

Press Release ...

...from State Representative Sara Feigenholtz



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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz

773-296-4141

DCFS Releases Child Abuse Reports After Assistant Majority Leader Feigenholtz and Advocates Demand Action

After 9 Months of Refusing to Release Complete Child Abuse Data, Department Posts Data Online

Springfield, Ill. – Today, Assistant Majority Leader Sara Feigenholtz joined child advocates to address alarming child abuse trends and to demand accountability from the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS.)

“I filed HR986 last week because the Department has been hiding child abuse data since July, 2017,” said Feigenholtz. “DCFS took a step in the right direction this morning by reversing itself and releasing data, but it took 9 months of advocacy from former Youth in Care to get that done. DCFS should be ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of the children of Illinois—not withholding vital information that advocates have used for decades to identify child abuse trends and protect children and families.”

For nine months, DCFS ignored advocates’ requests for a complete set of child abuse data, questioning their legal obligation to report the data, and suggesting that the computer systems they have used to compile the reports for over three decades are suddenly incapable or producing the reports. This morning’s data release shows that is not the case.

“The data released shows an increase in the number of children being re-abused—that number has skyrocketed by 50% since 2015,” said James McIntyre, President, Foster Care Alumni of America Illinois Chapter. “We also see a spike in opioid related calls. Services for people addicted to opioids have been cut over the last three years, and we worry that is the reason for the spike of caseloads related to opioid use.”

The alarming information contained in the released data makes it clear that more transparency is necessary to prevent child abuse in Illinois.

“This is a matter of being able to advocate for abused and vulnerable children,” said Kyle Hillman, a spokesperson for the National Association of Social Workers Illinois Chapter. “Without this data, social workers in the field haven’t had the supports they need. It was a total failure for this department to hide the data, and it was unconscionable for them to withhold it for as long as they did.”

“The Department continues to drag its feet on requests to release information related to the safety and well-being of our children, and that’s wrong,” concluded Feigenholtz. “DCFS is failing children and families across Illinois. They should step up and do the right thing all the time—not just when they are called out publicly for hiding information.”

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