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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Child Advocates, CASA of Silicon Valley Appoints New CEO
Frederick J. Ferrer Replaces Retiring Executive Director Karen Scussel

MILPITAS, CA, FEBRUARY 26, 2019 – Frederick J. Ferrer has been named CEO of [Child Advocates, CASA of Silicon Valley](#), the Santa Clara County nonprofit that provides trained volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) for children in the Santa Clara County foster care system.

Ferrer replaces outgoing Executive Director Karen Scussel who is retiring after six and a half years of heading the agency. Scussel has been involved with Child Advocates for over 18 years serving as a Board Member, Interim Director of Volunteer Services, Interim Director of Programs and Education Advocacy Supervisor. She has personally advocated for 17 foster children. In October 2012, Scussel became the Executive Director for the agency. During her tenure, Child Advocates grew from serving 595 foster children in FY 2014 to 905 foster children in FY 2018. During this time, Child Advocates became one of the largest CASA programs in California with a budget of \$2.4 million. In fiscal year 2019, Child Advocates plans to serve nearly 1,000 foster children and recruit, train and support 700 CASA volunteers in Santa Clara County.

“Karen is an exceptional leader who achieved the monumental challenge of aggressively growing the number of children we serve while accumulating financial resources for future investments. The board has always been impressed by the passion she brings to work every day and by the results she delivers year after year. She has been a true inspiration to all of us,” says Cassio Conceição, board chair.

“It has been an immense privilege to lead one of the most impactful small nonprofits in Silicon Valley, one that is truly creating better outcomes for foster children in our community,” says Scussel. “I leave this role with tremendous optimism and complete confidence that Frederick is the right person to lead the agency toward even greater success.”

[Frederick J. Ferrer](#) has over three decades of leadership in mobilizing stakeholders and staff toward change through groundbreaking nonprofit and public policy initiatives, programs and systems reforms. Most recently, he worked as President and Principal Consultant at Manzanita Solutions, a national

consulting firm that specializes in delivering strategic solutions and project management guidance to family-focused nonprofits and government agencies. Prior to this, he served as CEO of the Health Trust for nine years where he led the strategic direction of a \$100M foundation while growing the annual operating budget from \$12M to \$22M. Ferrer is Vice Chair of the Santa Clara University College of Arts and Science Leadership Advisory Board. Additionally, he serves as a Dean's Executive Professor of Public Health at Santa Clara University and adjunct instructor in Child Development and Education at De Anza College. Ferrer holds a M.S. degree in Counseling Psychology from San Jose State University and B.S. degree in Developmental Psychology from Santa Clara University. Ferrer received the Burgess Lifetime Achievement Award in HIV Services and Advocacy in 2016 and an honorary Doctorate of Public Service from Santa Clara University in 2014.

"Early in my career I realized that I had a great affinity to work with children and in low income communities," says Ferrer. "As an early childhood practitioner, college instructor, fundraiser and policy advocate, I developed and grew programs, designed state of the art curriculum, created innovative models in early childhood to include families in service delivery and advocated for system expansion and reforms at the local, state and federal levels. I see direct alignment with Child Advocates' mission to serve vulnerable children and youth in the dependency court system, and I look forward to growing the agency to serve more foster youth."

"Child Advocates is poised to leverage our very solid operational foundation to partner with other organizations as we seek to not only grow the number of children we serve, but also to improve outcomes and help drive systemic change," says Conceição. "There is no question in my mind that Frederick is the perfect candidate to lead us into this next phase of our journey. We feel incredibly fortunate to have him as our new leader."

"I have known Fred for many years and enjoyed working with him when he served as CEO of the Health Trust and as Executive Director of Estrella Family Services," says Santa Clara County Supervisor Cindy Chavez. "He is a decisive leader who champions change through collaboration and has extensive experience in backing research-based public policy initiatives that drive improvements in child development and health and human services. I look forward to collaborating with him and Child Advocates to further the county's 'Making Families Stronger Initiative' to vastly improve the county's foster care system."

In Santa Clara County, there are approximately 1,300 children in dependency care. In fiscal year 2018, Child Advocates provided CASAs to 905 dependent children and youth. The nonprofit agency has a three-year strategic plan to serve 1,200 children with a CASA by 2021. Currently, Child Advocates has more than 150 foster children waiting to be matched with a CASA.

About Child Advocates of Silicon Valley

Child Advocates was founded in 1986 and has served more than 16,000 foster children with a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). Child Advocates is the only agency in Santa Clara County that provides CASAs to foster youth. Because our volunteers are court-appointed, they can thoroughly research every aspect of a child's case, including meeting teachers, doctors, social workers, counselors, biological family members and foster parents, thereby gaining a comprehensive perspective on what the child needs in order to thrive. CASAs assist their child in accessing needed resources, follow their school progress, and speak up for their child's best interests in court. They maintain records about the case, submit reports and attend court hearings. CASA volunteers stay with their case until their child has a safe, loving home. Find out more about our CASA program at www.BeMyAdvocate.org.

About Frederick J. Ferrer

Frederick J. Ferrer has over three decades of leadership in mobilizing stakeholders and staff toward change through groundbreaking nonprofit and public policy initiatives, programs and systems reforms. Prior to becoming CEO of Child Advocates, Ferrer founded and lead Manzanita Solutions, where he provided consultation on health, early childhood, non-profit management, and systems reform. Before that, Ferrer served for nine years as CEO at the Health Trust, a \$100 million foundation, which provides direct health services, grants, and drives policy to improve the health of the community. Ferrer is the former Executive Director of Estrella Family Services, and was chair of the FIRST 5 Santa Clara County Commission. He is vice chair of the Santa Clara University's College of Arts and Sciences Leadership Advisory Board. He chaired the university's Blue Ribbon Commission on Diversity and Inclusion. He chairs the Rocketship Public Schools Board and serves on the Board of Legacy Academy. He is also a member of the Children's Discovery Museum LGBTQ Advisory Board.

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