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## Statement by CFSA Director Brenda Donald

(Washington, DC) –Today, DC Child and Family Services Agency director Brenda Donald released the following statement to CFSA staff in response to a recent media article.

This morning the [Washington City Paper](#) published a story that completely mischaracterizes the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) and does not represent who we are. The voices of those few people quoted in the article is not representative of what the majority of you experience and the hard work that you do every day to support children and families in the District.

Although the nature of the work can be stressful, contrary to the implications of the article, our number one priority is keeping kids safe.

CFSA is a mission-driven, important place to work, and we operate from a place of integrity and transparency. We don't cut corners, and we stand behind our work and our data. This work comes with its challenges and while we have struggled in the past in some areas, we have also made vast improvements across the agency. Thanks to recommendations, feedback and changes driven by our own workforce, we are doing well with self-monitoring, strong quality assurance practices, reliable data systems and management and innovative practices that go above and beyond the LaShawn lawsuit standards. While on any given day, caseload numbers do shift, as verified by the Court Monitor, we are maintaining the LaShawn standards for our caseloads.

In fact, many of the references to comments by our oversight authorities were old news. More recently, during CFSA's DC Council Budget Oversight Hearing, CFSA's Court Monitor, the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP), stated:

*“Since the beginning of CSSP’s involvement as Court Monitor, CFSA’s practices, performance, and outcomes have dramatically improved and the District is rightfully proud of those accomplishments for children, youth, and families and aware of those areas where additional improvement is still needed. During this last year, CFSA took steps to stabilize some areas of practice in need of improvement and initiated important new efforts including adding in-house*

*clinical mental health capacity to engage with children as soon as they enter foster care, creating peer supports for parents, and most recently, making structural changes to improve child protective services (CPS) practice.”*

And our progress was also acknowledged during CFSA’s December 2018 LaShawn Status Hearing by Judge Thomas F. Hogan of the U.S. District Court:

*“It is evident from the progress reports that CFSA has great staff, is doing great work and cares about children in DC, and the agency is making progress toward exiting the LaShawn Lawsuit.”*

As employees of this agency, your voices are taken seriously. Leadership, in partnership with the Labor Management Partnership Council, is working hard to create a supportive environment. We have and will continue to heavily invest in your well-being, exemplified by our Wellness Works program, which includes physical fitness and mental health activities, financial wellness information and volunteer opportunities. We are also continuously focused on recognizing your accomplishments and are fresh off of the heels of a month-long celebration of our social workers during Social Work Appreciation Month, which culminated with a 4 Pillars Scorecard Awards celebration of recent achievements by our dedicated social work staff.

My job is to provide resources to support workers, constantly review caseloads and move quickly to fill vacant positions. Our leadership team is also always open to hearing about your concerns and challenges, including issues that are contrary to our best practices, and how we can continue to stay on the path of improving the agency.

**In closing, I am proud, and you should be proud of the remarkable efforts that you continue to put forth daily for kids in care and their families.**



Brenda Donald

Director