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STATEMENT

For Immediate Release

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NEW MEXICO FOUNDATION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT STATEMENT ON CYFD'S ACTION TO CLOSE SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETINGS

Sunlight is the best disinfectant – words from the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis that still ring true today – except it seems for a special council formed by Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham to address the dysfunctional Children Youth and Families Department (CYFD).

At the Children Youth and Families Department Advisory Council's first meeting on Thursday, the council announced its meetings will be closed to the public – as the council chair said public meetings would not be productive. The New Mexico Foundation for Open Government (FOG) strongly urges the committee to reconsider and adopt a resolution opening all the meetings, and we know from experience it can be done.

In 2018, the New Mexico Supreme Court formed a similar commission, The Adult Guardian Study Commission. That Commission opened its meetings to the public and published its agendas and minutes. As one member remarked, "The effort and charge of the commission is the one most single important chance we have to make a significant difference in the guardianship process and it shouldn't be status quo."

As the goal of the CYFD committee is to make recommendations to generally improve the safety and well-being of children in the care of the child protective services system, FOG believes any attempt to engage in a public decision-making process without including the public is a violation of the public's trust. It is basically a question of accountability and being transparent – something CYFD is sorely lacking.

The New Mexico Open Meetings Act (OMA) was passed in 1978 in recognition of the fact that a representative government is dependent upon an informed electorate for the benefit of all New Mexicans.

As an advocate for transparency in government, NMFOG's mission is to defend the public's right to know and to educate citizens and government agencies about their rights and responsibilities under New Mexico's open-meetings and open-records laws. Founded in 1990, NMFOG is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that serves the open government interests of the general public, the business community, elected officials, journalists and lawyers. If you have any questions or concerns regarding IPRA or the OMA, you can contact NMFOG at 1-505-764-3750.

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