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### Foster Care Reform Rhetoric: How Communication Relates to Action

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## **Abstract**

America's foster care system faces a myriad of issues that social workers and politicians alike attempt to change and fix. By analyzing the rhetoric social workers and politicians use when discussing foster care issues and reforms, one can come to an understanding of each group's perspective on the given issue or reform measure. This study takes that analysis a step further by comparing the rhetoric of social workers and politicians to one another and drawing conclusions about the communication relationship between the two groups. The state of the communication relationship is judged by how closely related each group's perspective on a given foster care issue is. This communication relationship is then compared to the foster care reform measures pursued within each state. The three states used as case studies within this analysis are California, New York, and Georgia. By analyzing communication relationships in comparison to reform measures pursued within each of these three states, the study finds that a strong communication relationship correlates to successful foster care reform measures in a given state, whereas weak communication relationships correlate to unsuccessful foster care reform measures. From this correlation, the study concludes that states may be able to improve the success of their foster care reform legislation by building a stronger communication relationship between state social workers and state politicians.

## Executive Summary

America's foster care system, while aiming to help and protect the welfare of children, often encounters issues that complicate its goals. Informational systems, case review and quality assurance systems, and foster and adoptive parent standards are three common areas in which the foster care system experiences issues. As these problems and solutions to address them are discussed, social services workers and politicians within a given state often engage in discourse that illuminates their understanding of and perspective on a given foster care issue. By comparing rhetoric from a state's social workers to that of the state's politicians, this study draws conclusions about the communication relationship between these two groups. This communication relationship is then studied in relation to the foster care reform measures pursued within a state, with the hypothesis being that the more harmonious the communication relationship is (with harmonious referencing how closely aligned the social workers' and politician's rhetoric is), the more successful and relevant the state's foster care reform measures will be.

In order to analyze this topic, the study draws on works by Shelley Hawthorne Smith, Anita Fetzer, and Peter Bull. Social work rhetoric is analyzed through the narrative framework discussed in Smith's "Constructing Hope: Narrative and the Foster Care Experience." This study analyzes social workers' rhetoric through this framework in order to better understand how they frame issues within the foster care system. Identifying the 'main characters' and the way they are characterized in social workers' rhetoric is essential to study how they portray various foster care issues. To analyzing political rhetoric, this study draws on Fetzer and Bull's "Doing Leadership in Political Speech." Fetzer and Bull highlight "four principal verb forms (event, communication, subjectification and intention)" that occur in political speech and outline how

these verbs can indicate a politician's stance on an issue (132). This study will analyze political rhetoric about foster care using this methodology, while also noting how this rhetoric is employed to serve a politician's image as a leader.

This study will analyze social work rhetoric and political rhetoric about foster care in three states: California, New York, and Georgia. These states were chosen in order to provide a brief glimpse into three major geographic locations in the United States: West, Northeast, and Southeast. In each state, rhetoric from state social workers and state politicians was analyzed and compared in order to draw conclusions about how the communication relationship between these two groups correlated to the success of foster care reform measures pursued within the state.

Rhetoric analyzed in the California case study focused on the issue of practices for prescribing psychotropic medications to foster youth. Analysis of the state's social work and political rhetoric demonstrated a harmonious communication relationship between the two groups, which correlated to the successful passage of a bill to address psychotropic medication prescription practices for youth. Rhetoric analyzed in the New York case study focused on the topic of Child Protective Services (CPS) response standards, specifically in relation to physical abuse cases. Analysis of the state's social work and political rhetoric demonstrated a conflicting communication relationship, which correlated to an irrelevant foster care reform attempt that focused on family matching instead of CPS responses. Rhetoric analyzed in the Georgia case study focused on the issue of appropriate housing for foster youth. Analysis of the state's social work and political rhetoric demonstrated a somewhat conflicting communication relationship, which correlated to the passage of irrelevant legislation that placed restrictions on the types of families that can adopt and house foster children.

By synthesizing the results from these three cases, the study found that in states where the communication relationship between social workers and politicians was harmonious, this correlated to the successful passage of relevant foster care reform measures. Additionally, in states where the communication relationship between social workers and politicians was conflicting, this correlated to the passage of irrelevant foster care reform measures.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **Foundational Concepts**

Before analyzing foster care reform rhetoric, it is important to understand a few key concepts about child welfare programs and the common issues affecting them. American child welfare systems, as the name implies, work to ensure the health, safety, and happiness of the country's youth. Though contemporary child welfare systems offer many services to assist families and children, this study focuses on foster care services. In this study, foster care refers to the system in which the State places children living in unsuitable or unstable home situations into a safer, alternative housing environment. These alternative environments can include "settings such as group homes, residential care facilities, emergency shelters, and supervised independent living" ("Foster Care"). Within the United States, the names for agencies which arrange these foster care services vary. Agency names which occur frequently in this study include Child Protective Services (CPS) and Administration for Children's Services (ACS). Additionally, this study often uses the term "caseworker," which is the name used for social services workers who assist children, foster parents, adoptive parents, and birth parents with services and options regarding the child's wellbeing, placement options for children removed from living with their birth parents, family reunification, "parent/child counseling," and "respite care" (Reamer and

Siegel). Understanding these basic child welfare concepts sets a foundation for exploring issues within the foster care system.

Many of the concerns explored within this study are tied to known systemic issues within the foster care system. In *Child Welfare for the 21st Century*, Peg McCartt Hess of the Institute for Families in Society and social worker and writer Gerald P. Mallon highlight several systemic components that can factor into child welfare services issues. These factors include, among others, statewide informational systems, case review and quality assurance systems, and foster and adoptive parent standards (Mallon and McCartt 8). To analyze rhetoric about these issues, this study takes a state-by-state approach. The California case study's focus on foster care prescription practices will explore the topic of quality assurance, the New York case study's focus on CPS responses to maltreatment reports will explore the topic of case review quality, and the Georgia case study's focus on housing for foster children will explore the topic of foster and adoptive parent standards.

### **What is this study?**

This study examines the rhetoric used by state social workers and politicians in discussing the aforementioned foster care topics. Each group's rhetoric will be analyzed to reveal common themes in how they approach foster care issues within the state. By then comparing these groups' rhetoric, this study draws conclusions about the communication relationship between social workers and politicians within the state. The study then examines how these communication relationships correlate to the success of each state's foster care reform efforts. Finally, the study concludes by forming theories about the communication relationship factors that correlate to successful foster care reform measures.

**What is the purpose/justification for the study?**

This study's main purpose is to improve foster care reform efforts through communication. By examining and comparing rhetoric from social workers and policy makers/politicians, this study identifies the kinds of communication relationships that correlate to successful and unsuccessful foster care reform initiatives. This identification can potentially encourage states to improve communication between social workers and politicians, and thus increase their likelihood of success in creating effective foster care reform policies.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

Two key texts inform this study's methodology. In analyzing rhetoric from social workers, this study draws on Shelley Hawthorne Smith's work in "Constructing Hope: Narrative and the Foster Care Experience." When analyzing political rhetoric, this study utilizes rhetorical concepts discussed and applied in "Doing Leadership in Political Speech" by Anita Fetzer and Peter Bull. Both texts inform this study's understanding of prominent rhetorical themes in each group's speech. This literature review identifies these themes and concepts and discusses their applicability to this study. Additionally, this section will offer a brief explanation of how these concepts will be applied in this study's rhetorical analyses.

In studying and analyzing foster care and social work rhetoric, Smith focuses on CPS in Arizona. Smith deconstructs language used in training materials and language used by case workers and foster parents in interviews. For this study, Smith's analysis of Arizona case workers' rhetoric is referenced in order to deconstruct case worker rhetoric from California, New York, and Georgia. When analyzing case workers' rhetoric, Smith focuses on their language characterizes a child's birth parents and foster caregivers. Smith approaches her analysis using a narrative framework, which allows her to discuss which "characters" are portrayed "as central to the plot" in social work rhetoric (10). In other words, Smith examines social work rhetoric to

understand which subjects (foster children, birth parents, foster parents) are most heavily focused on, and how their role in foster care is characterized. Overall, Smith's rhetorical analysis emphasizes three main rhetorical components and devices: characterization, subjects, and narrative style. This study's analysis will identify how and why these themes are used in social workers' rhetoric about foster care issues in California, New York, and Georgia.

Fetzer and Bull's "Doing Leadership in Political Speech" will serve as this study's main reference for analyzing political rhetoric about foster care. In "Doing Leadership," Fetzer and Bull analyze speeches from British politicians in the context of "four main verb forms" that reoccur across political speech. As the authors explain, these verb forms "(event, communication, subjectification and intention)" have specific uses and purposes in political speech. Fetzer and Bull explain these verb forms in the following quote:

It was proposed that action and intention verbs primarily target competence, while subjectification and communication verbs primarily target responsiveness...Furthermore, each of these four verb forms can be seen to correspond to four agency- anchored domains: (1) action, (2) reports about the reports of others, (3) intention, and (4) thoughts and feelings. (127)

By examining how these verb forms are used by politicians, Fetzer and Bull's rhetorical analysis deconstructs how politicians "perform leadership throughout a political speech." This study incorporates a similar analysis by identifying and examining the use of these verb forms in political speech about foster care. Additionally, this study's analysis is influenced by Fetzer and Bull's concept of "performing leadership." Rhetorical samples from politicians will be analyzed with the understanding that the language used not only conveys a viewpoint on an issue, but also helps construct a politician's image as a leader.

Literature from Smith, Fetzer, and Bull introduces rhetorical analysis concepts that this study uses to construct a deeper analysis of political and social work rhetoric on foster care issues. By performing this analysis, this study identifies each group's understanding of foster care issues and how to address them. The relationship between the rhetoric of these two groups will also be analyzed in comparison to foster care reform policies pursued within each state. In doing this, the study will draw conclusions about how the relationship between politicians' and social workers' rhetoric correlates to the success or failure of foster care reform within the state.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

This project uses critical rhetorical analysis as its primary research method. In order to examine the efficacy of foster care reform rhetoric and regulations, I collected statements from politicians and social workers from three different states: California, New York, and Georgia. Research began by studying each state individually. For each case, I examined and analyzed rhetoric from politicians and social workers in order to understand how these two groups portray issues within the foster care system. Politicians' rhetoric served as examples of how policy-makers portray foster care, while social workers' rhetoric served as examples of how professionals who work directly with foster care and child welfare services portray the system. Featured in the appendix are samples of the rhetoric that will be examined in this study's analysis section. The rhetoric is categorized first by state, then by group (social work rhetoric or political rhetoric), and then by person. This section will also introduce the figures whose rhetoric is being studied and what positions these figures hold that makes them relevant to this study.

