

Statements in Support of Settlement Agreement

Organizational Plaintiffs

Therese Yanan, Executive Director, Native American Disability Law Center

“This agreement ensures that Native children have access to traditional ceremonies and that culturally responsive healing practices are promoted throughout the state, and realizes the protections of ICWA so that children are placed appropriately with their families and within their communities,” said Therese Yanan, Executive Director of the NADLC, an organizational plaintiff.”

Nancy Koenigsberg, Senior Attorney, Disability Rights New Mexico

“DRNM is pleased to see that the goals in the agreement include increasing collaboration among child-serving agencies led by CYFD and HSD. The commitment to building a coordinated system of care that includes a wide array of community based services to eligible children in State Custody statewide is vital to their well-being. This will result in a statewide system which is necessary to ensure that all children in state custody and their families have prompt access to necessary services regardless of where they live.”

Plaintiffs' Counsel

Tara Ford, Clinical Supervising Attorney, Stanford Youth and Education Law Project

“The Governor and her team have prioritized improving the lives of children in foster care. The Kevin S. settlement is a bold move to improve the child welfare system in New Mexico. Change of this magnitude will take time, dedication and working with purpose. Now the work begins. New Mexico's foster children deserve this!”

Grant Davis-Denny, Partner, Munger Tolles Olson LLP

“Almost half a million U.S. children are in foster care, and nearly all enter state custody having experienced multiple traumatic events, ranging from neglect to outright abuse. That itself is a national tragedy. But even worse, child welfare systems across the country not only fail to treat childhood trauma, but actually re-traumatize our nation's most challenged kids. New Mexico is blazing a new path forward by re-orienting its foster care system to take account of and prevent childhood trauma, and other states should follow suit. If they don't, lawyers from across the profession should join forces with behavioral health care experts to protect the rights of foster children.”

Kathryn Eidmann, Senior Supervising Staff Attorney, Public Counsel

“For too long, our institutions and systems serving young people have lagged behind what we know is true about the impact of childhood trauma. We are proud to have developed an ambitious plan to fully implement trauma-responsive principles across all levels of the child welfare system.”

Jesselyn Friley, Staff Attorney, Public Counsel

“This settlement will re-orient both agencies toward accommodating the effects of trauma in all the children they serve. It goes far beyond just improving the usual services offered by child welfare and behavioral health systems. We at Public Counsel are thrilled to continue to work with the agencies, the experts, and New Mexico's child advocates to transform these essential systems.”

Sara Crecca, Crecca Law Firm

“This agreement outlines the very type of reform youth in foster care, foster parents, and advocates have been desperate for in New Mexico for decades. As a Guardian *ad Litem* and Youth Attorney advocate for eighteen years and co-counsel on *Kevin S.*, I am thrilled to be a part of this ground-breaking system reform.”

Mike Hart, Partner, Martinez, Hart, Thompson & Sanchez, P.C.

“When she took office, Governor Lujan-Grisham told New Mexicans she and her Administration would put children first. But, other politicians before her had made similar promises to our State. Today, however, there can be no question about her dedication and commitment to following through on that promise. Today, our Governor has empowered the New Mexico Children, Youth & Families Department to implement the tools, practice changes, and resources in order to fundamentally improve the lives of the state’s most vulnerable children – the abused and neglected. This is what leadership and vision looks like on the very hardest issues that plague our state. The devastating negative and long-term impacts of childhood abuse and neglect on our community are well understood, and today, Governor Lujan-Grisham has put the needs of these children first, and has committed to making the changes that will have far-reaching impacts for the State of New Mexico.”

Andrew Schultz, Director, Rodey Law Firm

“For far too long, CYFD has been unable to break the seemingly never-ending cycles of abuse, mismanagement and tragedy that too many children in foster care have endured. This settlement shatters the status quo and creates new avenues for CYFD to better treat the children within its care. The settlement also serves as a clear model for what can be accomplished when professionals from different orientations come together with a single

purpose and are willing to work together for the good of New Mexico's most vulnerable citizens.”

Kelly Waterfall, Associate, Law Office of Ryan J. Villa

“This agreement can help to ensure that the most vulnerable children in New Mexico have access to crucial mental and behavioral health services.”

Foster Youth Advocates and Attorneys

Bette Fleishman, Executive Director, Pegasus Legal Services for Children

“This settlement provides an opportunity for New Mexico to develop a system of child welfare that understands and responds to the impact of trauma experienced by children in foster care and addresses the unique needs of Native children in foster care.”