



# BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

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**KATHRYN BARGER**  
SUPERVISOR, FIFTH DISTRICT  
CHAIR OF THE BOARD

May 18, 2020

Honorable Alex Villanueva  
Sheriff, Los Angeles County  
211 West Temple Street, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Sheriff Villanueva,

This is in response to your May 13, 2020, letter concerning child welfare checks. Upon receipt of said letter, I conferred with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and County Counsel to understand what transpired.

While I appreciate your initiative to assist in the protection of vulnerable children in the County, the protocol your Department released [REDACTED] was issued prior to final agreement and approval by DCFS. Your staff proposed going out on welfare checks for all children, including those already being served by DCFS, where a school district in your jurisdiction contacted you with concerns. Additionally, your Department would remind school districts that their mandated reporting duties were still in effect, and any suspicions of abuse or neglect should be called into the Child Protection Hotline. However, DCFS' April 22, 2020, email summarizing the call was not an approval of your proposal, but a summary to be further assessed.

I understand that on April 23, 2020, Captain Hannemann sent a "proposed directive" to DCFS for review and indicated that, "As soon as we can obtain approval or direction from DCFS, we can put this directive into action." I also understand that DCFS advised your Department that it needed to discuss the proposed protocol with its Executive Team before agreeing to it, but that your Department issued the Notice before receiving DCFS' response. Therefore, there was no final agreement by DCFS contrary to the representations you are now making.

DCFS is concerned that sending a uniformed law enforcement officer to a family's home without any reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect would not necessarily improve safety for children. There is concern that doing so could actually make matters worse by creating more fear and stress for families who are already struggling to handle uncertainty and effects of the pandemic. As you note in your letter, several others expressed similar concerns when Captain Hannemann presented the proposed program to the Justice and Children's Deputies. In the end, DCFS decided not to proceed with this practice. Given everyone's concerns, I understand DCFS' decision.

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I am extremely disappointed with your Tweet on May 14, 2020, in which you accuse DCFS, my colleagues, and myself of putting this County's children in danger and having a "pre-Gabriel" mindset. Inflammatory and false comments such as those ignore all of the hard work the Board of Supervisors, DCFS, and all law enforcement partners, including Sheriff's Deputies, have done over the years, particularly since the tragedy of Gabriel F., to increase collaboration and services to our most vulnerable constituents.

I have spent my career in public service working to improve the lives and protection of children in Los Angeles County, and I am proud of the accomplishments we have made, while acknowledging there is much more to be done. The implication in your letter that I, along with DCFS, would "sabotage" or do anything to put children in harm's way is also not well-taken. While this particular project may not have worked out as you might have hoped, I trust and expect that you and DCFS will continue to collaborate to protect the welfare of our children.

Sincerely,



KATHRYN BARGER  
Supervisor, Fifth District  
Chair, Board of Supervisors