



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE CHILD ADVOCATE

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GAIL GARINGER
THE CHILD ADVOCATE

October 31, 2014

The Honorable Michael Barrett, Chair
Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities
State House, Room 313A
Boston, MA 02133

**RE: Line Item 1599-7771
Fair Hearing Evaluator
Office of the Child Advocate Initial Progress Report**

Dear Chairman Barrett,

The General Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2015 included as line item 1599-7771 an ANF Reserve Appropriation of \$200,000 for the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) to select an independent evaluator to assess the administrative hearing process of the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Line Item 1599-7771 directs the OCA to "select an independent evaluator to assess the department's administrative hearing system; provided further, that the evaluation shall report on whether the department's regulations, funding, staffing levels and processes provide for an administrative hearing system that is timely, independent and fair."

In compliance with Line Item 1599-7771, I am filing this first quarterly progress update with the House and Senate Clerks, the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means, and the House and Senate Chairs of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities.

OCA staff received a proposal and quote from The Ripples Group as a result of a competitive procurement process. The OCA has accepted the proposal and selected The Ripples Group to be the independent evaluator for this project. The Ripples Group is a management consulting firm in Boston with a vibrant public sector practice, having successfully completed many projects in matters related to health and human services in the Commonwealth.

OCA staff and representatives of The Ripples Group have met to discuss the nature and scope of the DCF Fair Hearing Evaluation, to develop a work plan, and to

finalize a contract. We are excited about this project and are grateful to the Legislature for the opportunity to conduct this important evaluation that hopefully will lead to an improved DCF Fair Hearing process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gail Garinger". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G" and a long, sweeping tail.

Gail Garinger
The Child Advocate

Cc: The Ripples Group