



SENATOR GREG BACA
Senate Republican Leader

SENATOR CRAIG BRANDT
Senate Republican Whip

SENATOR MARK MOORES
Senate Republican Caucus Chair

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Contact: Joaquin Romero

joaquin.romero@nmlegis.gov

(505) 506-5798

"Children First" Child Advocate Bill Passes the Senate *Senate Republicans applaud broad, bipartisan support*

SANTA FE — Today, the Senate passed Senate Bill 373 on a 30-8 bipartisan vote. The bill, introduced by **Senator David Gallegos** (R-Eunice), **Senator Crystal Diamond** (R-Elephant Butte), and **Senator Leo Jaramillo** (D-Espanola), creates an independent accountability office for the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) housed in the Office of the Attorney General. The Office of the Child Advocate would review systemic issues in CYFD, receive complaints, make appropriate referrals, and investigate complaints.

"My colleagues and I are ecstatic to have such broad, bipartisan support in addressing this pressing issue," said Senator Gallegos. "I have been fighting for greater oversight and transparency for nearly six years. Year after year, we have hit many roadblocks including strong opposition from CYFD. Today was a great first step in ensuring that the structural issues with this broken department begin to heal."

Attorney General Raul Torrez publicly supported this measure and will front the cost of the new office for the first year. Senate Bill 373 is nearly identical to House Bill 11 which today passed the House of Representatives with overwhelming bipartisan support.

"Today we proved that there are bipartisan solutions to save our most vulnerable children," added Senator Diamond. "Change will only come when we address the systemic issues with the department and I am grateful to the Attorney General and my colleagues for their support of this vital bill."

Senate Bill 373 will now be sent to the House of Representatives.

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