantees, partners, and, most importantly, the impacted children, youth and families themselves.

Ms. Contreras's plethora of experiences and accolades, which have not all been mentioned, echo her dedication and understanding of children and families' hardships. In addition, her vast knowledge of youth homelessness, child welfare-involved youth, juvenile court-involved youth, immigrant youth, youth who have been trafficked, and women's rights all relate to the physical and mental health of families nationwide. Her distinctive experience equips her with the proper tools ideal for the Assistant Secretary of ACF at HHS.

Sincerely,

Darla Bardine  
Executive Director  
darla.bardine@nn4youth.org  
202-783-7949

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NEW AMERICA

October 12, 2021

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairman Ron Wyden and Ranking Member Mike Crapo,

We are delighted to support Robert Gordon's nomination to be assistant secretary for financial resources at the Department of Health and Human Services.

We write as individuals who lead organizations committed to making government work better for people. We use data, design, and policy tools to speed up, simplify, and improve programs to better deliver benefits and services to residents. Our aim is a government that really works for the public—one that honors people’s dignity, respects their time, and uses taxpayers’ dollars effectively.

Robert Gordon is an effective champion for exactly these goals. In his time at the Office of Management and Budget, he became known for working quietly behind the scenes to better use data in health, human services, and education programs—connecting initiatives that often worked separately in silos; improving services for the most vulnerable residents, and creating incentives for innovation. In Michigan, we cheered him on—and in some cases supported him directly—as he worked to eliminate excessive documentation requirements for getting access to public benefits which imposed heavy burdens on residents, but did little to reduce error or fraud. And, in recent months, he has worked with many of us to help states effectively invest funds from the American Rescue Plan.

All of us have worked personally with Robert. Some of us have been colleagues or collaborators on important projects to make the government deliver. We know his talent, his high bar for policy making detail and care for evidence and his management style. We are excited to see a leader and public servant like Robert join the Department of Health and Human Services. On a more personal note we know his character, his care for his family, his way of taking care of staff and mentoring young people. And we know you will come to see that he is the type of person you want leading in government and is someone we can trust to look out for the public good.

Thank you for your care and time on this important nomination.

Signed,

Amanda Renteria  
Code for America

Cecilia Muñoz  
Senior Advisor, Public Interest  
Technology, New America

Pauline Abernathy  
Benefits Data Trust

Tara Dawson McGuinness  
New Practice Lab, New America

Jeffrey Liebman  
Professor of Public Policy, Harvard  
Kennedy School and Director,  
Government Performance Lab

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OREGON ALLIANCE

February 9, 2022

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

I am writing in support for Rebecca Jones Gaston’s confirmation as Administration on Children Youth and Families Commissioner.

The Oregon Alliance is a dedicated champion and established voice in advocating for the safety, health, and well-being of children, youth, families, and communities across Oregon. We are a diverse group of organizations serving Oregon’s kids and their families at home, in school, in residential settings, and within the community. We join with dedicated community leaders, our partners in government, allied fields, and those we serve to deliver effective policies, best practices, and resources. We work to help all kids live better lives and for families and communities to thrive in every corner of Oregon.

I have had the opportunity work collaboratively with Ms. Jones Gaston as the current the Child Welfare Director for the State of Oregon’s Department of Human Services since 2019. Under her leadership, Oregon has launched a significant Child Welfare Transformation Plan built on trauma-informed, family and community-centered, as well as, culturally responsive programs and services. She has formed strategic national and state partnerships with organizations that share the same

safety, permanency, and well-being goals for those served by public agencies. Equity and inclusion are at the center of this work, improving the context in which children, youth, parents, and families can thrive, thereby making prevention possible. While in Oregon, Ms. Jones Gaston began the work to shift the focus of our child welfare system from placement to prevention through cross-system partnerships and implementing the Family First Prevention Services Act.

Ms. Jones Gaston will bring significant expertise and a real world perspective of how our child welfare system can improve for children and families. More importantly, she will bring an inclusive, collaborative approach to creating solutions where families and children are at the center.

In closing, I am more hopeful now with the possibility of Ms. Jones Gaston being at the helm of the ACYF. I urge you to support Ms. Jones Gaston's nomination as the ACYF Commissioner.

