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I have read Legislative Document No. 779 - An Act to Create a Separate Department of Child and Family Services

This is a plan to create a new Department of Child and Family Services along with an independent commissioner, separate from DHHS.

This new department is urgently needed due to the many documented, serious failures within DHHS/CPS. It is imperative that we improve our record ensuring the wellbeing and welfare of our most vulnerable children. The separation of CPS from DHHS will shift the focus to prioritizing what is most important our children. Amply identified and documented systemic failures are not the result of Republican or Democrat administrative policies, but have come from a long term, deeply entrenched set of institutional problems within DHHS that no one is willing to take on.

4 million dollars is not a lot to ask to better ensure the wellbeing and welfare of our children. Even DHHS now says that they are willing to separate CPS from their department, after long fighting against it tooth and nail. This plan is not simply a renaming/branding of the bureaucracy, but given the failures that have been brought to light in the past few years this measure should be seen as a fresh start for building a new support system for children and families. I would like to see this new organization include the youth criminal justice system under it's umbrella, as well as employ the use of family court to handle CPS cases.

While this proposal will not directly address the shortage of caseworkers, fewer layers of bureaucracy will make it easier for them to directly interact and take timely action to ensure the wellbeing of children under their care. Systematic improvements should allow them to get the support they need, as well as limit the turnover of staff. Should a family court be set up to handle cases, cases would move along faster, which would lower ongoing case loads.

This proposal also calls for an independent investigator to look into child protection operations. This is essential for Kinship and Foster Families who currently have no outside support or authority to turn to when there is a problem, and do bureaucrats truly want to look into themselves if there is a mission failure? There is lack of accountability from DHHS/CPS because they are not required to follow their own rules and if they step away from them, there is no one to hold them accountable.

I disagree that reunification should be the end goal for all cases. The top priority must be what is best for the child(ren) in question. If what is best for the children is unclear, then listen to the input of the Guardian Ad Litem; that is what they are there for.