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John Bel Edwards, Governor
Marketa Garner Walters, Secretary

November 10, 2022

The Honorable John Bel Edwards
Governor of Louisiana
Post Office Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards:

Since the moment I came into this work to rebuild the department from the damage done by the previous administration, we have done remarkable work in child welfare. From changing the foster care system through the Quality Parenting Initiative, creating Louisiana Fosters with the First Lady, to record breaking adoptions and raising the age of foster care to 21, the impacts of this administration will last far beyond our years of service.

As we faced unprecedented natural disasters, I could not have been more proud of the DCFS staff who sheltered 34,870 people through 12 storms. And when a worldwide pandemic changed the face of our nation, state and department, the women and men of DCFS stepped up and sheltered 1,271 people isolating from COVID, while also sheltering other citizens from hurricanes Laura and Delta in non-congregate settings. During COVID, DCFS held the first ever statewide virtual disaster food program in our country.

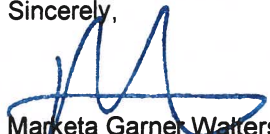
We have created on-demand SNAP, lessening the burden and wait time for our citizens who need food, raised our national ranking from 49th to 35th with our increase in FITAP to our most vulnerable citizens and provided more financial support to those families who step up to take care of their grandchildren or other family members in need.

As we face unprecedented increases in reports of abuse amid a fentanyl epidemic, the DCFS staff are burdened more than ever before, working around the clock, to address the impossible task set before them. As cases mount and investigations continue, we do not yet know the final findings in bearing the truth of our rising fatality count. However, along with child welfare workers around the state, I honor the 61 lives that we have lost thus far in 2022.

I have spent my career in service to fragile families, and I believe the children and families of Louisiana deserve the very best. Our staff are often traumatized by the same societal and economic challenges as those faced by other citizens and by the very work they are called to do. While we are not perfect, and struggle to find staff in this post-COVID, great resignation and remote work environment, those that are committed to the service of others are here, in the arena, fighting every day to do their best to help the children and families who come through our doors. They deserve the respect and admiration of others, not the blame and fault-finding that is at our door.

So, it is with both deep sadness and great pride that I tender my resignation from the position of Secretary with plans to retire effective December 31, 2022; and through that date, I will utilize available personal leave and will be available to assist with the transition of my replacement.

Sincerely,



Marketa Garner Walters
Secretary