Royce Bowlin  
Executive Director

The Oregon Alliance was founded in 1917 to support the lives of Oregon's Children. Alliance member organizations provide services and supports to over 100,000 children, youth and young adults across Oregon annually.

Organization	Main Office Location
Albertina Kerr	Portland
Bob Belloni Ranch	Coos Bay
Boys and Girls Aid of Oregon	Portland
Bridge Meadows	Portland
Bridgeway Recovery Services, Inc.	Salem
Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare	Portland
Community Action Partnership of Oregon	Salem
Connections365	Salem
Family Skill Builders	Clackamas
Family Solutions	Medford
Greater Oregon Behavioral Health, Inc.	The Dalles
Homestead Youth and Family	Pendleton
J Bar J	Bend
Jackson Street Youth Services	Corvallis
Janus Youth Programs, Inc.	Portland
Jasper Mountain	Jasper
Kairos Northwest	Grants Pass
Looking Glass Community Services	Eugene
Madrona Recovery	Portland
Maple Star Oregon, Inc.	Portland
Maslow Project	Medford
Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency	Salem

Organization	Main Office Location
Morrison Child and Family Services	Portland
Neurotherapeutic Pediatric Therapies, Inc.	Canby
New Avenues for Youth	Portland
Northwest Family Services	Portland
Northwest Human Service, Inc.	Salem
Oregon Community Programs	Eugene
Parrot Creek Child and Family Services	Oregon City
Professional Therapeutic Community Network	Salem
St. Mary's Home for Boys	Beaverton
The Next Door, Inc.	Hood River
Trillium Family Services	Portland
Volunteers of America, Oregon	Portland
Yamhill Community Action Partnership	Yamhill County
Youth Progress Association	Portland
Youth Unlimited, Inc.	Gresham
Youth Villages	Marylhurst

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OREGON CHILD ABUSE SOLUTIONS  
4300 NE Fremont St., Suite 220  
Portland, OR 97213  
(503) 455-8339  
[www.oregoncas.org](http://www.oregoncas.org)  
[info@oregoncas.org](mailto:info@oregoncas.org)

February 8, 2022

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

Oregon Child Abuse Solutions (OCAS), an Accredited State Chapter of the National Children's Alliance, would like to show strong support for the confirmation of Rebecca Jones Gaston as ACYF Commissioner.

OCAS supports Oregon's 23 Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) and one tribal CAC. CACs provide forensic interviews, medical assessments, family advocacy, trauma-focused therapy, and community-based prevention services for children impacted by abuse. We are a critical partner on Oregon's 36 multidisciplinary teams and work closely with child protective service workers to ensure children and their families can grow into adulthood, safe, supported and full of hope.

I have worked closely with Rebecca Jones Gaston since her hire and have found Ms. Gaston to be authentic, effective, warm, strategic, and visionary. What stands out about Ms. Gaston is her ability to lead a driven, focused, and impactful team and her close partnerships with community-based providers. Ms. Gaston understands the wide base of support and focus Oregon needs to make our state safer and more supportive of families experiencing safety concerns.



Ms. Gaston has been instrumental in building a strong vision for Oregon's child welfare division and in prioritizing diversity, equity and inclusion efforts. Despite competing challenges and priorities, Ms. Gaston never fails to show up to the Child Welfare Advisory Committee authentically and with action in mind. In her tenure, Ms. Gaston has helped lead our child welfare division by creating cohesion and developing shared overarching, agreed upon goals. OCAS supports her nomination and is very excited to witness what a leader of her caliber can accomplish as ACYF Commissioner.

Sincerely,  
Becky Jones  
Executive Director

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RESULTS FOR AMERICA

October 20, 2021

Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chairman Wyden, and Ranking Member Crapo:

As local, state, and national organizations committed to building and using data and evidence to address our nation's greatest challenges, we are writing to express our strong support for the nomination of Robert Gordon to be Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Mr. Gordon has demonstrated his strong commitment to public service and evidence-based policy-making over three decades now. During his illustrious career at all levels of government, he has added to our nation's understanding of how to drive real results that help working families. As the Director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, he led innovative initiatives to improve agency performance and played a central role in the state's early COVID-19 pandemic response. As a senior official at the White House Office of Management and Budget, Mr. Gordon stewarded President Obama's administration's evidence-based policy-making initiatives, which closely tied program funding to evaluations. In his time at OMB, Mr. Gordon also led the design of innovative initiatives in maternal and infant home visiting, early childhood development, and child welfare. He had direct responsibility for overseeing the Administration for Children and Families and Administration on Aging at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, food and nutrition programs at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Social Security Administration.

