



State of New Mexico
House of Representatives
STATE CAPITOL
Santa Fe

KELLY FAJARDO

R - Valencia
District 7

1402 Main Street, Box B501
Los Lunas, NM 87031
Home Phone: (505) 573-0471
E-mail: kelly.fajardo@nmlegis.gov

September 30, 2019

The Honorable Brian Blalock
Secretary
Children, Youth and Families Department
P.O. Drawer 5160
Santa Fe, NM 87502

Dear Secretary Blalock,

During the most recent legislative session, the New Mexico Legislature unanimously passed House Joint Memorial 10, legislation directing the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) to convene a task force to examine New Mexico's Child Protective Service system and recommend improvements. The memorial requires the task force to report its findings to the Legislative Health and Human Services Committee by no later than October 1, 2020.

We are nearing the one-year deadline for the task force report, and yet the task force still has not been formed. The task force was ordered by the Legislature because too many of New Mexico's children have suffered harm, injury, and even death while under the supervision of New Mexico's Child Protective Services. Clearly, the system must be improved. The task force was designed to take a comprehensive view of the existing system. It was supposed to engage stakeholders working in many different areas of the system, ask them where our state's services are falling short, and solicit their ideas for repairing these shortfalls.

However, the clock is running on this effort. We are just one year away from the reporting deadline, and the task force members have not even been named. These appointees will have less than a year to meet, collect input and data, analyze it, and produce a report. The longer it takes to seat this task force, the less time we are giving them to fulfill the intent of the memorial and protect New Mexico's children. The delay in starting this task force is shortchanging the process and our state's most vulnerable kids.

Therefore, I am requesting a formal report on all of CYFD's actions taken to date to organize and launch this task force. New Mexicans deserve to know why it has taken over six months just to name the participants on the committee. I would also like a copy of CYFD's proposed project plan and schedule for meeting the deadline set in HJM 10. Since it has taken this long just to

COMMITTEES:

Commerce & Economic Development
Local Government, Land Grants & Cultural Affairs
Rules & Order of Business

INTERIM COMMITTEES:

Capitol Security Subcommittee
Economic & Rural Development
Indian Affairs
Interim Legislative Ethics
Science, Technology & Telecommunications

Advisory Member:

Legislative Council
Legislative Education Study
Mortgage Finance Authority Act Oversight
New Mexico Finance Authority Oversight
Transportation Infrastructure Revenue Subcommittee

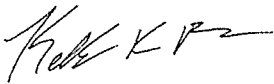
Designee:

Legislative Finance

convene the committee, I am worried about CYFD's ability to produce a quality report that meets the standards outlined in HJM 10 by October 1, 2020.

New Mexico's foster families are the unsung heroes of our Child Protective Service system, and they are watching this process very closely. Many of them personally advocated for this memorial during the legislative session. Their efforts were supposed to be acknowledged by the governor during a recent picnic held in their honor at the Governor's Mansion. Unfortunately, the governor did not show up to the event, causing many in the foster family community to question her administration's commitment to them and improving conditions for the children placed in their care. Please do not let these families down by cheating this task force of the time they need to do a credible job in repairing our broken child protection services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelly Fajardo", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kelly Fajardo
State Representative
District 7