



August 23, 2011

Ms. Jeanine Livingston
Director, Contract Compliance
Washington State Federation of Employees
1212 Jefferson Street SE #300
Olympia, WA 98501

Dear Jeanine,

We would like to express our appreciation to your members for meeting with Partners for Our Children. We appreciate the opportunity created by your leadership to discuss our mutual interest in improving Washington's child welfare system, and would like to take a moment to clarify our position on House Bill 2106 and provide information about some of our other activities.

Regarding our role in House Bill 2106, at this stage we will continue to staff the Transformation Design Committee and, as POC's Executive Director, I will participate as a member of that Committee as well as the Site Selection Committee. Like you, we are interested in moving towards performance-based contracts because we believe that it will result in better outcomes for children and families. Once implemented, we would expect to see a better fit between the needs of vulnerable children/families and the array of state-purchased services available to them. As we discussed, POC is committed to a fair unbiased test of Part 2. Towards this end, we have made a number of suggestions we believe will improve the evaluation process described in HB 2106. POC staff is currently developing a written proposal we would like to discuss at a future Site Selection Committee meeting. At the same time, we are looking for additional funding to support a more robust evaluation.

We believe that the best child welfare systems are informed by evidence and we are unaware of any empirical evidence to suggest that private case management is inherently more effective than services managed by public employees. Clearly, there are many factors that affect the quality of child welfare services. Many child welfare jurisdictions, both public and private, make claims about improved outcomes; unfortunately there is little evidence to support these claims. This, of course, is why we want to very carefully evaluate Part 2 of HB 2106.


Also, POC is currently working closely with Children's Administration and a number of private funders to create a web-based information exchange that will make child welfare data and a wide array of other information directly available to both the general public and child welfare practitioners. Your members have been very clear that easy access to current research findings, program evaluations, and promising practices from other jurisdictions would be of great value to them as they work to meet the needs of children and families in the child welfare system. Although many of the details are not yet worked out, private philanthropy has indicated their willingness to fund this project over the next three years.

We also share your commitment to improving training of the state child welfare workforce and believe that children are best-served by a skilled, professional workforce. We would like to invite your members to learn more about the new training collaboration between the Children's Administration, University of Washington, Eastern Washington University, and Partners for Our Children. This initiative is a critical new investment in long term improvement that supports professionals to do their best for children who come to the attention of the

child welfare system. The collaboration is still in a building phase and is working towards the development of a training continuum – from pre-service to in-service training – and includes social work education with a robust research and evaluation plan.

In closing, let me thank you and your members for the opportunity to engage in an open and honest exchange of ideas. While we probably won't agree on all the issues, we have already identified a number of common interests and we look forward to continuing the dialogue. At POC our aim is to support long term improvements in services to vulnerable children and their families, and we view WFSE as an important partner in this work.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Benjamin de Haan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Benjamin de Haan, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Partners for Our Children
University of Washington