After analyzing rhetoric from both groups, I compared their portrayals of the foster care system to foster care reform measures being pursued within several states. With this relationship in mind, foster care statistics and anecdotal evidence were also examined in order to gauge the efficacy of reform measures and relevance of each group's rhetoric. By comparing rhetoric in

relation to policy, I examine how political rhetoric's relationship with social work rhetoric affects foster care reform measures pursued with the state. This comparison was done to test the hypothesis that if a politician's rhetoric about foster care focuses on issues similar to those highlighted by social workers' rhetoric, then the reform policies these politicians pursue will prove more relevant and effective in addressing certain foster care issues than policies pursued by politicians whose rhetoric is discordant with social workers' rhetoric.

This research utilized sources from national advocacy groups, government agencies, newspapers, and scholarly works. Prominent state newspapers were drawn from in order to collect the most recent and detailed information about each state's reform work and political discourse. Statistics and reports from advocacy groups and government organizations were used in order to compare rhetoric and policy to recorded facts about child welfare services. Scholarly reports and books, such as *Child Welfare for the Twenty-First Century* by Mallon and Hess, were also consulted in order to build a foundation of knowledge about foster care reform work.



## Chapter 4

### Background and State-by-State Context

Research focuses on foster care topics in three states: California, New York, and Georgia. An in-depth case study of one particular foster care issue is featured for each state. Context for each of these issues and an introduction to each case study are featured below.

#### **California**

The California case study focuses on rhetoric and policy concerning the prevalence of psychotropic medication being prescribed to California's foster youth. As *California Healthline* reports, "nearly one in four children in California foster care are on psychotropic medications," and this statistic rises to 56% for children in group homes (Beall qtd. in Gorn). Foster care reform discourse between politicians and social workers in California appears to focus heavily on this high medication rate. Though the "one in four" statistic is consistent with national prescription rates for foster children, California foster care rhetoric has emphasized prescription practice reform following "publication of a series of investigative articles" by *San Jose Mercury News* reporter Karen de Sá (United States; Korry). This is the context in which this project's California case study exists. This study analyzes rhetorical samples in order to draw conclusions

about how rhetoric from California politicians and social work professionals relate to one another and the reform policies pursued in the state.

The rhetorical samples from California social work professionals communicate a desire to decrease rates of and reform practices for prescribing psychotropic medications to foster children. Analyzing social work rhetoric not only reveals this stance, but also highlights the motivations behind it. Social work rhetoric analyzed in this section comes from several California social work professionals, such as director of California's Department of Social Services Will Lightbourne, director of Santa Clara County's Department of Family and Children's Services Lori Medina, and former foster child and current California foster care ombudsperson Rochelle Trochtenberg. Overall, rhetoric from these social work professionals forms a coherent platform about reforming prescription practices in order to lower the rate at which foster children are prescribed psychotropic medications. While each figure's rhetoric employs a unique style, themes such as prescription policy reforms and the human impact of psychotropics reoccur throughout statements from these social work professionals. Statements from these professionals are examined in the Analysis Section to provide a more in-depth understanding of how this rhetoric functions within the state.

Rhetorical samples from California politicians incorporate many of the same messages about the foster care prescription topic as social work professionals' rhetoric. Analyzing statements from California politicians reveals that their speech often includes a similar tone and perspective on how and why the foster care prescription rate should be addressed. Overall, a stance supporting foster care prescription practice reform remains the same in each of the political rhetoric samples. The samples examined in the Analysis Section include statements from California senators Bill Monning and Mike McGuire. Though McGuire's rhetoric stresses

state responsibility more than Monning's rhetoric, both senators utilize an emotionally-charged style. This style emphasizes the importance state politicians place on the issue and is reminiscent of the messages from social work professionals. By analyzing these rhetorical components and comparing them to social work rhetoric within the state, this study provides theories on how the communication relationship between these two groups correlate to success of foster care policies pursued within the state.

### **New York**

The New York case study will focus on rhetoric and reform measures concerning communication failures and physical abuse in the state's foster care system. Alongside recent highly publicized abuse cases in New York, a 2015 report on child maltreatment found that the number of "children who received an investigation or alternative response" from the state's Child Protective Services (CPS) decreased by 7.1% between 2011 and 2015 (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services 42). Foster care reform rhetoric and policies examined in this case will focus on the topic of CPS responses to child maltreatment claims. This study analyzes rhetorical samples in order to draw conclusions about how New York state politicians and social work professionals communicate with one another, and how this communication relationship correlates to foster care reform measures pursued within the state.

The rhetorical samples from New York social work professionals focus on the topic of unsatisfactory CPS responses for foster care cases. Though all of the samples in this section focus on this topic, there appears to be disagreement about the main causes of the issue. Perspectives on the causes of this issue that will be discussed include "foster care panic," overloaded caseworkers, and the nature of child protective work as a profession. Examining New York social work rhetoric reveals the

disparities between these various perspectives. Social work rhetoric analyzed in this section comes from several New York social work professionals, such as ACS caseworkers Chaton Alexander and Rochelle Lowe, and child welfare advocate Richard Wexler. Overall, the perspectives shared in rhetoric from these social work professionals appears scattered. Though they all seem to acknowledge issues with CPS responses within the state, each figure focuses on different reason behind and solutions for these issues. This study's Analysis Section further examines New York social work rhetoric in order to provide insight on how these competing rhetorical stances function within the state.

Similar to this social work rhetoric, despite sharing a focus on the aforementioned CPS response quality issue, rhetorical samples from New York politicians also seem to vary greatly in their perspectives on the causes of and solutions for the issue. Though not true of all New York political rhetoric, many of the samples analyzed in this study seem to blame unsatisfactory CPS responses on negligent and/or incompetent work from state social workers and administrations. This rhetoric demonstrates a departure from New York social workers' rhetoric which emphasizes aforementioned circumstantial factors as major reasons for unsatisfactory CPS responses. However, some political rhetoric, such as statements from senator Kirsten Gillibrand, align with social work rhetoric's focus on resources to address overloaded caseworkers. By examining statements from politicians such as Senator Gillibrand and Suffolk County District Attorney Thomas Spota, this study aims to provide an overview of New York state's political discourse on foster care. In this study's Analysis Section, this rhetoric is compared to New York's social work rhetoric in order to generate theories on how the communication relationship between these groups affects foster care policies pursued within the state.

## **Georgia**

The Georgia case study focuses on rhetoric and policy concerning resources and funding to address the increasing number of children in the state's foster care system. Described as a "crisis" by a director from the Division of Family and Children Services, Georgia's increasing foster child population is faced with insufficient housing placement options (Eloy). Though many social work professionals and some reform policies attempt to address this housing crisis, state politicians seem to be in disagreement over the issue. During this "crisis," at the end of the state legislature's 2017 session, politicians failed to pass legislation designed to update state adoption laws and increase housing placement options for foster youths (Baruchman). An important detail that reoccurs in coverage of this bill is the fact that Senator William Ligon proposed "an anti-LGBT amendment" to the bill, which several sources have blamed for "tanking" the bill (Hennie). With this context in mind, this study examines Georgia politicians' and social workers' rhetoric in order to draw conclusions about the communication relationship between these two groups, and how this relationship correlates to the success or failure of foster care reform measures pursued within the state.

The rhetorical samples from Georgia social work professionals focus on the need for more resources for housing foster children. The resources discussed include a need for more foster families, as well as resources for group homes. Across many rhetorical samples in this section, social workers also highlight a "housing crisis" for Georgia foster youth as the reason for needing these resources. This study examines these themes in rhetoric from Georgia social work professionals such as Susan Boatwright, communications director for Georgia's Department of Family and Child Services, and Michelle Christian, foster care program manager for Devereux Georgia Treatment Center. Overall, the perspectives shared by these social workers seem to agree that lacking foster care housing is an issue that needs to be addressed. This study's Analysis Section examines this rhetoric and provides insight on

the methods Georgia social workers use to discuss the foster care housing topic.

Though rhetoric from Georgia social workers seems fairly consistent, Georgia political rhetoric depicts incongruent perspectives on the housing issue. Rhetorical samples from these politicians generally fall into one of two categories: 1. Those which maintain a sole focus on providing housing resources for foster children, and 2. Those which emphasize a want for religious protections and LGBTQ+ discriminatory policies in foster care housing policies. Though this first category seems to align with social work rhetoric's focus on increasing foster care housing options, the second category of rhetoric demonstrates a different set of values and goals. In order to analyze rhetoric from both groups, this study examines rhetorical samples from Georgia politicians such as governor Nathan Deal, senator William Ligon, and speaker David Ralston. By studying the relationship between these two groups and comparing their rhetoric to Georgia social work rhetoric, this study will theorize about how the communication relationship between these groups affects foster care policies pursued within the state.

## Chapter 5

### Analysis

#### California

##### Social Work Rhetoric:

In order to assess how California social work professionals address the foster care prescription issue, this study analyzes rhetoric from Trochtenberg, Medina, and Lightbourne. This analysis will take cues from Smith's work and examine which subjects are emphasized in social work rhetoric, how subjects and issues are characterized, and how a narrative style is used. Additionally, this analysis will identify how these social work professionals employ ethos appeals, what tone they use, and what the main purpose of their rhetoric appears to be. In conducting this analysis, the study will identify the overall state of social work rhetoric about the foster care prescription issue.

Analyzing Trochtenberg's rhetoric when addressing the foster care prescription issue reveals her heavy usage of Smith's subject, characterization, and narrative style concepts. Statements from Trochtenberg identify foster children as the main subject in the prescription issue. Trochtenberg emphasizes "children" and "kids" as the people "that are hurting" because of foster care prescription rates and practices (Trochtenberg qtd. in de Sá and Seipel). This language serves as a continuous reminder that Trochtenberg believes foster children are the primary

subjects involved in the prescription issue. Trochtenberg's rhetoric also places foster children at the forefront of this issue by stressing that these children are the people "hurting" because of California's foster care prescription rate and practices.