Mr. Gordon understands the power and promise of evidence-based policy solutions to effectively advance equitable economic mobility for all Americans. His expansive career has allowed him to work on evidence-based policy initiatives that strengthened outcomes for students ranging from early childhood to higher education. For all of these reasons and more, we urge his swift confirmation.

President Biden, in his January 2021 Executive Orders and Memoranda, has made clear his Administration's commitment to evidence-based policymaking. By confirming Mr. Gordon, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will continue to lead the charge in investing in initiatives that are proven to work and that promote innovation and continuous improvement to advance outcomes for all across the country.

Sincerely,  
Michele Jolin  
CEO and Co-Founder, Results for America

David Medina  
COO and Co-Founder, Results for America

Center for Employment Opportunity	Leading Educators
Children's Home Society of America	Marino Ventures, LLC
Code for America	National Prevention Science Coalition
EDGE Consulting	Northwestern University
Finding Common Purpose	Project Evident
Grant Thornton LLP	RecycleForce
Green and Healthy Homes Initiative, Inc.	REDF
GreenLight Fund	Research Institute for Key Indicators
Harvard Innovation Labs	Social Innovation Research Center
International Venture Philanthropy Center	Tobin Center for Economic Policy, Yale University
Keys2Work	

**Melody Barnes**, Results for America Senior Fellow, Co-Director, UVA Democracy Initiative; and Former Assistant to the President and Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council (Obama Administration)

**John Bridgeland**, Results for America Senior Fellow; CEO of Civic; and Former Director, White House Domestic Policy Council (G.W. Bush Administration); and Member, White House Council for Community Solutions (Obama Administration)

**Lynn Cominsky**, Professor, Physics and Astronomy, Sonoma State University

**Rebecca Maynard**, Professor Emeritus, University of Pennsylvania

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LETTER SUBMITTED BY H. LUKE SHAEFER, PH.D.,  
AND MICHAEL BRENNAN

October 27, 2021

The Honorable Senator Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance

The Honorable Senator Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance

Dear Senators Wyden and Crapo:

We were delighted to learn that Robert Gordon has been nominated for the role of Assistant Secretary of Financial Resources within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In our roles as Director of Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan and special counselor to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), and as CEO of Civilla, a human-centered design firm that works closely with MDHHS, we have had the privilege of working with Gordon during his time as director of MDHHS starting in 2019, and later as an advisor to Poverty Solutions. His leadership at MDHHS was a tremendous service to the people of the State of Michigan. His dedication to evidence-based and dignified policies to support low-income Michiganders was inspiring. During his time in Michigan, he spearheaded many innovations in the delivery of human services. We appreciate the opportunity to express our support for him as he seeks confirmation to this new role. He would be a tremendous asset to U.S. DHHS.

Gordon demonstrates a deep commitment to honoring human dignity and meeting basic human needs by emphasizing efficacy as defined by evidence. He argues for simplicity when possible in policy and process. During his tenure with the State and as an advisor at Poverty Solutions, he not only sent strong messages to the public and staff about this commitment, but he acted. Michiganders are better off because of it.

His policy work broke down barriers to access to public benefits, allowing the State of Michigan to offer low-income residents more life-saving resources. For example, Gordon led the work of the agency to simplify asset tests for benefits that created unnecessary red tape and deterred low income families from saving and seeking benefits. More importantly, he changed the application so that assets are self attested, basing this on the evidence that more arduous rules kept many eligible ap-

plicants from getting the aid they needed. This saved time and work both by those seeking help, and for caseworkers, allowing that effort to be put to other uses that could do more to support families in need. Under his leadership, the State enacted a child support “pass through,” which has been shown to increase employment and child support payments among non-resident fathers.

