

Dallas County ARPA Funding Proposal for Child Welfare

October 8, 2021

Dear Judge Jenkins and Commissioners Price, Garcia, Daniel, and Koch,

On behalf of TexProtects and the 8 other undersigned local community organizations that advocate for and serve children and youth in Dallas County, we write to urge you to consider the enclosed strategies in American Rescue Plan funding decisions for Dallas County.

There is a current crisis within our CPS and Foster Care systems that requires the attention of our local government. As you are likely aware, the immediate crisis at hand is a historically unprecedented lack of capacity for child beds in foster care. The number of children without placements continue to worsen by the month and there is little relief in sight due to a variety of factors. The approximate 25 children without homes in the county at any given time is just a symptom of many deeper challenges facing the state's foster care system, which many believe to be on the brink of imploding.

We believe there is a significant opportunity for the County to invest one-time federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars in both the prevention of future child removals and future child maltreatment which will alleviate the burden of capacity challenges our county faces. Both investments could realize savings to the county, but most importantly, save the innocence and prospects of our most vulnerable children. While the outcomes most proximal to these strategies are related to child maltreatment reductions, such investments will also yield positive outcomes for early childhood education, maternal and infant health, behavioral health, and youth at risk of entering our juvenile systems, which have all been severely impacted by the pandemic.

As eligible through ARPA guidance, such strategies outlined as follows, including spending on public health strategies at local hospitals on programs such as Family Connects, or providing improved monetary assistance to Child Placing Agencies and relative caregivers, the County can contribute significantly to alleviating the challenges facing our child welfare system. Funding is just one of many actions that will need to be taken. Each strategy outlines the cost, children impacted, cost-benefit, metrics, and timeline use of such funding. The County holds existing contracts with several entities engaged in these strategies that could be leveraged and expedite the process in reaching these children.

All of you have played a significant role in supporting children over the years and the child protection community is extremely grateful for your support. We also recognize these challenges cannot be solved solely at a state level but also, by utilizing federal funds, need to be aggressively pursued by our community who has the ultimate responsibility in caring for the children in our midst.

We appreciate your consideration of this extremely timely and critical matter.

Regards, Sophie Phillips, CEO TexProtects

TexProtects has put forth three key strategies to increase the number of home-based and kinship placements for children entering or at risk of entering foster care within Dallas County to address the foster care capacity crisis and mitigate substantially increased risk of child abuse and neglect that occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic on the root causes of child maltreatment with the four-pronged approach below totaling \$30.2 million ARPA with 26,597 children impacted.

- Strategy #1: Investment in increased rate for child-placing agencies to provide better quality and increase foster care placement to reduce strain on foster care capacity crisis.

Total Proposed Investment: \$5.7 million

Total Children Impacted: 1,230

- Strategy #2: Investment in monetary assistance for relative caregivers to prevent children from entering foster care and reduce strain on foster care capacity crisis.

Total Proposed Investment: \$17 million

Total Children Impacted: 1,737 (a subset of 3,500 children in substitute care placements in Dallas County during FY2020)

- Strategy #3: Investment in community-based child abuse prevention programs.

Total proposed investment: \$1 million

Total Children Impacted: 12,930