



STATE OF INDIANA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
State House, Second Floor
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Michael R. Pence
Governor

August 21, 2013

Dear Members of the Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana:

Nothing matters more to the future of our state than the well-being of our children. As policymakers and elected officials, we share an obligation to do all we can to make Indiana a great place to be a child and to raise children.

For children to succeed in life, they ultimately need to be able to pursue their dreams. This is easier for children to do when they grow up in loving homes, attend good schools, and live healthy lives.

Unfortunately, too many children in Indiana are deprived of these basic goods. With more than one in five Hoosier children living in poverty, we know we need to do better as a state. Low-income children in Indiana fare worse on third grade reading tests than their peers, they struggle with obesity rates above the state average, they are more likely to be victims of crime, and they are more likely to be raised in single-parent families in which poverty rates are significantly higher than in families headed by two married parents. Vulnerable youth not only struggle with poverty, they also face heartbreaking challenges stemming from abuse, neglect, and illness.

These data points are more than numbers. They represent children in Indiana who will be unlikely to pursue their dreams to become that doctor, teacher, firefighter, or scientist they hope to be one day. The troubles of life itself will get in the way, and dreams will remain just that – dreams. As a father, nothing saddens me more.

For these reasons I am encouraged by the creation of the Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana. Under the leadership of its chairman, Justice Rush, the Commission is focused on ensuring that our state agencies are aligned in their efforts to serve vulnerable youth. This mission is timely and important. We have made great strides in Indiana, but there is much more that we need to do to ensure that children do not slip through the cracks and that they have access to the very best services to lead them on a pathway to success.

I commend Judge Mary Beth Bonaventura for lending her insights as Director of the Department of Child Services and applaud the members of this commission for taking so seriously the task set before them. Thank you all for sharing your vast experiences and expertise, and I look forward to working with you on solutions that make our state the most responsive in America when it comes to the needs and hopes of all our children.

Sincerely,

Michael R. Pence
Governor of Indiana