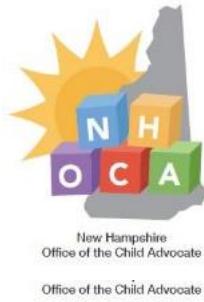




State of New Hampshire

Office of the Child Advocate

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New Hampshire Office of the Child Advocate Response to the Massachusetts Child Advocate's Investigative Report on Harmony Montgomery

CONCORD, N.H. – Today the Massachusetts Office of the Child Advocate (Mass OCA) released its [Multi System Investigation of Harmony Montgomery](#) today. The New Hampshire Office of the Child Advocate is grateful for the diligence and care with which the Mass OCA examined Harmony’s situation. The findings of the Mass OCA investigation are instructive on many levels for all child protection cases.

“The key finding of the investigation – that Harmony’s unique needs and wellbeing were not prioritized on the same level as the assertion of her parents’ rights and thereby not central to the legal or child protection cases is one that New Hampshire should consider carefully,” said Cassandra Sanchez, Child Advocate. New Hampshire recently amended the purpose of its Child Protection Act to provide “*that the best interest of the child shall be the primary consideration of the court in all proceedings under this chapter.*” RSA 169-C:2, I. “The Mass OCA investigation on Harmony confirms that we need to remain steadfast in this commitment to children, especially considering the 2022 bill proposal for a parental bill of rights and other initiatives that may undermine any expectation of a child having the right to be protected from abuse and neglect, and to have their needs met and understood. This includes the need for knowledge about parental capacity and necessary supports to meet a child’s needs.” Sanchez noted.

Consistent with prioritizing the needs and wellbeing of children is the recommendation to of the Mass OCA that neighboring states need to come to an understanding and address gaps in cross-border information sharing. “As the Mass OCA noted in its investigation, our office made recommendations in our [Summary of 2020 System Learning Reviews](#) to establish proactive communicating relationships between neighboring state child welfare agencies.” Sanchez said. “New Hampshire needs to

Pursuant to RSA 21-V, the Office of the Child Advocate provides independent oversight of all children’s services provided or arranged for by the State to assure that the best interests of children are being protected.

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