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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HRC Foundation Recognizes Child Advocates of Silicon Valley for LGBTQ Inclusion Efforts

MILPITAS, CA, June 27, 2019 -- [Child Advocates of Silicon Valley](#) proudly announced that it is one of 70 organizations across the country recognized by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation for its work with LGBTQ foster youth. **Members of Child Advocates will meet today at 12:30 pm outside the Family Courthouse at 201 N. First Street for a photo with Superior Court Judge Shawna Schwarz and other local county dignitaries.**

Child Advocates recruits, trains and supports Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) to work one-on-one with children in foster care, ensuring that each child's needs are met and their voice is heard while navigating the court dependency system.

Child Advocates is included in the HRC's [Celebrating Everyday Change-Makers in Child Welfare](#) -- a first-of-its-kind report highlighting more than 70 child welfare agencies across the country that partnered with the HRC Foundation's [All Children - All Families](#) (ACAF) project to improve the services they provide to the LGBTQ community, including children in foster care and prospective foster and adoptive parents. These organizations serve more than 350,000 clients annually in 23 states, and employ nearly 11,000.

"We are honored to be recognized as a leader serving LGBTQ foster youth, especially at a time when LGBTQ youth are over-represented in the foster care system," said **Frederick J. Ferrer, CEO of Child Advocates of Silicon Valley**. "This seal of Innovative Inclusion is testament to the humanity and dedication of our board, staff and volunteers and reflects our agency's vision to unite expertise with compassion and cultural responsiveness to achieve the goal of safety, permanency and well-being for the LGBTQ youth we serve."

"Thousands of committed professionals -- from frontline workers to executives -- know that LGBTQ youth are perfect just the way they are and that removing barriers for potentially qualified LGBTQ foster and adoptive parents is in the best interest of children," said **Alison Delpercio, Director of the HRC Foundation's All Children - All Families Project**. "While some of these agencies are taking their first steps toward inclusion and others have been leaders in innovating new approaches, more agencies should look to the policies and practices these organizations are implementing to protect against anti-LGBTQ discrimination and meaningfully engage their communities."

The agencies featured in the report conducted an internal self-assessment, provided professional development to staff and implemented ACAF's "Benchmarks of LGBTQ Inclusion," which track policy and practice changes within agencies. *Celebrating Everyday Change- Makers* features three "Tiers of

Recognition,” which celebrate the strides agencies have made toward becoming fully LGBTQ welcoming and affirming.

- Building a Foundation for Inclusion: 14 organizations
- Solid Foundation for Inclusion: 25 organizations
- Innovative Inclusion: 32 organizations

This work could not be more important. LGBTQ youth are overrepresented in foster care and face increased risk of both negative experiences and outcomes:

- Up to 30% of youth in foster care are LGBTQ;
- LGBTQ youth are twice as likely to report being treated poorly as their non-LGBTQ peers while in care;
- LGBTQ youth have a greater average number of placements than their non-LGBTQ peers;
- LGBTQ youth are more likely than their non-LGBTQ peers to be placed in congregate care, including group homes.

“For the LGBTQ foster youth who have experienced physical, emotional or sexual abuse, the supportive role of the CASA volunteer is crucial to that child’s mental health and well-being,” said Ferrer. “CASAs can provide a safe, non-judgmental environment for LGBTQ children to express their thoughts and feelings about what they’re going through. Just having a non-biased, caring adult for children who identify is huge.”

Child Advocates is actively recruiting volunteers. Individuals interested in becoming a CASA volunteer can learn more at www.BeMyAdvocate.org/Volunteer.

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 The Human Rights Campaign Foundation

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation is the educational arm of America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender and queer people. HRC envisions a world where LGBTQ people are embraced as full members of society at home, at work and in every community.

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