Further elaborating on foster children's roles as the primary subjects of this issue, Trochtenberg characterizes these children by analogizing their struggles to those of war veterans, saying that "these are children who have been through what we know war veterans have been through" (Trochtenberg qtd. in de Sá and Seipel). Alluding to PTSD as a common link between war veterans and foster children, Trochtenberg characterizes foster children as a population suffering from significant trauma. As Smith discusses in "Constructing Hope," the way CPS figures (case workers, foster children, foster parents, birth parents, etc.) are characterized can significantly influence how foster care topics are understood and discussed. Translating this concept to the foster children/war veterans analogy, Trochtenberg's rhetorical choice to characterize foster children as victims of traumatic experiences can be understood as her way of framing the prescription issue in terms of how it impacts foster youths. By characterizing foster children in this way, Trochtenberg both frames the foster care prescription discussion as a children's welfare issue and furthers cements foster children as the main subject in this discussion.

The analogy Trochtenberg uses to characterize foster children also demonstrates her use of narrative style. This style manifests through the narrative Trochtenberg crafts when comparing foster children's struggles to the traumatic war stories of veterans. Trochtenberg also employs this narrative style when discussing her past experiences as a foster child who was prescribed and medicated with several psychotropic medications. When discussing the problem with the



foster care prescription rate and practices, Trochtenberg shares the following account about her experiences being medicated as a foster child:

You know, it sucks when you're like 15 and putting on makeup or brushing your teeth seems like climbing a mountain. And on psychotropic drugs, sometimes that's how it felt. I just felt like my brain was disconnected from my body. And everything felt like a mental exercise to overcome those side effects.

(Trochtenberg qtd. in “Drugging Our Kids”)

This account exemplifies the narrative rhetorical style Trochtenberg uses to discuss and frame the foster care prescription issue. By sharing this personal story, Trochtenberg employs the narrative style and provides a specific example of a child who was hurt by the foster care prescription practices. Trochtenberg continues using this narrative style in further descriptions of her experiences. In these descriptions, Trochtenberg says, “I have a tremor because I was drugged for my whole adolescence,” and that the medications she was prescribed made her feel like “a prisoner in [her] own body,” (Trochtenberg qtd. in “Drugging Our Kids”). These details are an important component of Trochtenberg’s narrative style. They not only vividly illustrate Trochtenberg’s personal narrative, but they also help support her perspective on the foster care prescription issue. By explaining how she was negatively affected by foster care prescription practices, Trochtenberg provides support for her claim that foster “kids are hurting” (Trochtenberg qtd. in de Sá and Seipel). For Trochtenberg, this narrative style also works as an ethos appeal. While Trochtenberg currently speaks from the position of a foster care ombudsperson, her background as a former foster child provides credibility to her personal narratives and her claims that California’s foster care prescription practices can harm foster children.

With these rhetorical components analyzed, the tone and purpose of Trochtenberg's rhetoric can be examined. Trochtenberg's tone is demonstrated in the phrases "These are kids that are hurting," and "Medications are so overused— and so significantly," (Trochtenberg qtd. in de Sá and Seipel). By framing the prescription issue as a child welfare issue that is "hurting" foster children and associating this problem with how "significantly" medications are overprescribed for foster children, Trochtenberg's tone reads as serious, concerned, and focused on the prescription issue. This language also helps convey the purpose of Trochtenberg's rhetoric: to prompt change in the systems that allow for these prescription practices to harm foster children. Trochtenberg makes this message clear in her repeated calls for accountability. For example, when speaking about the foster care prescription rate, Trochtenberg said:

"What I see in these numbers is: We don't really treat, we use chemical restraints. We drug...Medications are so overused — and so significantly — that it's outrageous there's such a lack of leadership in holding doctors accountable and holding the system accountable." (Trochtenberg qtd. in de Sá and Seipel).

In this quote, Trochtenberg's language places the onus for foster care prescription issues on a lack of oversight in the systems responsible for prescribing to and medicating foster children. Specifically, Trochtenberg targets doctors as figures contributing to the problematic foster care prescription rate in California. When singling out the doctors who prescribe to foster children, Trochtenberg also suggests that failures to hold these doctors accountable for their prescription practices have been a major contributing factor in California's foster care prescription issue. Trochtenberg links this idea back to the main purpose of her rhetoric by saying, "The person who has the authority to write a prescription is where we need accountability. We still don't have that," (Trochtenberg qtd. in de Sá and Seipel). This call to action captures the overall purpose of

Trochtenberg's rhetoric. As she has stated, California's foster care prescription rate is indicative of a harmful issue with the prescription practices for foster children. By repeatedly calling for accountability among the doctors and systems responsible for prescribing to foster children, the purpose of Trochtenberg's rhetoric is to reform these conditions in order to protect foster children from being hurt by psychotropic medications.

Rhetoric from Medina seems to share a similar purpose to Trochtenberg's rhetoric, but with some slight differences in style. Compared to Trochtenberg's focus on foster children themselves, Medina's rhetoric seems to focus more on foster children's symptoms. Medina's emphasis on language such as "symptoms" and "children's trauma" demonstrates this focus and establishes common reasons for medicating foster children as the main subject in her rhetoric (Medina qtd. in "Senate Panel"). Though Medina uses Smith's characterization concept less than Trochtenberg, additional statements by Medina portray this subject as a complex topic which is significantly influenced by foster care prescription practices. Medina elaborates on this link between foster children's symptoms and the prescription issue, saying that "these children's trauma cannot just be remediated with medication," and that is important for there to be "other approaches" when treating these symptoms and trauma (Medina qtd. in "Senate Panel"). In this statement, Medina characterizes her main subject as having been improperly addressed through the sole use of medication. This characterization helps clarify the relationship Medina understands between her main subject and the prescription issue. By focusing on foster children's symptoms and suggesting that medication has been improperly used to treat these symptoms, Medina establishes foster children's symptoms and trauma as the subjects being most significantly negatively impacted by California's foster care prescription practices. Medina's straightforward style helps establish this connection, while eschewing the narrative style that

Trochtenberg utilizes so heavily. Succinct and direct statements such as “The symptoms around these children’s trauma cannot just be remediated with medication. There has to be other approaches,” demonstrate this straightforward style that Medina adopts (Medina qtd. in “Senate Panel”). While Trochtenberg’s use of narrative style works alongside her personal foster care experiences, Medina’s stylistic choice plays to her qualifications, as her credibility and ethos appeals are based in her work experiences as the director of Santa Clara County’s Department of Family and Children’s Services. Medina’s style also helps her establish a clear relationship between her primary subject and the prescription issue. Examining the main purpose of Medina’s rhetoric further clarifies this link.

By focusing on foster children’s symptoms and how they are treated, Medina’s rhetoric suggests that her main purpose is to ensure that the systems handling foster children’s prescriptions are closely monitored and run properly. Medina employs a serious and focused tone when discussing the systems. This focus is demonstrated by Medina’s consistent emphasis on the medical treatments foster children receive. Her description of the “very rigorous process” of review for foster children’s mental health prescriptions combined with her discussion of “contracting with an expert panel” to further review these cases illustrates the focus with which she approaches the foster care prescription issue (Medina qtd. in Burbank; Burbank). Medina’s emphasis on these systems also suggests that the main purpose of her rhetoric on this issue is that the systems which handle foster children’s mental health prescriptions must be held accountable and possibly changed in order to ensure foster children’s symptoms and trauma are being treated properly. In this way, Medina’s rhetoric shares a similar purpose with Trochtenberg’s rhetoric.

Lightbourne’s rhetoric shares similar messages, while also echoing Medina’s tone. Though Lightbourne’s rhetoric lacks narrative style and detailed characterization, the main

subject he focuses on remains similar to Trochtenberg's foster child focus and Medina's symptom focus. In fact, Lightbourne ties these two subjects together by highlighting the treatments used to address foster children's symptoms. His repeated use of treatment-related phrases, such as "meds," "psychotropic prescriptions," "therapies," "psychotropics," and "nonmedical treatments," clearly establishes that his rhetoric's main subject is the methods being used to treat foster children (Lightbourne qtd. in Gorn; Lightbourne qtd. in "Senate Panel"). The way in which Lightbourne consistently places this subject at the forefront of his rhetoric about the foster care prescription issue also demonstrates his direct and focused style. In each of his statements on the topic, Lightbourne consistently concentrates on treatments for foster children, without straying into personal anecdotes or details like Trochtenberg. Similar to Medina, this style works to Lightbourne's advantage due to his experiences, credibility, and ethos appeals coming from his position as the director of California's Department of Social Services.

Due to this direct style, the main purpose of Lightbourne's rhetoric is easily understood. As the aforementioned quotations demonstrate, throughout Lightbourne's statements on the foster care prescription issue he centers discussion directly on the medications and treatments being used on foster children. He further conveys his rhetoric's purpose by expressing his "very deep concern about the volume" of psychotropic medication prescriptions for foster children, and stating that he and his department "want to bring that number down" (Lightbourne qtd. in "Senate Panel"). These statements represent the purpose of Lightbourne's rhetoric: to change the foster care prescription rate. Additional rhetoric from Lightbourne elaborates on this purpose and provides further understanding about Lightbourne's stance on foster care prescription rates and practices. For example, while Lightbourne states his belief that psychotropic prescriptions should

only be used “when all other systems have been used [first],” and that “nonmedical treatments” should be prioritized, he clarifies his stance by saying:

““Clearly there are some situations in which psychotropic prescriptions may be appropriate,” Lightbourne said. “We have to know that something is being done because it’s absolutely necessary, not because it’s convenient — that it’s not simply behavior management.”” (Lightbourne qtd. in Gorn; in “Drugging Our Kids”).

By acknowledging that there may be some circumstances in which psychotropic prescriptions for foster children are acceptable, Lightbourne makes it clear that while he supports prescription rates being lowered, he is not entirely against these medications being used. Still, Lightbourne discusses the need for prescription practices to be reviewed in order to ensure that the use of psychotropics on foster children is “not simply behavior management,” but rather “absolutely necessary” for the child’s health. Similar to both Trochtenberg and Medina, the main purpose conveyed in Lightbourne’s rhetoric on the foster care prescription issue is that prescription rates need to be lowered and prescription practices need to be reviewed and possibly changed in order to ensure that foster children are being treated properly.

Analyzing rhetoric from these three social work professionals reveals a common understanding about the need to change the foster care prescription rate and prescription practices. Though each speaker emphasized different styles and characterizations, their stances on the foster care prescription topic remained similar. Overall, the general consensus gleaned from this analysis shows an agreement between various social work professionals about the need for lowering the prescription rate, holding the systems responsible for these prescriptions accountable, and reviewing and possibly reforming foster care prescription practices.