He acted quickly at the onset of the COVID–19 pandemic. It was inspiring to work with him during that time. While he must have worked near constantly on the health side of the department, he also empowered the human services side of the house to change rules so that individuals could access vital services and social safety net supports without putting themselves at risk of infection. For instance, under Gordon’s leadership, Michigan became the first state in the nation to get approval for P–EBT food assistance. We simplified and improved energy assistance and made changes that would ensure people could get the help they needed even with stay at home orders in place.

After Michigan had replaced its public benefits application, Gordon spearheaded the replacement of the benefits renewal form, leading to thousands more people maintaining access to critical resources and saving them thousands of hours spent filling out forms or standing in line in the State office. Committed to better serving Michiganders, Gordon launched projects to simplify language in external communications and improve office design. His strong focus on implementation was evidenced by his work to eliminate backlogs in case processing and his work to ensure staff had the technology to best serve residents.

Gordon has the track record, skills, and disposition necessary to address the complex challenge of poverty and the complex world of human services delivery. He views his work as solving problems for vulnerable residents, not just processing benefits. He treats those he serves as well as the individuals he employs with dignity and respect. He is a true public servant.

Sincerely,

H. Luke Shaefer, Ph.D.  
Associate Dean for Research and Policy  
Engagement  
Hermann and Amalie Kohn Professor of  
Social Policy  
Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy

Director of Poverty Solutions  
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Michael Brennan  
CEO and Cofounder  
Civilla  
michael@civilla.org 313.449.1878

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STATE OF MICHIGAN  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
LANSING

George W. Romney Building  
111 South Capitol Avenue  
Lansing, Michigan 48909  
[www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov)

GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

GARLIN GILCHRIST II  
LT. GOVERNOR

October 15, 2021

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo,

I write in strong support of Robert Gordon’s nomination to Assistant Secretary for Financial Services, Department of Health and Human Services.

Robert served as Director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) from January 2019 through January 2021. While this role would

have been demanding under any circumstances, the COVID-19 pandemic gave rise to unprecedented challenges.

Robert was a core member of our pandemic response team from the start. Michigan declared a state emergency upon the first confirmed case on March 10, 2020 and from that day until his departure in January 2020, Robert advised on all aspects of our response, including testing, prevention and mitigation, and the health care system. Robert worked incredibly hard. He led the department during grueling and unimaginable circumstances. He was thoughtful, creative, proactive, and informed. And above all else, Robert was committed to protecting public health.

I am proud of the work my administration has done to fight this pandemic. Robert and his team were an incredibly important part of our response and I appreciated his service to our state. The nation will be well-served with Robert confirmed as Assistant Secretary for Financial Services.

Sincerely,

Gretchen Whitmer  
Governor

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VOICES FOR VERMONT'S CHILDREN ET AL.

February 8, 2022

Hon. Ron Wyden  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
239 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, who are members of the State Policy Advocacy and Reform Center (SPARC), a network of state multi-issue child advocacy organizations, legal advocates, and organizations focused on children and families involved with the child welfare system, we write to express our strong support for the nomination of January Contreras to the position of Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services. Ms. Contreras is extremely qualified for this position and is uniquely suited to lead the Administration for Children and Families.

Ms. Contreras is a seasoned administrator at the state and federal level. She has served in a cabinet level position in state government, a sub-cabinet position in the federal government, and as an advisor to Governor Janet Napolitano. Ms. Contreras has managed career and political staff, policy agendas, operational directives, development and implementation of rules and regulations, and tribal and legislative relations. She has managed large teams and budgets effectively with a constant focus on the people that receive the services.

Ms. Contreras has been a strong advocate and community leader in Arizona. She founded a legal services non-profit organization, Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services (ALWAYS), where she served as Executive Director for nearly eight years. Ms. Contreras personally represented victims of domestic violence; human trafficking; and children and young adults experiencing homelessness, foster care, and family separation. This work has led Ms. Contreras to advocate for key crisis prevention supports, including affordable housing, childcare, and health services.

Ms. Contreras's entire career has centered on public service. She advocated for increased access to health care at Arizona's Medicaid agency. She launched a racial disparities strategic plan at Arizona's Department of Health Services. At the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, she led efforts to support immigrant victims of crime. In her work through ALWAYS, Ms. Contreras created a legal home for Arizonans typically left behind in the justice system, many of whom experienced the most

traumatic crimes imaginable. She has served on state coalitions, task forces and advisory boards focused on domestic violence, human trafficking, and young adults transitioning out of foster care.

