



# TEXAS HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES

## Chris Turner

State Representative, District 101

February 22, 2017

The Honorable Ken Paxton  
Office of the Attorney General  
209 W. 14th Street  
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Attorney General Paxton:

I write to ask you to cease any pending and possible future objections and appeals in the case of *M.D., by her next friend, Sarah. R. Stukenberg, et. al, vs. Greg Abbott.*

In December 2015, the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas, Corpus Christi Division, ruled that the State of Texas has violated the constitutional rights of foster children. These are the very same constitutional rights elected officials such as ourselves have sworn to protect and defend. According to Judge Janis Jack's ruling, our system is so flawed that foster children "often age out of care more damaged than when they entered." If there was ever a call to action for state officials to get serious about reforming foster care, this was it.

However, since the ruling, you and your office have inexplicably spent an inordinate amount of time, energy and money on pointless and unsuccessful appeals and objections. Even though your initial appeal of the ruling was rejected by an appellate court, as was your appeal to prevent the appointment of special masters, you persist in your legal gamesmanship, in effect delaying the implementation of needed reforms, squandering precious taxpayer money (\$7 million and counting) and worst of all, perpetuating a dangerous and flawed system. Your most recent objection, which the court rejected last week, is an example of this legal foot-dragging.

The *Texas Tribune* reported last week that "Texas is home to some 80,000 child sex-trafficking victims" and that the vast majority of these children have had "some contact with the child welfare system." Those stunning facts should outrage every single one of us.

There is bipartisan consensus in the Legislature that serious and immediate reforms are needed in Child Protective Services and the foster care system. Your actions do not contribute to this effort; in fact, they distract from it. It is time to drop your objections and any further appeals and work with legislators, as well as the Court's special masters, to find solutions to help the young Texans who have been failed by our state government.

Sincerely,

  
Chris Turner

Chris.Turner@house.state.tx.us

Capitol • P.O. Box 2910 • Austin, Texas 78768-2910 • phone (512) 463-0574 • fax (512) 463-1481  
District • 1600 East Pioneer Parkway • Suite 515 • Arlington, Texas 76010 • phone (817) 459-2800 • fax (817) 459-7900