### Political Rhetoric:

In order to assess how California politicians address the foster care prescription issue, this study analyzes rhetoric from Senators Beall, McGuire, and Monning. This analysis will take cues from Fetzer and Bull's work and examine how these politicians use the four verb forms (event, subjectification, communication, and intention), and how these verbs help convey their stance on the foster care prescription issue. Tone and subject will also be analyzed to understand how they help convey each politician's views and purpose. In conducting this analysis, the study will also identify the overall state of political rhetoric about the foster care prescription issue.

When analyzing this political rhetoric, event/action verbs and intention verbs occurred most often. When discussing treatments for foster children, Beall uses action verbs heavily. Additionally, the action verbs Beall uses, such as "use," "control," and "provide," all reference mental health treatments for foster children (Beall qtd. in Gorn). Analyzing this in reference to Fetzer and Bull's work, Beall's use of these verbs can be interpreted as a method through which Beall expresses his competence and capability. The context in which Beall employs these verbs further suggests that he specifically expressing his competence and capability in addressing the foster care prescription issue. Similar themes occur in the use of action verbs in Monning's rhetoric. In contrast to Beall's action verbs which focus on foster children's treatments, the action verbs in Monning's rhetoric are split between referencing foster children's safety and the regulations for medication. The two contexts in which Monning uses action verbs include: 1. His usage of "to protect" when discussing foster children's safety and wellbeing, and 2. His usage of "establishing" when discussing regulating prescriptions for foster children (Monning qtd. in Stitt; Canady). By using these action verbs in this context, Monning portrays an image of his

competency in both caring for foster children and coming up with concrete policies to address the prescription issue. This active, caring image is portrayed through his use of “to protect,” while his use of “establishing” when discussing prescription regulations portrays that he is capable of creating policies to address the prescription issue.

Similar to action verbs, intention verbs are also linked to how a politician expresses their competency. After action verbs, these intention verbs are the most common verb form that shows up in California politicians’ rhetoric about the foster care issue. In phrases such as “we need” and “should never be,” Beall utilizes intention verbs to express his plans and objectives for addressing the foster care prescription issue; these plans include implementing “an alert system” for foster children being inappropriately prescribed to, and shifting treatment practices away from a reliance on prescription medications (Beall qtd. in Gorn; Korry). In this case, Beall’s competency is conveyed through the solutions he comes up with to address the foster care prescription issue. Beall’s portrayal of competency is strengthened by how closely his plans (such as decreasing reliance on prescriptions) are tied to the main issues in the foster care prescription discussion (such as the high prescription rate). Intention verbs in Monning’s rhetoric function similarly to those in Beall’s rhetoric. Specifically, in the statement “there needs to be thoughtful guidelines,” Monning uses intention verbs to discuss his plans for addressing foster care prescription practices (Monning qtd. in Stitt). This rhetoric not only displays Monning’s competency for political planning, but also demonstrates that his plans are closely tied to both the main issues in the foster care prescription discussion and to the plans introduced by Beall. McGuire continues to build on these themes of political competency. In his statement, “It’s time for the state to be a better parent,” the phrase “to be” is classified as an intention verb indicating McGuire’s intent to have “the state” change how it approaches treating foster children (McGuire



qtd. in “Senate Panel”). While still following Monning and Beall’s discussion on plans for addressing the foster care prescription issue, McGuire’s rhetoric is less focused on specific policies. Instead, McGuire uses intention verbs to convey a sense of accountability as the main factor in expressing his competency. McGuire, Monning, and Beall all use intention verbs and action verbs when discussing this issue, and in doing so work to portray their competency in addressing the foster care prescription rate and practices.

Compared to action and intention verbs, subjectification verbs occur sparsely in rhetoric from these politicians, and are often aided by the speaker’s chosen tone and subjects. As Fetzer and Bull explain, subjectification verbs help express a politician’s thoughts and/or feelings and reflect their responsiveness on a topic. Beall uses the subjectification verb “consider” to reflect his thoughts on foster care prescription practices (Beall qtd. in Korry). By voicing his thoughts in this way, Beall also demonstrates his responsiveness to the prescription issue. This responsiveness is further clarified by examining the tone and subject of Beall’s rhetoric. Using emotionally-charged phrases such as “drugging and sedating children,” Beall adopts a grim and serious tone in order to discuss the main subject of his rhetoric, the foster children being prescribed these psychotropic drugs (Beall qtd. in Korry). By emphasizing the severity of the issue and highlighting foster children as the main subject, Beall’s rhetoric responds more clearly and directly to the prescription issue. While his use of the subjectification verb “consider” signals his responsiveness, tone and subject provide a stronger connection to the prescription issue. Similar themes arise when examining Monning’s usage of subjectification verbs. When discussing the prescription issue, Monning says, “I clearly see these as health care issues and fundamental human rights issues,” with the word “see” serving as the subjectification verb expressing Monning’s thoughts and views on the topic (Monning qtd. in “California Foster

Care”). While this verb signals Monning’s thoughts on the prescription issue, the tone and main subject of his rhetoric better expresses his responsiveness to the issue. By examining Beall’s tone and subject, his response can be interpreted as more directly related to the prescription topic.

This direct tone is demonstrated in his use of the word “clearly,” indicating that he is steadfast in his belief that the main subject at hand in the prescription issue is the “health” and “human rights” of foster children. Similar to Beall’s rhetoric, Monning’s rhetoric proves more responsive in its strategic use of tone and subject, rather than in its use of subjectification verbs. McGuire’s rhetoric forgoes using subjectification verbs altogether and demonstrates responsiveness primarily through tone and subject. For example, when discussing the main subjects of his rhetoric, prescription practices and the foster children affected by them, phrases such as “simply unacceptable” and “fallen victim,” are key to McGuire’s tone (McGuire qtd. in “Senate Panel”). These phrases work to establish the stern and compassionate tone in McGuire’s rhetoric. Furthermore, McGuire’s rhetoric also exhibits responsiveness by discussing prescription practices as “simply unacceptable,” and expressing his belief that foster children have “fallen victim” to these practices. As demonstrated in rhetoric from all three senators, tone and subject play a major role in expressing responsiveness to the foster care prescription issue.

This foster care prescription issue serves as the common theme in rhetoric from all three of these politicians. By using action and intention verbs, the politicians showcased their competency in addressing the issue. By strategically using tone, subject, and subjectification verbs, they exhibited a responsiveness to the foster care prescription rate and practices, and agreement on the need to review and regulate these practices. Overall, the general consensus gleaned from this analysis shows that California political rhetoric agrees on the need to address the foster care prescription problem.

## New York

### Social Work Rhetoric:

In order to assess how New York social work professionals address the topic of CPS responses to child maltreatment claims, this study analyzes rhetoric from Alexander, Lowe, and Wexler. As with the California study, this analysis will take cues from Smith's work and examine which subjects are emphasized in social work rhetoric, how subjects are characterized, and how the speaker uses narrative style. Additionally, this analysis will identify how these social work professionals employ ethos appeals, what tone they use, and what the main purpose of their rhetoric appears to be. In conducting this analysis, the study aims to identify the overall state of New York social work rhetoric on the CPS responses issue.

The main subject, characterization, narrative style, and tone in Alexander's rhetoric when addressing the CPS responses issue reveals a focus on the factors affecting caseworkers' responses to maltreatment claims. Specifically, statements from Alexander identify unmanageable caseloads as the main subject of this issue. Alexander identifies this subject when saying that his number of cases "is actually 18," despite ACS's reports that the average caseload is about 14 cases (Alexander qtd. in "Exclusive"). This subject remains consistent throughout Alexander's rhetoric. Additionally, when Alexander discusses this main subject of high caseloads, his position as an ACS caseworker lends credibility to his accounts and works as an ethos appeal. He goes on to characterize the caseworkers dealing with these caseloads as "too overwhelmed to be effective," (Alexander qtd. in "Exclusive"). In the context of heavy caseloads that Alexander emphasizes, characterizing caseworkers in this way seems to focus on how they are being affected by circumstances in the CPS responses issue, rather than how foster

children are being affected. This description of caseworkers' roles also factors into Alexander's narrative style. Explaining that many caseworkers have "left and we are taking up the slack," Alexander weaves a narrative that portrays caseworkers as a group in need of "supportive services," (Alexander qtd. in "Exclusive"). This narrative style also works to reinforce his focus on high caseloads and their effect on caseworkers as his main subject; the main purpose of Alexander's rhetoric is also suggested here. This purpose is clarified by further examining Alexander's rhetoric and its tone. In language and phrases such as "overwhelmed," "lighten that load," and "taking up the slack," Alexander cultivates a weary, stressed tone. Given Alexander's position as a caseworker and his main subject of the heavy caseloads, this tone again seems to focus the CPS response issue on how caseworkers are impacted by the number of cases to which they must respond. In this way, Alexander's weary, stressed tone appears to generally portray caseworkers as also being stressed and "overwhelmed" by their caseloads. Together, the tone, style, subject, and characterization in Alexander's rhetoric work together to convey Alexander's main purpose in speaking about the CPS responses issue: to stress that high caseloads are a major factor affecting caseworkers' responses, and to emphasize caseworkers' need for resources to help them address these cases. Specifically, this purpose of expressing the need for resources is demonstrated in Alexander's call for "supportive services" such as case aids (Alexander qtd. in "Exclusive"). Overall, Alexander's rhetoric centers the CPS response issue around the needs and issues of the caseworkers whose jobs it is to handle these responses. Rhetoric from other caseworkers repeats many of these same themes.

Rhetoric from Lowe, another ACS caseworker, employs a similar narrative style and characterization, but uses a more emotional tone when discussing caseworkers as her main subject. In contrast with Alexander, Lowe does mention foster children's role in the CPS

responses issue; however, she still clearly emphasizes caseworkers as her main subject. The following quote demonstrates how Lowe establishes caseworkers as her main subject while still mentioning how children are impacted by the CPS responses issue: “You are in constant fear, nervous, anxiety, wake up early in the morning thinking about what you have to do to make sure the kids are safe,” (Lowe qtd in “Exclusive”). As this statement from Lowe shows, though she brings up the safety of these “kids,” foster children do not function as the subject of her rhetoric, but rather as a source of “fear” and “anxiety” for caseworkers. By describing these stressful feelings and circumstances for caseworkers in the above quote, Lowe demonstrates that the actual main subject of her rhetoric is the caseworkers responsible for CPS responses. Like Alexander, Lowe is afforded credibility in this discussion, as she has a position as a caseworker. Her experience in this position works as an ethos appeal when discussing circumstances for caseworkers. Again like Alexander, Lowe characterizes caseworkers as “overwhelmed;” however, unlike Alexander, she continues her characterization by using a more emotional tone, employing expressive and emotive language such as “fear, nervous, anxiety,” and “afraid,” (Lowe qtd in “Exclusive”). By emphasizing these intense feelings that caseworkers deal with in regards to their work responding to child maltreatment claims, Lowe’s rhetoric not only takes on an emotional tone, but also characterizes caseworkers as having these stressful emotions as a result of dealing with having to respond to maltreatment claims. Emphasizing these emotions also functions as an ethos appeal, seemingly intended to generate sympathy for these caseworkers.