We believe that any review of Ms. Contreras’s record, will leave no doubt that she should be confirmed as Assistant Secretary for Children and Families. We support Ms. Contreras’s nomination because, both in and out of government positions, Ms. Contreras has established a reputation as a trusted leader with integrity who cares deeply about the people she serves. In her career, she has worked with local, rural, and tribal community and government leaders, judiciary members, grass roots organizations, law enforcement, and the philanthropic community. She has built a record of working across the political aisle and successfully collaborating to accomplish meaningful change.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact SPARC’s Senior Child Welfare Policy Manager, Elissa Hyne at (203) 561-7212 or ehynes@foramericaschildren.org.

Sincerely,

Voices for Vermont’s Children  
Foster Success  
Children’s Action Alliance  
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute  
Florida’s Children First

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YOUTH VILLAGES

February 8, 2022

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Chair  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate  
Committee on Finance  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

On behalf of Youth Villages,<sup>1</sup> a national leader in children’s mental and behavioral health committed to building strong families, delivering effective services and significantly improving outcomes for children, families and young people involved in child welfare and juvenile justice systems across the country, we write to express our strong support for the confirmation of Oregon’s Child Welfare Director Rebecca Jones Gaston as the Commissioner of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Throughout her 25-year career in human services and child welfare spanning Maryland and Oregon, Director Jones Gaston has dedicated her life to improving the lives of children, youth, and families in a variety of roles. She has served as a social worker, advocate, therapist, consultant and administrator throughout her career. She is highly qualified to serve as the ACYF Commissioner and her nomination comes at an appropriate time as Congress prepares to take up issues like Title IV-B reauthorization and the continuing implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act. These efforts will need strong leaders within the Administration to ensure effective implementation and delivery of services and programs to all Americans that need them. She is also very clear in what youth are facing today. As the Committee knows there is a children’s mental health crisis that has been exacerbated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Director Jones Gaston has been clear about the need to prioritize children and adolescent health, including their mental health.

Director Jones Gaston’s “Vision for Transformation”<sup>2</sup> that she successfully implemented in Oregon is needed at the federal level and would be an asset for HHS. Her leadership in transforming Oregon’s child welfare systems into a family well-being system that better meets the needs of children, youth, and families is well aligned to the Biden Administration’s approach to centering lived experience and their dedication to prevention where possible, and appropriate interventions when necessary. Additionally, Director Jones Gaston understands and has demonstrated

<sup>1</sup> <https://youthvillages.org/>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/de2445.pdf>.

that transformational work like she has done in Oregon and will do for ACYF must be done collaboratively. Director Jones Gaston has been able to convene and collaborate with public and private sector partners, including those with differing priorities or vision. She understands the importance of bringing together tribes, providers, school leaders, law enforcement, biological families, foster families, adoptive families, young people, cross-system agencies, and many others to ensure that children, youth, and families have what they need to thrive.

ACYF oversees major federal programs that provide financial assistance to states, community-based organizations, and academic institutions to provide services, carry out research and demonstration activities, and manage training, technical assistance and information dissemination.

In this role, Director Jones Gaston will oversee two bureaus that are responsible for improving the lives of children, youth, and families, as well as carrying out research and evaluation activities. Youth Villages supports this nomination knowing that in her role as Oregon's child welfare director she transformed the agencies mission and purpose; ultimately reducing the number of children in foster care by approximately 1,000 children over two years.

With the recent appointment of Kimberly Waller as Associate Commissioner of the Family and Youth Services Bureau and Associate Commissioner Aysha Schromburg of the Children's Bureau, we are confident that Director Jones Gaston will successfully advance the agency's mission of improving the lives of children and families through programs that reduce child abuse and neglect, increase the number of adoptions, and strengthen foster care.

Director Jones Gaston is knowledgeable with respect to all of the programs that are in the jurisdiction of HHS' Administration on Children, Youth, and Families. We therefore urge the Committee and the Senate to swiftly confirm her as Commissioner of the Administration of Children, Youth, and Families.

Sincerely,

Patrick Lawler  
CEO

