

Opening Statement

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Nominee for Commissioner, Administration on Children, Youth and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Finance Committee
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Thank you Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Wyden, and members of the Committee for the opportunity to appear before you as President Trump's nominee to be the Commissioner for the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, serving those who are in greatest need of hope and assurance that there can be a brighter future.

I am proud to have my family and many friends and colleagues across the country watching this hearing today, including my two sons, and their wives, my daughter and her husband and my two grandchildren, and my 93-year-old mother. My father who passed away four years ago, just before my parent's 68th anniversary, is with me in spirit. Also watching are members of the Gilpatrick family, who took my father into their home in 1940. Their benevolence has shaped the course of my life.

My youth was filled with opportunity. My parents modeled a strong work ethic and an unwavering sense of personal responsibility. I was keenly aware from an early age that others did not have the same advantages that a loving family can bring. My dad was orphaned at age 8, grew up in a children's home and found a foster family just as he was aging out of care. He was a living example of the hope that a stable, loving

foster family can bring to the life of a child. Almost 80 years later, this foster family is still a large part of my life.

No doubt their magnanimity influenced the decision my husband and I made at the age of 28 to adopt a 16-year-old from a group foster home sponsored by our church. In many ways, our son served as a social service proving ground. He came to us after years of unimaginable abuse and over the next ten years as he sought to overcome its effects, we stood firm in our love – and plenty of it was tough love and enforced consequences - as he learned to take responsibility for the man he chose to be. I am very proud of who he is today, as I am of all three of my children.

I've had the privilege of working for many years in state and federal government, including at HHS, on family and child welfare policies and priorities. I believe my success has been due in large part to an understanding of how government partners with faith-based and community organizations to get its work done, and how policies can either help or hinder service delivery and client outcomes.

ACYF spans two bureaus: The Family and Youth Services Bureau and the Children's Bureau, which address a range of issues: child abuse and neglect, foster care and adoption, homeless and runaway youth, trafficked youth, adolescent pregnancy, and domestic violence. But these issues are connected—to address any one of these concerns in isolation is to ignore the underlying factors that characterize the complexity of each.

With the recent passage of the Family First Prevention Services Act, I am energized and optimistic about its potential to be a catalyst for systemic change for

those who support families experiencing challenges. And, with today's knowledge and understanding of the effects of adverse childhood experiences and the resulting trauma that presents in a myriad of ways, I feel a sense of urgency to support and encourage all systems of care to deliver services through a multi-disciplinary, trauma-informed lens.

I have seen what hope can do to change a life. I believe the families that require our services do not just benefit from "best practices" or from a "continuum of care" or from "prevention services." At the core of my being I know it is about relationships, being in relationship with others, the human element, that one-on-one supportive dynamic that is difficult for government to provide, but can often come through extended family, a place of worship, a community center, a school, a teacher, a coach, a pastor, a mentor.

I bring to this position a deep understanding of the nonprofit sector and its capacity to do what government can't. If I am confirmed, I will be a tireless advocate for children, youth, and families in crisis, and all caregivers and service providers who seek to help and heal. Across this vast land, communities are coming together around issues they have identified and seek to address together, drawing on the strengths and resources of many to improve the health of their communities. Whether the issue is opioid abuse, teen suicide, cyberbullying, teen pregnancy, sex trafficking, domestic violence, or child abuse, I have seen that when communities come together, name a problem, and own it, the power of relationships and the human element can overcome many obstacles. And imagine if all were educated on the effects of trauma and understood the possibility of healing the deepest of wounds.

I thank President Trump for the opportunity to serve as the Commissioner for ACYF, and I thank each of you for your consideration of my nomination.