



***Foster & Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center***  
6200 Second Street, N.W. – Third Floor  
Washington, DC 20011

July 9, 2015

Chairperson Yvette Alexander  
Committee on Health and Human Services  
Council of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Chairwoman Alexander,

I appreciate the opportunity to submit this letter on behalf of the confirmation of Mr. Raymond Davidson as Director of Child and Family Services Agency, as I was out of town during the July 1 hearing. My name is Margie Chalofsky. I am the Executive Director of the Foster & Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center, commonly known as FAPAC. I am also the proud adoptive parent of a twenty-two year old son who came to us as our foster son when he was seven months old.

FAPAC provides training and support for foster, kinship and adoptive parents of children from the District child welfare system, works to strengthen relationship between birth and foster parents, and partners with CFSA, other government agencies, and a network of community and advocacy groups to develop solutions to systemic problems in the District child welfare system. As an organization whose staff and board is majority comprised of current or former foster and/or adoptive parents, we support a vision of strong prevention programs to keep families intact; high quality, well-trained and supported foster family placements when children do need to come into care; serious efforts towards reunification and other permanency; and meaningful



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and effective post permanency services to support children and families and keep them stable and healthy.

I am writing this letter in support of the appointment of Mr. Raymond Davidson for Director of Child and Family Services Agency.

We have seen much progress at CFSA these past years. It is certainly clear that the District has a much different and greatly improved agency and child welfare system than when FAPAC opened our doors almost 15 years ago. Each director over these years has made her or his own positive mark. However, from our perspective, CFSA has had too many changes in top leadership over these years, and each time there is that turn-over, we run the risk of losing ground and momentum. We feel reassured that Mr. Davidson's tenure with CFSA prior to his appointment in this role will serve well to bring continuity and thus decrease this risk of loss of momentum.

Mr. Davidson has taken the reigns of the agency at a very critical time. A few years ago, CFSA leadership made the decision to reframe itself as an agency that worked to provide services to children in their families whenever possible and to remove fewer children from their parents for placement into foster care. Additionally, the decision was made to support the effort of "kin first," putting substantial resources into building a robust program to be able to more quickly and effectively identify and license kinship families for placement. On top of this all, CFSA is working towards creating a trauma informed system, as well as putting into place new child assessments, a comprehensive educational strategy, and many other new initiatives.

It is to be applauded that many new seeds have been planted at CFSA and throughout the District's child welfare system that have the potential to greatly help children and families.



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However, those of us who have been around for a while know that over the years, CFSA has had no shortage of new initiatives. What we have definitely had, however, is a shortage of new initiatives that have been successfully implemented from top to bottom and have blossomed into significant practice change that are proven to create better outcomes for children and families.

At this point, what is most critically needed is a leader who can take these initiatives from what are currently laudable ideas and concepts, and together with other administration and staff, turn them into programs that work. It is critically needed that CFSA have a leader who would commit to creating the learning environment among staff to make it possible to move good ideas, concepts and intentions to actual change. CFSA needs a leader who can connect the dots of all these seeds that are planted throughout, and create actual business plans and procedures to ensure implementation. CFSA needs a leader who understands organizational behavior and management structure and is experienced in how to create the necessary structures and accountability to get things done in a systematic and effective way.

From our perspective, Mr. Davidson has the requisite management background, from both his prior role at CFSA as well as his work in the private business sector, that will allow him to assess CFSA's organizational structure in order to create accountability measures to ensure that new frameworks and practices actually move from vision to reality. With his experience, he would be able to clearly identify the tools, training and support that staff will need in order to implement new directions.

From our initial work with Mr. Davidson these past few months we have found him to be open to input, involvement and partnership from community groups as well as from families. We have found him to listen well, to absorb different perspectives and



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viewpoints, and to be very responsive. At this time, our most burning issue is the large gap in the District's placement array that is absent of a true model for working with children and youth with more extensive behavioral and emotional needs. We have placed this and other issues at his door and found that he has already begun to dig into identifying potential solutions and resolutions. He has requested that we submit a comprehensive list of issues from families, and committed to developing an on-going and accountable response mechanism.

We believe that critical work can move forward under Mr. Davidson. For these reasons, I am submitting this letter in support of Mr. Davidson's appointment as the new CFSA Director.

Thank you,

Margie Chalofsky  
Executive Director  
Foster & Adoptive Parent Advocacy Center (FAPAC)