



April 18, 2019

Dear Community Partners,

It is my great honor to join Governor JB Pritzker's Cabinet and to help pursue his vision for our state as the Secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). As my tenure with the state begins again, one of my priorities is to establish trust with you and to build upon and develop solid working partnerships. We have common goals for those we serve, and our team looks forward to working with you to address the challenges that face IDHS and maximize opportunities to enhance and promote our services.

I have worked with some of you before, but I wanted to reach out to introduce or re-introduce myself as I get up and running again at IDHS. I am a child of immigrants from Taiwan; I have lived and/or worked in Illinois since I was eight years old and studied at the Universities of Illinois as well. I live in the suburbs of Chicago and have two teenage boys who keep me busy and grounded. I have had the opportunity to serve on numerous boards of directors for amazing non-profits in the region and have spent my entire career working in the non-profit and public sectors - dedicated to advancing social justice and pursuing equity.

For the past seven years, I have been the president of the Woods Fund Chicago, which is a grant-making foundation that funds organizations that draw on the power of communities to fight the brutality of poverty and structural racism. Between 2003 to 2012, I served as the IDHS assistant secretary of programs joining after serving as the executive director of the Chinese Mutual Aid Association. All of these experiences have shaped who I am, and I plan to draw on them to serve IDHS and the state with honesty, integrity, kindness, diligence, equity and loyalty.

As I continue to reacquaint myself with IDHS, it is apparent that the past several years have eroded our human services system and impacted those who we are charged to serve. However, you, our community partners have remained resilient and steadfast in your work for all Illinoisans. The challenges we face at IDHS are significant, but I know that with your help and the knowledge of our staff, we will overcome them. Even with the challenges, I am also walking into many opportunities with the leadership in the Governor's office and in the General Assembly. All of whom are earnest in the desire to improve.



I am pleased to share with you some of the new members of our leadership team. They will be joining us in the coming weeks to complement the talent we already have at IDHS. They bring experience and deep dedication to IDHS, as well as strong skills in management and teamwork. They have diverse backgrounds, but they are united in their passion for improving the lives of those around us. I hope you will welcome them heartily.

Kia Coleman will serve as Assistant Secretary - Designate for Programs. Kia comes to IDHS from the City of Chicago, Department of Health, where she is the Deputy Commissioner of Behavioral Health leading strategy and development for mental health, violence prevention, and substance abuse programs and initiatives. Prior to that, she was the Director of Juvenile Justice Programs at the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services. In addition to public sector experience, Kia led St. Sabina's successful 2012 pilot of One Summer Chicago. A true community change agent, Kia has been devoted to ensuring those most impacted by issues have a voice in the solutions. She was also a 2016 Civic Leadership Academy Fellow. She will begin in early May.

Dulce Quintero will serve as Assistant Secretary - Designate for Operations. Dulce comes most recently from Erie Family Health Humboldt Park. Before joining Erie, Dulce played a pivotal role as the Director of Operations for La Casa Norte, where she established Casa Corazon Youth Drop-in Program and the nationally recognized Solid Ground Youth Supportive Housing Project. With over 20 years of high impact experience, Dulce was inducted into the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame in 2017 and has been dedicated to leading change for diverse, at risk and traditionally underserved populations. She will begin in early May.

Ryan Croke will serve as the Chief of Staff. Ryan is Director of the Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living. Ryan previously served as the Associate Chancellor for Public Affairs of the University of Illinois at Springfield and worked for Lieutenant Governor Quinn and then Governor Quinn, serving as his Chief of Staff. Ryan is the son of deaf parents and is fluent in American Sign Language. He will begin later this month.

Also joining the executive leadership team:

Rahnee Patrick will be the Director of Rehabilitation Services. Rahnee comes to us from Access Living where she has served the past nine years as the Director of Independent Living. Rahnee has been a disability rights activist and advocate since 1992 and received the American Association of People with Disabilities' 2008 Paul Hearne Emerging Leader Award. Rahnee's work is guided by a passion for advancing the rights for people with disabilities. She lives in downtown Chicago with her spouse Mike Ervin, where they try to make each other laugh every single day. She will begin in May.



JB Pritzker, Governor

Grace B. Hou, Secretary

Francisco DuPrey will re-join IDHS as the Chief Operating Officer. Many of you may remember Francisco as he served with me as the IDHS Assistant Secretary of Operations from 2003 – 2007. For the last 10 years, he has been consulting with large school systems, such as Chicago Public Schools, School District of Philadelphia, and the Puerto Rico Department of Education. Francisco's diverse experiences and skills in improving productivity and maximizing efficiencies will help ensure our agency operations continue to effectively support the work of IDHS. He will begin later this month.

Sharron Matthews will serve as the manager of the Community Services Enterprise Program. She contributed to the development of this program when she served as Deputy Director of Central Management Services and Assistant Director of Healthcare and Family Services. We are fortunate to have Sharron bring her considerable talents and skills to IDHS and help this program grow to its full potential. She will begin in May.

I would like to express my gratitude to Corey-Anne and Quinetta for their past service and look forward to continuing our work together.

Corey-Anne Gulkewicz will be continuing with many of her same projects and will transition into the position of Senior Policy Advisor to the Assistant Secretary of Operations later this month. She is an adept problem-solver and is effective at digging into processes and figuring out productive solutions. She will continue to be an asset to IDHS in this new capacity. Many thanks to Corey-Anne for her yeoman work over the last few months as IDHS Chief of Staff and in her many previous roles as well.

Quinetta Wade will continue to be a great resource to IDHS as the DRS Chief of Staff. Quinetta has been a strong manager at the helm of DRS for the last two years and will continue to provide steady leadership to this Division in this new capacity. My thanks go to Quinetta for her past many years of exemplary work in DRS.

I sincerely look forward to working with you all as I continue to get up to speed. Building strong relationships with you is essential to the success of our agency and our state. Stay tuned for our next message that will introduce our new e-newsletter and how you can sign up.

Sincerely,

Grace B. Hou

Secretary
Illinois Department of Human Services