

January 14, 2026

Sent via Email and U.S. Mail

The Honorable Brian P. Kemp

Governor of Georgia
Office of the Governor
206 Washington Street, Suite 203
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Dear Governor Kemp,

We write to you with the shared understanding that you are committed to ensuring the stability of Georgia's child welfare system and its ability to protect children from harm. Throughout your tenure, you have expressed concern for vulnerable children and families, and we recognize the responsibility you carry in stewarding a system that must function reliably even under strain. It is in that spirit—and with urgency—that we write to you now.

Georgia is experiencing a **provider network crisis** within its child welfare system.

Across the state, essential child welfare service providers are reducing capacity, suspending programs, or closing altogether due to funding shortfalls. Family preservation services, foster care supports, therapeutic interventions, transportation, and in-home services are disappearing at a pace that is already affecting children and families. We are deeply concerned that this crisis is accelerating and that additional provider losses are imminent.

As former Directors of Georgia's Division of Family and Children Services, we have lived through periods when the provider network eroded. We know the long-term consequences. When providers disappear, children enter foster care who might otherwise have remained safely at home. Once in care, children remain longer because the services needed to stabilize families, support reunification, or maintain placements are no longer available. Caseworkers have fewer options. Judges face constrained choices. Foster parents burn out. Congregate care increases. Costs rise. Outcomes worsen. The damage is profound and not easily reversed.

As you know, providers have long raised concerns about reimbursement rates that do not cover the cost of services, workforce attrition, delayed payments, unfunded mandates, and increasingly burdensome administrative and liability insurance requirements. More recently, the sharp reduction in preventive and in-home services resulting from budget shortfalls has further destabilized the system—significantly increasing the likelihood that children will enter care unnecessarily and remain there longer than needed.

This provider network crisis is not the result of a lack of commitment by providers or frontline DFCS staff, nor is it driven solely by market forces. It reflects structural and funding pressures that now require immediate executive action to prevent deeper harm to children and families. Many child welfare providers are nonprofit organizations that supplement state funding through charitable fundraising, faith communities, and philanthropy. When providers close their doors, Georgia loses not only service capacity but also vital supplemental community resources that cannot be easily replaced.

Governor, the consequences of inaction are immediate and measurable. Children are waiting longer for services that could keep them safely with their families. Removals are occurring not because they are the best option, but because the supports needed to keep families intact are no longer available. Long-standing providers—many of them nonprofit and faith-based organizations that have served Georgia faithfully for decades—are closing their doors because they cannot continue to operate at a loss while absorbing increasing responsibility and liability.

This moment demands decisive action.

We respectfully urge you to take the following steps without delay:

- **Authorize emergency stabilization funding from the state surplus** to immediately shore up child welfare providers and prevent further loss of capacity while longer-term solutions are developed and the supplemental budget is considered.
- **Publicly reaffirm your commitment to maintaining Georgia's child welfare provider network** and its critical role in protecting vulnerable children and families.
- **Direct relevant state agencies to remove administrative and fiscal barriers** that are accelerating provider shutdowns and service reductions.
- **Commit to longer-term funding and policy reforms** to ensure this crisis does not recur.

If there is one lesson our experience has taught us, it is that Georgia's child welfare provider network cannot be rebuilt quickly once it collapses. When stable funding erodes, providers lose trust in their ability to continue serving children and families, and capacity disappears. Children bear the consequences.

Having carried the responsibility of leading this system before, we understand the challenges you and your leadership team face. At the same time, we have witnessed firsthand the devastating effects of provider capacity loss on abused and neglected children. Those children cannot wait for another budget cycle or another study. They need stabilization now.

Trusting in your commitment to ensuring Georgia's children are safe, stable, and cared for, we respectfully ask you to respond to this urgent situation.

Sincerely,

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