

May 9, 2003

Representative Roger S. Ishee  
P.O. Box 6845  
Gulfport, Mississippi 39506-6845

Dear Representative Ishee,

Thank you for your letter dated May 6, 2003. Protecting our children is the most important function of the Department of Human Services. We were advised by Thelma Brittain, Executive Director of the Department, that recruiting efforts have been targeted and ongoing. Last week, we were advised that there are two new social workers who will be working on the coast.

When the Legislature appropriated additional funds during the session to fund social worker positions for Department of Human Services, I verbalized concern about limitations in the statute relating to only allowing a 3% increase in salaries of social workers for retention purposes. I felt this could have a detrimental effect in recruiting efforts without allowing full flexibility to hire and to retain the necessary licensed social workers to protect our children.

We welcome any and all suggestions and participation in this effort to address the critical shortage of social workers in Mississippi. I have asked Thelma Brittain to contact you so that your specific questions can be addressed.

Thank you again for your concern about our children.

Very truly yours,

RONNIE MUSGROVE