

April 2, 2014

The Honorable Janice K. Brewer
Governor, State of Arizona
1700 West Washington Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

RE: Request to veto Budget

Dear Governor Brewer,

The National Association of Social Workers, Arizona Chapter (NASWAZ) is very concerned about this current legislative budget as passed by the House and the Senate. We strongly urge you to veto this budget if it reaches you in its current form.

Months ago, you expressed horror about and vowed you would address this crisis fully. You took bold and courageous action and created the Division of Child Safety and Family Services to replace CPS. Your proposed budget provided sufficient funding to address the impossible CPS staff caseloads, funding for the new agency, and other critical funds for technology and children's services. You realized these are crucial investments that are necessary to address the unprecedented number of children involved with CPS.

Like you, the public responded with an outpouring of concern for these children and demands for the Legislature to fully fund CPS to align caseloads with national standards. Across the state, citizens from all political viewpoints urged funding for prevention programs and for child care subsidies so that families could have the support and education they needed as well as safe places to leave their children while they worked: these services can address the increasingly high level of neglect and allow children to be safe in their own homes.

"Actions speak louder than words." When the nearly 6,600 "Not Investigated" cases were discovered at Child Protective Services (CPS), the AZ State Legislature also expressed horror, outrage, and shock. They too promised "reform." But the Republicans in the legislature have developed a budget that does not address the crisis nor safeguard children in any reasonable way. Their actions have drowned out their words. The legislative budget does not provide enough funding to reduce caseloads and address the current crisis. There are insufficient funds for the new agency and for technology. There are no funds for prevention or child care. The majority in the Legislature refuses to place the safety of AZ's children first. The children in CPS custody are the responsibility of the State. They suffer abuse or neglect followed by the trauma of removal from their homes into CPS custody. Then, far too many of them continue to be neglected by our state. Over 12,000 cases in CPS are currently "inactive" because CPS is so thinly stretched it is impossible meet all the needs of these children and families.

It is the state's moral responsibility and ethical duty to begin provide enough resources to serve all these vulnerable children.

NASWAZ urges you to veto the legislative budget proposal and demand that CPS funding levels be at least as high as your own budget proposal. In addition, we urge you to include funding for prevention and child care to begin to mitigate this crisis of children coming into CPS custody. The time for political rhetoric and broken promises is over. In the end, it is indeed true that "Actions speak louder than words."
Thank you for your leadership and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Suzanne M. Schunk, LCSW
Board President NASW Arizona Chapter

Cc: President Andy Biggs, Speaker Andy Tobin, Representative Chad Campbell, Senator Anna Tovar, Director Charles Flanagan,
Director Clarence Carter