



West Virginia Office of Inspector General

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Office of Inspector General Announces Jessica Bryant as Director of the Foster Care Ombudsman Division

Charleston, WV – The West Virginia Office of Inspector General is pleased to announce the Jessica Bryant as Director of the Foster Care Ombudsman Division. Bryant brings extensive child welfare expertise, system-level oversight experience, and a strong commitment to independent, impartial review to promote accountability, transparency, and integrity in programs and systems serving West Virginia children and families.

Bryant began her career in Child Protective Services, managing investigations, court-involved cases, and permanency planning. This frontline experience provided her with a deep understanding of how policies, practice, and communication directly affect child safety, family engagement, and placement stability. She later transitioned into oversight roles focused on reviewing complaints, assessing compliance, and identifying systemic issues - responsibilities central to the work of an effective ombudsman.

In addition to her professional background, Bryant brings personal lived experience as a kinship caregiver to a child involved in the foster care system. This perspective has shaped her commitment to transparency, timely responses, and respectful engagement with families navigating complex systems. It also reinforces her focus on practical solutions that strengthen trust and improve outcomes for children and caregivers.

“Jessica Bryant brings exactly the right blend of experience, judgment, and compassion to this role,” said Inspector General Ann Urling. “Her understanding of child welfare from both frontline and oversight perspectives, combined with her commitment to independence and accountability, will strengthen the Foster Care Ombudsman Division and enhance trust for the children, families, and caregivers it serves.”

“The Foster Care Ombudsman exists to ensure concerns are heard, reviewed fairly, and addressed independently,” Bryant said. “I am honored to serve in this role and committed to listening carefully to children, families, and caregivers, while identifying meaningful opportunities for improvement that strengthen the system as a whole.”

As Director, Bryant’s initial priorities include strengthening accessibility, building trust with those the ombudsmen serve, and ensuring consistent accountability. She plans to focus on clear communication, objective review of concerns, and thoughtful collaboration with partners - while maintaining the independence and impartiality essential to the Ombudsman’s role.

Through Bryant’s leadership, the Foster Care Ombudsman Division will continue advancing its vision of a child welfare system that is transparent, accountable, and trustworthy - one in which children and families are treated fairly, their voices are heard, and concerns lead to constructive, lasting improvements that contribute to safer, healthier communities across West Virginia.