

Revised Testimony of Commissioner Cynthia F. Figueroa  
City of Philadelphia Department of Human Services  
Resolution No. 161029  
March 3, 2017

Good afternoon, Councilman Johnson, Councilman Jones and members of the Legislative Oversight and Public Safety Committees. I am Cynthia Figueroa, Commissioner of the City of Philadelphia Department of Human Services (Philadelphia DHS).

As you are aware, the City of Philadelphia Department of Human Services is the largest child welfare agency in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Our mission is to promote safety, permanency and well-being for children and youth at risk of abuse, neglect and delinquency. We serve thousands of children and their families each year. We provide an extensive array of prevention services, in home services, foster care, adoption, and juvenile justice services. Additionally, we run the City's juvenile detention center called the Philadelphia Juvenile Justice Services Center.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding Resolution No. 161029. This resolution relates to the collection of costs and fees for children and youth in placement through the juvenile justice system. As many of you know, Philadelphia DHS, like other counties in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, pursuant to State requirements, currently collects child support from parents whose children are in detention or juvenile justice placement. We recognize that the collection of these costs can cause severe hardship for families, which is why we asked the state for permission to stop the collection.

March 3, 2017

My original testimony which I submitted to City Council on Wednesday, reflected that DHS was prepared, pending state approval, to immediately stop the collection of child support from parents whose children were placed in detention or delinquent placement. I am thrilled to report that yesterday afternoon, we received a courtesy copy of the State's testimony. Their testimony indicated that there is an option for counties to stop the collection for children who are in detention and delinquent placements because we do not collect Title IVE dollars (federal funds for children in foster care) for these placements. After consultation with our fiscal team and Law Department, I am pleased to report that Philadelphia DHS will take action to immediately stop the collection of child support from parents whose children are placed in detention and delinquent placement.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the law students from Temple University's Justice Lab who first brought this issue to the Department's attention. We worked closely with the law students to review the legal authority and compelling data regarding collection of child support in the juvenile justice arena.

Shortly after I became Commissioner, in the Fall of 2016, I requested the State to review the analysis and justification proposed by the law students. I made this request because Philadelphia DHS is licensed by the State, they are the entity who has to grant us the authority to cease the collection of child support in delinquent cases. We are pleased that the State's testimony reflects our position.

We also want to make you aware that effective April 1, 2017, the City will begin using a new firm, called RCB, which is minority owned and operated, for the collection of child support

payments. We are using this opportunity to revamp our entire child support collection procedure.

We look forward to partnering with the State in our effort to support the children and families involved with the juvenile justice system. I am happy to respond to any questions.