While using this emotional tone and characterizing caseworkers in this way, Lowe also demonstrates a narrative style which portrays caseworkers in the protagonist role and describes how dealing with the “pressures” of high caseloads are causing them to be “afraid” that children

may get hurt, or that the caseworkers themselves might get “arrested because something slipped through the cracks” as a result of their high workload (Lowe qtd in “Exclusive”). The details Lowe stresses as part of this narrative style help reveal the main purpose of her rhetoric. Similar to Alexander, discussing the need for support for caseworkers appears to be the main purpose of Lowe’s rhetoric. In contrast with Alexander, Lowe focuses on a need for additional caseworkers as opposed to services such as case aids. For example, Lowe discusses how “her office has not been fully staffed in more than a year,” and continues by stating that “we don’t have a lot of workers,” (ABC7; Lowe qtd in “Exclusive”). Mentioning this lack of workers helps demonstrate Lowe’s main purpose of emphasizing the need for more caseworkers. While Lowe’s and Alexander’s rhetoric approaches the CPS responses issue by discussing the lack of and need for additional caseworker resources, rhetoric from Wexler takes a different approach.

Wexler, a child care advocate, focuses his rhetoric on a concept called ‘foster care panic.’ When discussing the CPS responses issue, Wexler’s tone, characterization, and narrative style help him establish his main subject of foster care panic as the primary factor involved in the CPS response issue. Wexler introduces his main subject when he defines “foster care panic” in the following quote: “A foster care panic is the ultimate child welfare mistake, it overloads the system, harms wrongfully removed and leaves workers less time to find children in real danger,” (Wexler qtd in “Investigation”). While his emphasis and focus on foster care panic in the quote alone demonstrates his focus on this concept as a major factor in the CPS responses issue, he further establishes foster care panic as his main subject when he discusses the subject in two other, separate sources. Not only does Wexler explain that foster care panic has occurred “in New York many times before,” he also explains how this issue directly relates to caseworkers’ ability to properly handle CPS maltreatment responses when he explains that foster care panic

has led to a situation where “workers are so overloaded” that they can’t give “any case the attention it deserves,” (Wexler qtd in Pope-Sussman; Wexler qtd in “Investigation”). Wexler elaborates on this connection extensively. While establishing foster care panic as his subject, he also makes pointed choices in how to characterize the issue in his rhetoric. For example, when characterizing his subject of foster care panic, Wexler describes it as “the ultimate child welfare mistake,” which “harms” both the children and caseworkers involved in CPS responses (Wexler qtd in “Investigation”). By characterizing foster care panic in this way, Wexler not only elaborates on how foster care panic affects the CPS responses issue, he also begins showcasing his narrative style. In Wexler’s rhetoric, this narrative style is used when discussing how foster care panic impacts the kids and caseworkers involved in CPS responses to maltreatment claims. For example, Wexler often explains foster care panic by using a basic narrative framework wherein “overloaded” and “terrified” caseworkers are faced with “less time” to handle their caseloads due to an “overload[ed] system” (Wexler qtd in “Investigation”). By using this narrative style, Wexler illustrates a clear picture of how foster care panic negatively impacts the CPS responses issue. Tying together Alexander’s emphasis on overwhelming caseloads and Lowe’s discussion of how these caseloads cause high stress for caseworkers, Wexler’s rhetoric utilizes this narrative style to provide a detailed explanation of foster care panic. The purpose of rhetoric is then understood more directly when examining the tone Wexler uses when discussing foster care panic.

The warning tone Wexler employs helps illuminate his main purpose for focusing on foster care panic in his rhetoric. In the context of the high-profile abuse cases in New York which correlate to a state-wide emphasis on CPS responses to maltreatment claims, Wexler describes foster care panic as an almost cyclical issue which is often sparked by these highly

publicized cases, leading to increased calls, reports, and claims being made, which in turn puts stress on the CPS system. When discussing foster care panic, Wexler's usage of language such as "mistake," "needlessly," "harms," "wrongfully," and "real danger" demonstrate the serious and intense tone of his rhetoric (Wexler qtd in "Investigation"). Working together with his narrative style and characterization, Wexler's tone about his main subject of foster care panic reflects his belief that this situation represents a primary component of the CPS responses issue. From this, Wexler's main purpose becomes apparent. By portraying foster care panic in this way, Wexler's suggests that the main purpose of his rhetoric is warn people against feeding into this foster care panic so that they can avoid putting more stress on the CPS response system.

Analyzing social work rhetoric from Wexler, Alexander, and Lowe reveals a common theme about overloaded caseworkers' role in the CPS responses issue. Though each speaker approached the topic with a unique tone and method of characterization, each of their stances on the CPS response issue emphasized how heavily the workload of caseworkers factors into the issue. Overall, the consensus gleaned from this analysis shows an agreement between various social work professionals about how overwhelming caseloads negatively impact caseworkers' ability to properly respond to maltreatment claims.

#### Political Rhetoric:

In order to assess how New York politicians address the CPS responses issue, this study analyzes rhetoric from District Attorney Spota and Senator Gillibrand. As with the analysis of California's political rhetoric, this analysis will take cues from Fetzer and Bull's work and examine how these politicians/policymakers use the four verb forms (event, subjectification, communication, and intention), and how these verbs help convey their stance on the CPS



responses issue. Tone and subject will also be analyzed in order to understand how these factors help convey each politician's stance on the issue. In conducting this analysis, the study will also identify the overall state of New York's political rhetoric about the CPS responses issue.

This analysis begins by examining rhetoric from Senator Gillibrand's statements on the CPS responses issue. Upon analyzing Senator Gillibrand's rhetoric, event verbs appear to dominate her speech, with intention verbs being the only other form used. Gillibrand utilizes event verbs in various contexts, such as when introducing the issue and describing some of CPS's functions. For example, Gillibrand's rhetoric features event verbs in phrases such as "children enter" and "wait to be placed," (Gillibrand qtd. in Kings County Politics). In this case, these verbs serve a dual function of demonstrating Gillibrand's competency via her understanding of the CPS system and highlighting the main subject of her rhetoric. While "enter" and "placed" display Gillibrand's level of knowledge about CPS's work, the subject tied to these verbs reveals the true subject on which Gillibrand is focusing. In these phrases, Gillibrand identifies "children" in the CPS system as her main subject (Gillibrand qtd. in Kings County Politics). Examining further rhetoric from Gillibrand displays a trend in her focus on children as her main subject. From numerous uses of the term "child" or "children," to the usage of the phrase "boys and girls," Gillibrand clearly demonstrates that the main subject she focuses on in regards to the CPS responses issue is the children who are involved with and/or receive assistance from CPS (Gillibrand qtd. in Kings County Politics). From these statements, it is clear that Gillibrand concentrates on children's part in the CPS responses issue. While placing these children at the center of her rhetoric, the action verbs used in Gillibrand's statements also help identify her understanding of the circumstances which factor in the CPS responses issue. Specifically, Gillibrand seems to use event verbs to frame the issue in terms of flaws in CPS's

system. This shows in phrases such as “can’t keep up” and “ends up preventing” that Gillibrand uses to describe CPS’s ability to properly serve children (Gillibrand qtd. in Kings County Politics). By using these phrases, accompanied by the compassionate tone affected by continually referencing children as the main subject, Gillibrand’s rhetoric suggests that its main purpose is to discuss solutions to these CPS issues. Further statements from Gillibrand make this clear.

When discussing this main purpose, Gillibrand uses event verbs in conjunction with intention verbs to speak about plans for addressing CPS issues. Action and intention verbs are identified as the main verb forms Gillibrand uses, with subjectification and communication verbs being used zero times in the rhetorical samples collected for her analysis in this study. Gillibrand uses an intention verb in the phrase “would update” to speak about her CPS reform plans in the form of The Nation Adoption and Foster Care Home Study Act (Gillibrand qtd. in Kings County Politics). In this context, Gillibrand seems to use this verb phrase in order to convey a sense of competency when discussing her intentions in addressing the CPS responses issue. To further describe her plans for reform measures, Gillibrand uses event verbs such as “protect” and “matched,” which exemplify her understanding of what components of the issue need to be addressed in order to improve CPS responses to maltreatment claims (Gillibrand qtd. in Kings County Politics). While discussing her reform plans in this way, Gillibrand both reveals her rhetoric’s main purpose, and attempts to express her competency on the issue. By singling out specific actions to be reformed, Gillibrand attempts to demonstrate competency and understanding of that main factors contributing to the CPS responses issue. In her rhetoric, Gillibrand seems to identify these main factors as an “outdated child welfare system” in need of reform to better “protect” children and get them “matched” to foster and adoptive families

(Gillibrand qtd. in Kings County Politics). These statements also suggest that encouraging updates and reforms to New York's child welfare system serves as the main purpose of Gillibrand's rhetoric. By heavily using event and intention verbs to express this purpose, Gillibrand's rhetoric also appears to serve as a vehicle for expressing Gillibrand's competency as a politician when discussing CPS responses.

