Representative Mary Young, *Chair*
Representative Brandi Bradley
Representative Monica Duran
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Senator Rhonda Fields, *Vice-Chair*
Senator Barbara Kirkmeyer
Senator Chris Kolker
Senator Rachel Zenzinger

Colorado's Child Welfare System
Interim Study Committee

State Capitol Building, Room 029
Denver, Colorado 80203-1784
(303) 866-3521

October ---, 2023

Dear Members of the Joint Technology Committee:

During the 2023 legislative interim, Colorado's Child Welfare System Interim Study Committee was charged with taking a holistic look at Colorado's child welfare system to address the major factors facing the system in order to better serve the state's children and families. The committee examined a number of areas related to Colorado's child welfare system, including Colorado's Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System, commonly known as the Trails System.

The Trails System is a vital tool for counties working to serve families that are involved in the child welfare system, and without this system, counties are unable to deliver critical services. Over the last few months, the committee has heard about the numerous challenges that county caseworkers and other child welfare personnel face when using the Trails System. Insufficient servers, networks, and infrastructure have led to outages in the Trails System and a negative user experience. These outages also can negatively impact the performance reviews of caseworkers due to no fault of their own, while also possibly placing some of Colorado's most vulnerable children at risk.

During the committee's August 22 meeting, the Colorado Department of Human Services and Office of Information Technology (OIT) discussed the technical hurdles the state faces with modernizing the Trails System. The discussion included making sure the system is stable and the data is secure. One of the key issues is that of technical debt; specifically, how the state's overall technical debt negatively impacts the Trails System. This technical debt takes up time and staff resources and is making it difficult to operate a single Trails System, rather than operating in both a legacy system and a newer modernized system.

The committee seeks the Joint Technology Committee's (JTC) assistance in quickly transitioning into a high-quality single Trails System. The committee highly recommends that the JTC prioritize IT capital budget requests for the Trails System and other IT systems connected to child welfare, as well as the overall technical debt of the state's technology infrastructure. Prioritizing these requests is critical to better support Colorado's child welfare system and address the issues and concerns raised by both the state departments and county agencies about the Trails System. We feel this is incredibly important in order to ensure the safety of Colorado's most vulnerable children.

Sincerely,

Representative Mary Young
Colorado's Child Welfare System Interim Study Committee Chair