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STATE AGREES ON SETTLEMENT IN KENNY A LAWSUIT

ATLANTA (GA) – The State of Georgia has reached a settlement in a lawsuit involving its Department of Human Resources’ Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS). The lawsuit, known as *Kenny A. et al., v. Perdue*, was filed in June 2002 and sought certain changes in the delivery of services to children in DFCS’s care within Fulton and DeKalb counties. The proposed settlement would provide specific goals and benchmarks for measuring the quality of those services as agreed upon by both parties.

“Since this lawsuit was filed in 2002, we’ve hired hundreds of new caseworkers, reduced employee turnover and started turning the corner on protecting our most vulnerable children-- and we were doing this regardless of outside pressure,” said Governor Sonny Perdue's spokeswoman Heather Hedrick. "This was one of our top priorities and the Governor certainly didn't need a lawsuit to bring this to his attention.”

In the proposed settlement, both sides agreed to specific outcome measures to gauge the State ’s progress in improving services to children. These measures include, but are not limited to: numerical goals for reducing caseworker and supervisor caseloads; timelines for responding to reports of abuse and neglect for children who are in state care; increased contact and continuity of relationships between children and their caseworkers; specific goals for the quality of foster care environments; increased sibling and relative placements; timelines for delivery of health services for children in state care; specific goals related to the placement and stability of children in the foster care system; and reductions in the proportion of children who experience multiple moves while in the care of DFCS.

“The bottom line is that there is nothing in this agreement that we didn’t think was in the best interests of children and their families,” said B.J. Walker, Commissioner of the Department of Human Resources. “It fits right in with the goals we already have in place and the direction we’re already heading. In fact, although it only deals with Fulton and DeKalb Counties, we

think it's a plan that's good enough for all of Georgia; one we can use to improve services across the state. We've made a tremendous amount of progress in the past year, but I know we can – and must – do even better.”

The lawsuit in question is filed in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia as Civil Action No. 1:02-CV-1686-MHS.

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