

For Immediate Release
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FORMER FOSTER KID FIRST TO LEAD LOCAL CHILDREN'S AID IN 126 YEAR HISTORY

Barrie, Ontario – Today, Child Welfare Political Action Committee Canada (Child Welfare PAC) Founder, Jane Kovarikova, steps into the role of board chair for Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions (formerly known as Children's Aid). This agency has served the region since 1894.

"Jane has been a valued board member for many years, and we are thrilled for her to be chair," said Geraldine Dooley-Phillips, executive director. "Her experience as a former youth in care and her research in the child welfare system gives her a unique understanding that serves to challenge and improve strategic directions for the organization and more importantly, promote better outcomes for children, youth, and families."

Board members are responsible for oversight and governance at each of the 51 regional agencies in Ontario. While it makes sense to have those raised in care at the helm to help foster kids, this is not the reality. In more than a century, only one other board chair with lived experience has led an agency in the province.

"I am proud of the Simcoe Muskoka agency for recognizing the value of lived experience. They are among the very few leading Ontario with inclusion at the highest levels of the organizational structure," said Kovarikova, who grew up in foster care in Simcoe and is now completing her PhD at Western University.

"Understanding systemic challenges through board participation and lived experience are crucial to being effective. We cannot complain about the system on one hand and then withhold our wisdom on the other."

Kovarikova encourages all with lived experience to consider joining local Children's Aid governance boards. These boards are always recruiting. If you are interested, contact your local child welfare serving organization.

"Participation comes with its own unique challenges when you have lived experiences. I know this first hand," said Kovarikova. "The Child Welfare PAC is committed to building capacity for any prospective board members," she concluded.

What is the Child Welfare PAC:

The Child Welfare PAC is a federal not-for-profit that represents the interests of children raised by the government. The advisory board consists of professionals from academia, law, business, advocacy & public service who have lived experience in child protection systems. The complete advocacy agenda may be reviewed here: www.childwelfarepac.com

Child Welfare PAC Canada | 330 Bay Street, Suite 505, Toronto, Ontario M5H 2S8 Canada

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