

ROB KAUFFMAN, MEMBER
89TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg

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RULES

April 4, 2019

Honorable Bruce R. Beemer
Inspector General of Pennsylvania
555 Walnut Street
8th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Dear Inspector General Beemer:

It has been widely reported that Grace Packer was severely abused for a great deal of her life, despite involvement of the child welfare system in Pennsylvania. The fatality review report recently issued by the Department of Human Services shows that Grace had contact with the child welfare system since she was a child of tender years. Indeed, the report states that one of three county agencies having contact with Grace during her lifetime had suspicions that she was molested at the age of 4. Grace ultimately died a harrowing death on July 9, 2016, at the age of 14.

The criminal proceedings regarding the perpetrators, her adopted mother and the adopted mother's paramour, were recently completed, resulting in a guilty plea and a finding of guilt. One of the perpetrators, her adopted mother, Sara Packer, was an employee of a private agency licensed by the Department of Human Service, the Impact Project. According to news reports, Sara Packer was the foster mother for some twenty children while being employed by the child welfare system.

The Department of Human Services is responsible for monitoring, licensing, and providing technical assistance to county agencies and private agencies within the child welfare system. Further, the department is charged with investigating allegations of child abuse when the perpetrator is suspected to be an employee of a county agency or an agent of a county agency. In addition, the department is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Child Protective Services Law by the county agencies, as well as ensuring regulatory compliance of county agencies, including those regulations related to conflicts of interest.

Although the Department of Human Services issued its own fatality review report pursuant to the Child Protective Services Law, it is our belief that an independent investigation should be and must be conducted. The Office of Inspector General, under Act 29 of 2017, has

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the duty to “conduct civil and administrative investigations of a program or operation of an executive agency.” Accordingly, we respectfully request that the Office of Inspector General initiate and complete a thorough review of the Department of Human Services with respect to its fulfilment of its responsibilities as it relates to the life and death of Grace Packer.

Thank you for consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Rob Kauffman, Majority Chairman
House Judiciary Committee
89th Legislative District



Karen Boback, Majority Chairman
House Children and Youth Committee
117th Legislative District