In contrast, Spota uses a mix of event, intention, and communication verbs, which work to express both competency in and responsiveness to the CPS responses issue. When using event verbs, Spota's rhetoric focuses on the issues contributing to inappropriate CPS responses. Beginning by discussing the contributing issues, Spota uses the verb "delegated" to identify his understanding of a major problem in how New York's ACS system approached responding to maltreatment claims (Spota qtd. in Eltman). This language not only isolates a problem involved in the CPS responses issue, but also functions as Spota's attempt to demonstrate his competency in speaking on the issue. Spota's rhetoric further explores these issues when employing intention verbs. The usage of intention verbs in Spota's rhetoric primarily discuss Spota's plans and ideas for how to address the CPS responses issue. Specifically, in the phrase "there has to be some corrections that are made," Spota uses intention verb phrases such as "has to be" in order to express his belief that there needs to be "corrections" made to the CPS system in order to address the responses issue (Spota qtd. in Eltman). Spota's tone when discussing this topic further clarifies his stance on the CPS responses topic. By using these event and intention verbs in conjunction with a serious and outraged tone, Spota clearly demonstrates his stance about a serious need for reforming the CPS system. This serious and outraged tone is most clearly expressed in language and phrases that describe New York's CPS system as "a bureaucratic nightmare" and "so wrong," (Spota qtd. in Eltman). By using negative and emotionally-charged

language such as “nightmare” and “wrong,” Spota’s rhetoric develops a strong message about how problematic the CPS system is and how important it is to begin making changes to it. While understanding this tone helps convey Spota’s main purpose, this purpose is illuminated further by examining the communication verbs Spota uses.

As used in Spota’s rhetoric, communication verbs describe the conditions within the CPS system and are used to demonstrate Spota’s responsiveness to the responses issue. Specifically, when describing conditions within the CPS system, Spota uses communication verbs such as “interact,” “contact,” and “said” (Spota qtd. in Eltman). Each of these verbs are used to express Spota’s understanding of situations that occurred within the CPS system. Again assisted by his serious and outraged tone, Spota uses these verbs to both express his responsiveness to the issue and his understanding about the factors contributing to the issue— in this case, a lack of appropriate communication. By adding to his response to the CPS responses issue in this way, Spota helps create a clearer understanding of the main purpose of his rhetoric. In the ways Spota speaks about this CPS responses topic, his rhetoric’s main purpose seems to be to condemn the CPS condition which he believes factor into this issue and to encourage CPS reform measures to correct these conditions.

## **Georgia**

### **Social Work Rhetoric:**

In order to assess how Georgia social work professionals address the foster care housing shortage issue, this study analyzes rhetoric from Christian, Ford, and Forston. Again, this analysis will take cues from Smith’s work and examine which subjects are emphasized in social work rhetoric, how subjects are characterized, and how the speaker uses narrative style.

Additionally, this analysis will identify how these social work professionals employ ethos appeals, what tone they use, and what the main purpose of their rhetoric appears to be. In conducting this analysis, the study aims to identify the overall state of Georgia social work rhetoric concerning foster care housing.

Analyzing Christian's rhetoric when discussing the foster care housing topic reveals a focus on the amount of foster children in need of homes and parents. The main subject of Christian's rhetoric, the high number of children in need of homes, shows through Christian's repeated use of quantifying data. For example, Christian points out that "[foster parents] want this one child, and we need you to be able to take three, or take two," (Christian qtd in Elloy). Additionally, Christian cites "a recent increase in 15, 16, 17 year-olds who need homes," (Christian qtd in Elloy). By emphasizing these numbers in her discussion of foster housing, Christian establishes a consistent subject in her narrative. This subject is high numbers of children in need of foster housing, as contrasted with an inadequate amount of foster parents providing homes for these children.

While establishing this housing disparity as her main subject, Christian's rhetoric also demonstrates usage of Smith's characterization and narrative style concepts. For example, when discussing the foster care housing issue in terms of how prospective foster parents influence the issue, Christian characterizes foster parents as being too particular about the age of the foster child they care for and how many children they will care for (Christian qtd in Elloy). This characterization works to portray the foster care housing issue as an issue with prospective foster parents, rather than with the increased number of children in need of care that Christian established as her subject. This characterization and subject are thus paired together in Christian's rhetoric to form a narrative about large numbers of foster children being overlooked

by prospective foster parents who only want “one child” in “the 0-6 [age] range” (Christian qtd in Elloy). This narrative style shapes Christian’s rhetoric and allows her to discuss the foster care housing issue and factors influencing it through the lens of a narrative about foster children not being housed and cared for due to prospective foster parents’ refusal to foster multiple children, and/or children not in their desired age range. Overall, Christian’s rhetoric centers on this narrative, while also keeping the foster children in need as the main subject of the discussion.

Similar to Christian, rhetoric from Forston emphasizes the number of foster children in need as the main subject. Forston also characterizes the foster care housing issue as an issue with prospective foster parents. However, in a departure from Christian’s rhetoric, Forston characterizes the issue in terms of there not being enough people choosing “to step up” and become foster parents (Forston qtd in Campbell). This characterization of the housing issue works in tandem with Forston’s subject to build a narrative about large numbers of foster children being underserved by a low number of foster parents. For example, Forston’s mention of “112 children in Haralson County who are in the custody of the state” introduces the subject and then immediately contrasts it with the fact that there are “only 15 foster homes in the county” (Forston qtd in Campbell). While characterizing the housing issue as an issue of too few foster parents being available to house foster children, Forston also introduces an emotional appeal that aids her narrative style. This emotional appeal shows when Forston states that there is a “desperate need” for more families to care for and house foster children in Haralson County (Forston qtd. in Campbell). This emotional element to Forston’s rhetoric is important to her narrative style, as it pairs her main subjects with a set of wants and needs. In doing so, Forston’s narrative style clarifies her viewpoint on the housing topic and her thoughts on how this issue needs to be addressed. Emphasizing the lack of housing and a feeling of desperation about the

need for more families, Forston rhetoric employs narrative style in a way that both clearly characterizes the housing topic as an issue of too little foster families available to care for the amount of foster children in need, and helps construct her argument about the need for families in this part of Georgia to take an active role in addressing the housing issue.

Echoing rhetoric from Forston, Ford also highlights the number of families available to house Georgia's foster children. In the context of the larger discussion in Georgia about legislation allowing LGBTQ couples to be refused from adoption or housing foster children, Ford also seems to employ a narrative style that stresses acceptance of LGBTQ couples as an important factor in addressing the lack of housing for foster children. Ford first identifies foster parents as the main subject of her rhetoric when she states, "The need for adoptive parents is great," (Ford qtd. in Hart). Similar to Forston, Ford emphasizes the role of prospective foster parents in the foster care housing crisis. In contrast, Ford makes prospective foster parents the subject of her rhetoric, while Forston keeps foster children the subject of her rhetoric. While Forston introduces foster parents in order to characterize the housing issue, Ford makes prospective foster parents the main subject of her rhetoric. By portraying prospective foster parents as the main subject of her rhetoric, Ford is able to then characterize the housing issue in terms the prospective foster parents' experiences. This becomes evident when Ford begins characterizing the housing issue, saying:

LSG feels that any time we limit the number of potential homes or place restrictions on families and individuals who are willing and capable of adopting or fostering, that it has the potential to result in fewer homes being open and more children waiting longer times to be placed. (Ford qtd. in Hart).

In context of legislation about LGBTQ couples being able to adopt/foster children, Ford's rhetoric here characterizes the housing issue as an issue with the potential foster parents being limited or restricted from housing the children in need. This characterization is an essential part of Ford's narrative style, as it constructs a narrative arc in which her main subject, prospective foster parents, are barred from their goal of housing foster children in need. Ford develops this style and characterization further when she discusses discrimination against prospective foster families, stating that her organization's policy to "not discriminate against prospective foster or adoptive parents based on gender, marital status, sexual orientation, race, country of origin, age, or religious affiliation," (Ford qtd in Hart). Rhetoric such as this continues to characterize the housing issue in terms of discrimination against prospective foster parents with certain identities. Overall, this characterization paired with Ford's style and focus on prospective foster parents as the main subject of her rhetoric helps form a distinct argument about the foster care housing topic. In a departure from Forston and Christian, Ford focuses on prospective foster parents and uses specific characterization and narrative style in order to portray discrimination and restrictions against certain types of prospective foster parents as major factors in the foster care housing issue.

Analyzing social work rhetoric from Christian, Forston, and Ford reveals a common focus on there being too few prospective foster parents to house the amount of foster children in Georgia. Despite differing subjects and characterization, each social worker's rhetoric centered around the need for more foster parents/families. Overall, the consensus gleaned from this analysis shows that Georgia's social work professionals understand an increase in foster families as the most important factor in addressing the foster care housing issue.



### Political Rhetoric:

In order to assess how Georgia politicians address the foster care housing issue, this study analyzes rhetoric from Speaker of the House Ralston, Senator Ligon, and Governor Deal. This analysis will take cues from Fetzer and Bull's work and examine how these politicians use the four verb forms (event, subjectification, communication, and intention) to convey their stance on the foster care housing issue. Tone and subject will also be analyzed in order to further understand each politician's stance on the issue. In conducting this analysis, the study will also identify the overall state of Georgia political rhetoric about the foster care housing issue.

In keeping with trends from California's and New York's political rhetoric, rhetoric from the three Georgia politicians uses action verbs the most out of each of the four main verbs forms outlined by Fetzer and Bull. Throughout their discussion of foster care issues in Georgia, Ralston, Ligon, and Deal each use these action verbs to discuss Georgia's foster care housing crisis in relation to Senate Bill 375, which allows "faith-based adoption and foster care agencies" to restrict "LGBT couples, interfaith couples, single parents, unwed couples or other parents to whom the agency has a religious objection" from adopting or fostering children in need (Hart). In this discussion, Ralston's use of action verbs can be understood as his way of projecting his competency and capability in addressing the foster care housing topic. For example, this is demonstrated in Ralston's use of action verbs such as "refuse to keep," "deny," and "get adopted" in the phrase "I refuse to keep Georgia's children in foster care for another year and deny them the opportunity [to] get adopted" (qtd. in Sheinin). In this case, Ralston's use of action verbs serves as an attempt to display his competency in addressing the foster care housing issue. By using these action verbs to pinpoint increased adoptions as a major goal in fixing the foster care housing crisis, Ralston projects an image of himself as a capable leader with a firm

understanding of Georgia's foster care issues. In contrast, Ligon's use of action verbs focuses on a different facet of the foster care issue. Instead of addressing the housing crisis, his rhetoric centers on defending S.B. 375. For example, this is demonstrated in Ligon's use of action verbs such as "ensure" and "may violate" (qtd. in Hennie). Both examples include action verbs that Ligon uses when defending his support for S.B. 375. Ligon's use of these action verbs represents an attempt to portray himself as a competent leader and his support of S.B. 375 as a suitable response to the foster care housing crisis. As governor, Deal's rhetoric about the foster care topic is markedly vaguer than Ralston's and Ligon's. While still using action verbs, Deal often uses them to make broad assertions, rather than addressing specific issues. For example, Deal uses action verbs in the phrases "act quickly," "to protect," and "send me a clean bill" (qtd. in Sheinin). These action verbs serve mainly as a vehicle for Deal to express his acknowledgement of the necessity for solutions to the foster care housing crisis. While expressing this acknowledgement, the vague subject matter of Deal's rhetoric demonstrates that his main purpose is to convey an image of himself as a competent leader, rather than to take an active role in the foster care housing crisis discussion.

