

News Release

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Oregon Child Welfare Director nominated to lead federal Administration on Children, Youth and Families

Salem, OR – Rebecca Jones Gaston, director of the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS), Child Welfare Division, [has been nominated by the Biden-Harris Administration](#) to serve as Commissioner of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF).

The ACYF is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and oversees federal programs that support social services that promote the positive growth and development of children, youth and their families; protective services and shelter for children and youth in at-risk situations; and adoption for children with special needs.

“I’d like to thank Rebecca for the progress we have made during her tenure in stabilizing Oregon’s child welfare system and establishing a vision for transforming the system to better serve children and families,” said Governor Kate Brown. “Rebecca’s federal nomination is a testament to the good work happening in Oregon. I congratulate Rebecca on her nomination and am pleased that children and families across the country now will benefit from her leadership.”

Jones Gaston joined the Oregon Department of Human Services as Child Welfare Director in 2019, following Governor Brown’s executive order aimed at improving the child welfare system. Since that time, Jones Gaston had led the division in achieving the following:

- Stabilized the Child Welfare Division, including decreasing the number of children in foster care by 22 percent since November 2019; eliminating the use of out-of-state residential treatment facilities; and adjusting operations and policy to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic while maintaining services for children and families.
- Developed and begun implementation of [the Child Welfare Division Vision for Transformation](#), which brings a racial equity and anti-racism lens to every aspect of the work of the division and emphasizes it will work to prevent

maltreatment and the need for foster care, support families, and keep children in their homes whenever possible. The Vision has a strong focus on bringing to the table families with lived experience and Oregon Tribal Nations.

- Completed and received federal approval for [Oregon's Family First Prevention Services plan](#). The prevention plan is the first step toward Oregon's goal of transforming the child welfare system to one that is prevention-oriented by providing supports and services to family before foster care is necessary.

“Rebecca has provided steady leadership to help us navigate through challenging times, and she developed a vision and solid foundation for the future,” said ODHS Director Fariborz Pakseresht. “As a result, Oregon is in a good position to continue the momentum and improve well-being for all children and families served by our child welfare system.”

Before joining ODHS, Jones Gaston served as executive director of the Social Services Administration at the Maryland Department of Human Services. Jones Gaston has worked in the field of human services and child welfare for more than 24 years as a social worker, advocate, therapist, consultant, and administrator. She previously was a director with Casey Family Programs, providing technical assistance to child welfare agencies throughout the United States. From 2003 to 2007, she served as the National Campaign Director for AdoptUsKids, a major campaign aimed at increasing the numbers of foster and adoptive families developed in collaboration with the National Ad Council and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Children’s Bureau.

“I am honored to have served as leader of the Child Welfare Division for the past two years and am grateful to our staff and partners for working together improve outcomes for children and families,” Jones Gaston said. “Oregon will always hold a special place in my heart, and I look forward to bringing Oregon’s experience in child welfare into the national conversation.”

Jones Gaston’s appointment is subject to confirmation by the U.S. Senate. ODHS will announce a leadership transition plan in the coming weeks, pending Senate action.