

# **COLORADO CHILD PROTECTION OMBUDSMAN BOARD**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Stephanie Villafuerte appointed Child Protection Ombudsman**

DENVER – The Colorado Child Protection Ombudsman Board has appointed Stephanie Villafuerte to serve as Child Protection Ombudsman for the newly formed independent state agency.

“Stephanie Villafuerte has made tremendous contributions to child welfare in Colorado throughout her distinguished career in public service,” said Judge Kenneth Plotz, chairman of the Child Protection Ombudsman Board. “Her broad experience in management, law and public policy, combined with her dedication to the children of Colorado, convinced us that she is the right person to successfully lead this new office.”

Prior to her appointment as the Child Protection Ombudsman, Villafuerte served as a chief deputy district attorney in Denver, as deputy chief of staff to Governor Bill Ritter, and for the past five years as executive director of the Rocky Mountain Children’s Law Center, a nonprofit dedicated to protecting abused and neglected children.

“I am humbled and honored to have been selected for this important position. The Ombudsman office can serve a vitally important role in child protection by bringing stakeholders together to problem solve on behalf of Colorado’s abused and neglected children,” Villafuerte said. “I’m grateful for the work of the previous ombudsmen, their staffs and the many other people who helped establish an independent office for protecting children.”

The General Assembly created a child protection ombudsman in 2010. The office has been run by a contractor hired by the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), one of the agencies overseen by the ombudsman’s office. In 2015, the

General Assembly moved the office from CDHS, creating an independent state agency within the Judicial Department. Though the structure of the office has changed, the mission remains the same – to develop partnerships and make recommendations for improved policies that ensure the greatest protections for Colorado’s children.

“Stephanie has broad support throughout the community as the right person for this office,” Plotz said. “We heard from dozens of people who touted her unique blend of passion for protecting children, leadership skills, relationships with key stakeholders and an understanding of the system that needs oversight.”

The new office, which will be housed in the Ralph L. Carr Colorado Judicial Center, opens Jan. 1, 2016.

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