Despite the way Deal's use of action verbs communicates an apparent focus on conveying an image of leadership, the context in which he employs communication verbs demonstrates his competence in engaging the foster housing crisis. This shows most clearly in Deal's statement, "This is a much-needed reform to our adoption code, which hasn't been addressed for 27 years" (qtd. in Sheinin). In this case, both Deal's reference to Georgia's history of foster care policy and his use of the communication verb 'addressed' help him demonstrate his competence as a leader in Georgia's foster care reform discussion. As Fetzer and Bull discuss, communication verbs "primarily target responsiveness" (127). Thus, Deal's use of

communication verbs in this context further evidences his competence in responding to the foster care housing crisis. While communication verbs are absent from Ralston's rhetorical samples, Ligon makes use of communication verbs in a similar context as his use of action verbs. Again defending his support of S.B. 375 allowing religiously affiliated adoption/foster care agencies to refuse certain people (such as LGBTQ couples) from caring for foster children, Ligon uses the communication verb "ask" in the statement: "It is a fact that faith-based agencies have been shut down in some states because the power of the state came and said we're going to ask you to do things that may violate your mission statement" (qtd. in Hennie). In this statement, Ligon uses communication verbs to apparently demonstrate his responsiveness to concerns from religious organizations rather than to the foster care housing crisis. This is indicative of an overall trend in Ligon's foster care rhetoric of a prioritization of religious liberty rather than of finding solutions to the foster care housing crisis.

After analyzing this rhetoric, this study finds Georgia's political rhetoric about foster care reform to be in a state of conflict. Though Ralston, and to a lesser degree, Deal both discuss the need for solutions to house the foster children in need, Ligon's rhetoric focuses the foster care discussion more on a need for protecting religiously affiliated adoption/foster care agencies. These messages become evident through a dissection of the verb forms, subject, and tone in each politician's rhetoric. Comparing the results of this analysis helps this study come to the understanding of Georgia's political rhetoric about foster care being in a state of conflict.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Discussion**

With rhetoric from California, New York, and Georgia analyzed, this study will now assess the success and relevancy of reform measures pursued within each state. Additionally, this discussion will highlight and describe the communication relationship between social workers and politicians in each state and identify how this relationship correlates to the success and relevancy of foster care reform within the state.

#### **California**

Both social workers and politicians in California focused their rhetoric on the problematic prescription rate and practices within the state's foster care system. The main attitudes and approaches toward this issue remain similar between the two groups, despite differences in style and tone both between the groups and within the groups. These differences seem to not have a significant negative impact on foster care reform policies pursued within this state, as evidenced by the relevant legislation that California has passed in regards to foster care prescription practices.

A bill by Senator Monning will serve as a representative example of reform legislation in California. In order to prove relevant and applicable to the foster care prescription issue, this

legislation must specifically address the practices discussed in rhetoric from both groups in a way that could feasibly help reduce the foster care prescription rate. Senate Bill (SB) 253 serves as a strong example of legislation that conforms to these guidelines. This bill, penned by Senator Monning and featured in detail on his website, is described as legislation which will “create a more rigorous process” which “mandates the use of health care standards...when authorizing the use of psychotropic medication” on foster children (Stitt). To assess the relevancy of this legislation, the bill will be evaluated according to standards identified from the analysis of rhetoric from politicians and social workers on the foster care prescription issue: 1. Does the legislation discuss foster care prescription practices?; 2. Does the bill propose changes to these practices?; and 3. Could the bill lower the foster care prescription rate? By emphasizing the “process” involved in prescribing psychotropics to foster children, SB 253 meets the first standard. The second evaluation criterion is then met when the bill introduces new standards for this prescription process. Finally, the third criterion is met because SB 253 has the ability to lower the prescription rate by making the process by which foster children are prescribed psychotropics more difficult and thorough. From this evaluation, SB 253 demonstrates the relevancy of foster care reform measures pursued in California. Additionally, this successfully relevant legislation demonstrates a correlation to the strong communication relationship between social workers and politicians in the state.

### **New York**

The communication relationship between social workers and politicians in New York demonstrates fewer similarities than the California case’s communication relationship. Though both groups center their rhetoric on the discussion of CPS responses, the main subjects and

purposes identified by politicians and social workers demonstrate few points of agreement.

While social work rhetoric identifies overwhelming caseloads as a key factor in the CPS responses issue, political rhetoric within the state seems to focus on fundamental flaws in the CPS system. These differences appear to have a significant correlation to the success of foster care reform measures proposed to address CPS responses in the state.

A policy featured in Gillibrand's rhetoric, The National Adoption and Foster Care Home Study Act, will serve as an example of reform legislation in New York. In order to be classified as relevant and successful, this legislation must specifically address ways in which to improve CPS responses. The National Adoption and Foster Care Home Study Act will be judged on the following criterion: 1. Does this legislation identify CPS responses as a main reform issue?; 2. Does this legislation propose reform measures designed to improve CPS responses?; and 3. Could this bill feasibly impact the quality of CPS responses? To judge this legislation on the first criterion, this study looks at how Gillibrand discusses the act. Explaining that the bill "would update our child welfare system" by focusing on how children are matched to families, Gillibrand's rhetoric suggests that this act does not directly identify CPS responses as a main reform issue (Gillibrand qtd. in KCP). Additionally, this focus on family matching demonstrates that the act also does not meet the second criterion, as it does not propose reform measures which discuss reforms regarding CPS responses. Finally, this act fails to meet the third standard because by focusing on family matching instead of issues affecting CPS responses (such as foster care panic and high caseloads), the act fails to introduce solution that could feasibly affect or improve the CPS responses issue. By this criteria, foster care reform legislation pursued in New York appears to be unsuccessful and irrelevant to the CPS responses issue. This legislative

failure is correlated to the conflicted communication relationship between social workers and politicians within the state.

## **Georgia**

The communication relationship between social workers and politicians in Georgia demonstrates some similarities in a focus on finding solution to housing foster children in need, but also shows conflict in Ligon's divergent emphasis on religious protection for foster care agencies. Though Ralston's and Deal's rhetoric seems to share a similar subject matter to the social work rhetoric, Ligon's rhetoric is a departure that troubles the communication relationship between Georgia's social workers and politicians. This departure seems to have a significant impact on the relevance of foster care measures pursued within the state, especially when analyzing S.B. 375.

As mentioned in earlier passages, S.B. 375 is a foster care reform bill that notably allows religiously affiliated adoption/foster care agencies to refuse to allow certain people (such as LGBTQ couples) from adopting/foster a child in need. In order to be classified as relevant and successful within the scope of this study, this bill must specifically address ways in which to address the foster care housing crisis. This study will judge S.B. 375 on the following criteria: 1. Does this legislation identify housing for foster children as one of its main reform goals?; 2. Does this legislation propose measures that would help address the foster care housing crisis?; and 3. Could this bill feasibly increase the housing available for foster children in Georgia? To judge this bill on the first criterion, the study looks at language used within the bill that cites that bill as the "Keep Faith in Adoption and Foster Care Act," and discusses how the bill aims to allow "a child-placing agency" to cite "sincerely held religious beliefs" as reason for declining to

place a child with certain families (“SB 375 2017-2018 Regular Session”). As this language makes clear, the bill focuses mainly on religious protections for adoption/foster care agencies, thus failing the objective to identify housing for foster children as one of its main reform goals. Additionally, this sole focus on religious protections leads S.B. 375 to fail the second and third criterion as well, as it provides/proposes no feasible measures to address the foster care housing issue. Like the New York case study, this legislative failure in Georgia correlates to a conflicted communication relationship between the state’s social workers and politicians.



## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusion**

Overall, by examining these cases and communication relationships, this study found that a state having a social work/political communication relationship that shares a focus on similar subjects seems to correlate to that state's foster care reform measures proving successful. This finding is supported by the California case, wherein state social workers and politicians both centered their foster care rhetoric on the need for changes to the prescription practices associated with the state's high foster care psychotropic prescription rate. By focusing on the same main topics and areas in need of change, California's social worker/politician communication relationship demonstrates strong cohesion and agreement. Correlated to this relationship is the success and relevancy of foster care reform legislation pursued within the state.

Now looking at the New York and Georgia cases, the study found that rhetoric between the two groups (social workers and politicians) demonstrated significant points of divergence and disagreement. While in California both groups' rhetoric identified similar causes and issues, social workers and politicians in New York and Georgia appeared divided on the subject of foster care reform measures. These discordant communication relationships correlate to unsuccessful/irrelevant foster care legislation pursued in both states. As explained earlier, foster care legislation in both New York failed to address factors that would impact the quality of CPS

responses, and legislation in Georgia failed to address ways to improve the state's foster care housing shortage.

As these cases demonstrate, the social worker/politician communication relationship within a state seems to show a strong correlation to the success and relevancy of foster care reform legislation pursued within the state. The harmonious relationship and successful legislation in California compared to the conflicted relationship and unsuccessful legislation in New York and Georgia suggests these factors are of high importance when evaluating a state's foster care reform work. Thus, this study concludes that this correlation suggests that a state may be able to improve the relevancy of their reform legislation by building a stronger communication relationship between social workers and politicians within the state.

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## Appendix

### Rhetorical Samples from Each State

#### California

##### Social Work Rhetoric:

- Rochelle Trochtenberg, California foster care ombudsperson and former foster child
  - ““What I see in these numbers is: We don’t really treat, we use chemical restraints. We drug,” said Trochtenberg, “Medications are so overused — and so significantly — that it’s outrageous there’s such a lack of leadership in holding doctors accountable and holding the system accountable.”” (Trochtenberg qtd. in de Sá and Seipel).
  - ““These are kids that are hurting — these are children who have been through what we know war veterans have been through,” Trochtenberg said. “But where is the accountability? The person who has the authority to write a prescription is where we need accountability. We still don’t have that.”” (Trochtenberg qtd. in de Sá and Seipel)
  - “I don’t want to tell people I have a tremor because I was drugged for my whole adolescence.” (Trochtenberg qtd. in “Drugging Our Kids”).
  - ““I felt like I was a prisoner in my own body,” said Rochelle Trochtenberg” (Trochtenberg qtd. in “Drugging Our Kids”).
  - “You know, it sucks when you’re like 15 and putting on makeup or brushing your teeth seems like climbing a mountain. And on psychotropic drugs, sometimes that’s how it felt. I just felt like my brain was disconnected from my body. And

everything felt like a mental exercise to overcome those side effects,”  
(Trochtenberg qtd. in “Drugging Our Kids”).

- William Lightbourne, director of California’s Department of Social Services
  - “...There’s a very deep concern about the volume” of psychotropic drugs prescribed to foster youth. “Yes, we do want to bring that number down,” he said.” (Lightbourne qtd. in “Senate Panel”).
  - “Foster children deserve “nonmedical treatments whenever possible,” Lightbourne said.” (Lightbourne qtd. in “Senate Panel”).
  - ““Our goal is only having meds used when all other systems have been used [first],” Lightbourne said.” (Lightbourne qtd. in Gorn)
  - ““Clearly there are some situations in which psychotropic prescriptions may be appropriate,” Lightbourne said. “We have to know that something is being done because it’s absolutely necessary, not because it’s convenient — that it’s not simply behavior management.”” (Lightbourne qtd. in “Drugging Our Kids”).
  - ““There are things that are much better handled through therapies,” he said. “Psychotropics should be the end, not the start.”” (Lightbourne qtd. in “Drugging Our Kids”).
  
- Lori Medina, director of Santa Clara County’s Department of Family and Children’s Services

- ““The symptoms around these children’s trauma cannot just be remediated with medication. There has to be other approaches,” Medina said.” (Medina qtd. in “Senate Panel”).
- “Each recommendation that a child receive medication for mental health issues goes through “a very rigorous process” and must be approved by a Superior Court judge before the youth may be treated with them,” (Medina qtd. in Burbank).
- “Medina said the county’s Mental Health Department is looking at contracting with an expert panel to review the cases of foster care children authorized to receive psychotropic, or brain-changing medication,” (Medina qtd. in Burbank).

#### Political Rhetoric:

- Senator Jim Beall
  - ““Long-term use of psychotropic medications can lead to obesity, diabetes, heart disease “and in some cases, death,” Beall said. “We must provide alternative therapies to kids, and we need an alert system to notify us of potential abuse,” Beall added.”” (Beall qtd. in Gorn)
  - ““Drugging and sedating children should never be considered the primary option in lieu of counseling, therapy and appropriate treatment,”” (Beall qtd. in Korry)
  - ““We cannot use psychotropic drugs as a crutch to control behavior,” Beall said. “We must provide alternative options and services to kids, so they can get well without the use of these drugs.”” (Beall qtd. in Gorn)
  
- Senator Mike McGuire



- “Mike McGuire said past failures to act are now “simply unacceptable,” resulting in thousands of California foster youth who “have fallen victim to inaction, and at times politics,”” (McGuire qtd. in “Senate Panel”)
- ““Sometimes there’s good reason [for foster youth] to be sad and angry. And drugs have become the first response in this state,” McGuire said.” (McGuire qtd. in Gorn)
- “It’s time for the state to be a better parent,” (McGuire qtd. in Gorn).
- Senator Bill Monning
  - “The bill provides the courts with key factors to consider when making the potentially life-changing medical decision to prescribe psychotropic drugs to a foster child. It is our obligation to protect the wellbeing of foster youth in California and given the serious risks associated with the administration of these powerful drugs, there needs to be thoughtful guidelines prior to authorization.” (Monning qtd. in Stitt).
  - ““SB 253 represents an important step in establishing increased scrutiny of the harmful medications prescribed to foster children,” Monning said in a statement.” (Monning qtd. in Canady).
  - “Monning’s bill would provide courts with second medical opinions and require health exams before a child is prescribed an antipsychotic. “I clearly see these as health care issues and fundamental human rights issues,” Monning said.” (Monning qtd. in “California Foster Care”).

**New York**

## Social Work Rhetoric:

- Rochelle Lowe, ACS caseworker
  - “You are in constant fear, nervous, anxiety, wake up early in the morning thinking about what you have to do to make sure the kids are safe,” (Lowe qtd. in Hoffer, “Exclusive”).
  - “Lowe, who is a caseworker in the Bronx, said she's handling 19 cases and that her office has not been fully staffed in more than a year. She said retaining staff is nearly impossible because of the added pressures.” (“Exclusive”).
  - “People don't want to be arrested because something slipped through the cracks because they are overwhelmed, we don't have a lot of workers because everyone is leaving due to what is going on, people are afraid,” (Lowe qtd. in “Exclusive”).
- Chaton Alexander, ACS caseworker
  - Alexander: “The total number [of cases] now is actually 18.”  
Reporter: “ACS says average is 13 to 14 cases.”  
Alexander: “I think that was more so two years ago, not currently cause currently a lot of staff that have left and we are taking up the slack.” (Alexander qtd. in “Exclusive”).
  - “We are too overwhelmed to be effective and a case aide and other supportive services would lighten that load,” (Alexander qtd. in “Exclusive”).
- Richard Wexler, Child Welfare Advocate

- ““Case workers are terrified of having the next high-profile case on their caseload so they rush to take away a whole lot of children needlessly," said Richard Wexler, Child Welfare Advocate. Wexler calls it foster care panic.” (Wexler qtd. in “Investigation”).
- “A foster care panic is the ultimate child welfare mistake, it overloads the system, harms wrongfully removed and leaves workers less time to find children in real danger,” (Wexler qtd. in “Investigation”).
- “Workers are so overloaded, they're not given any case the attention it deserves so they actually miss the children in real danger,” (Wexler qtd. in “Investigation”)
- “Foster care panic means that workers are terrified of having the next high-profile tragedy on their hands. So they rush to remove children needlessly. We've seen this in New York many times before.” (Wexler qtd. in Pope-Sussman)

#### Political Rhetoric:

- Thomas Spota, Suffolk District Attorney
  - “The foster care system in the state of New York is a bureaucratic nightmare,” (Spota qtd. in Eltman)
  - “There has to be some corrections that are made, especially with respect to how these [ACS] agencies interact with each other,” (Spota qtd. in Eltman).
  - ““There was virtually no contact by ACS with these children or the foster parent,” Spota said. “They basically delegated every single responsibility they had to these nonprofit agencies and said to them, 'They're yours. Goodbye.' And that is so wrong.” (Spota qtd. in Eltman).

- Senator Karen Gillibrand
  - “Thousands of children enter New York’s child welfare system and wait to be placed with a foster or for adoptive family every year, but our outdated child welfare system can’t keep up with the need and ends up preventing many children from finding loving and stable families to welcome them in,” (Gillibrand qtd. in Kings County Politics).
  - “Boys and girls who live in the child welfare system are some of the most vulnerable among us, and Congress has a responsibility to help them grow up and reach their potential just like any other child has the opportunity to do,” (Gillibrand qtd. in Kings County Politics).
  - “The National Adoption and Foster Care Home Study Act would update our child welfare system, so that these children can be better matched to families who will meet their needs, take care of them, and protect them,” (Gillibrand qtd. in Kings County Politics).

## **Georgia**

### Social Work Rhetoric:

- Robin Forston, resource development recruiter for the Polk and Haralson County Division of Family and Children Services
  - “As we sit here today, there are 112 children in Haralson County who are in the custody of the state, and we have only 15 foster homes in the county,” (Forston qtd in Campbell)

- “We are in desperate need for families in Haralson County to step up and make sure these children remain in their hometown communities so that they aren’t moved across the state.” (Forston qtd in Campbell)
  
- Akiva Ford, foster care and adoptions manager for Lutheran Services of Georgia in Atlanta
  - “The need for adoptive parents is great,” (Ford qtd. in Hart).
  - “LSG feels that any time we limit the number of potential homes or place restrictions on families and individuals who are willing and capable of adopting or fostering, that it has the potential to result in fewer homes being open and more children waiting longer times to be placed,” (Ford qtd. in Hart).
  - “Lutheran Services of Georgia’s policy is that we do not discriminate against prospective foster or adoptive parents based on gender, marital status, sexual orientation, race, country of origin, age, or religious affiliation, but instead seek individuals and couples with a great capacity to love and nurture and a desire to make a difference in the life of a child,” (Ford qtd. In Hart).
  
- Michelle Christian, foster care program manager for Devereux Georgia Treatment Center
  - “Couples will come in and they’ll think, oh I want to be a foster parent, I want the 0-6 [age] range...You know, they want this one child, and we need you to be able to take three, or take two.” (Christian qtd in Elloy)

- “There's been a recent increase in 15, 16, 17 year-olds who need homes just to be able to graduate from high school and again to just remember living in a home,” (Christian qtd in Elloy).

#### Political Rhetoric:

- David Ralston, Georgia's Speaker of the House
  - “I refuse to keep Georgia's children in foster care for another year and deny them the opportunity get adopted,” (Ralston qtd in Sheinin).
  - “Ralston told the AJC it is “disappointing and troubling” that the Senate waited until now to add a “divisive” amendment to an important bill.” (Ralston qtd in Sheinin)
  - “The quickest and most reasonable way to get [the foster care bill] passed is for them to remove this language that they chose to put on, as I understand it, about an hour before it came into a Senate committee. That's the right way to do it.” (Ralston qtd in Sheinin)
- Senator William Ligon
  - “The amendment was brought to ensure that agencies that have historically provided services for many years will continue to do so,” (Ligon qtd in Hennie)
  - “It is a fact that faith-based agencies have been shut down in some states because the power of the state came and said we're going to ask you to do things that may violate your mission statement. We don't want that to happen in this state. We want to ensure that there are many places available to put children in good loving

homes. The intent and the effect of the bill has been grossly misconstrued,”  
(Ligon qtd in Hennie)

- Governor Nathan Deal
  - “Act quickly to protect our most vulnerable citizens and send me a clean bill I can sign,” (Deal qtd in Sheinin).
  - “This is a much-needed reform to our adoption code, which hasn’t been addressed for 27 years,” (Deal qtd in Sheinin)
  - “[The foster care bill] would make the adoption process easier for children and families, and we must do everything in our power to protect our foster children,” (Deal qtd in Sheinin)
  - “...Remove the amendment and act quickly to pass this bill,” (Deal qtd in Sheinin)