

**Columbus Consolidated Government
Council Meeting Agenda Item**

TO:	Mayor and Councilors
AGENDA SUBJECT:	Memorandum of Understanding Between the City of Columbus, the Juvenile Court of Muscogee County, and the Georgia Office of the Child Advocate
AGENDA SUMMARY:	Approval is requested to execute a Memorandum of Understanding between the Columbus Consolidated Government (“CCG”), the Juvenile Court of Muscogee County, and the Georgia Office of the Child Advocate (“OCA”) for participation in its Quality Legal Representation IV-E Program to allow the City to receive reimbursement for a percentage of fees paid by the Juvenile Court to attorneys for parents and children in dependency cases.
INITIATED BY:	Juvenile Court of Muscogee County

Recommendation: Approval is requested to execute a Memorandum of Understanding between the Columbus Consolidated Government (“CCG”), the Juvenile Court of Muscogee County, and the Georgia Office of the Child Advocate (“OCA”) for participation in its Quality Legal Representation IV-E Program to allow the City to receive reimbursement for a percentage of fees paid by the Juvenile Court to attorneys for parents and children in dependency cases.

Background: Georgia requires juvenile courts to appoint and pay for attorneys for indigent parents and children in certain proceedings. Title IV-E of the Social Security Act permits federal reimbursement of certain costs associated with independent legal representation of eligible children and parents in child welfare proceedings. The Georgia Office of the Child Advocate ("OCA") administers the Quality Legal Representation IV-E Program ("Program") through which participating local governments may obtain partial reimbursement of qualifying expenditures for legal representation.

Under the proposed MOU, OCA will administer the Title IV-E reimbursement process and remit to the City of Columbus 80% of the Title IV-E funds reimbursed based upon qualifying expenditures by the County, with OCA retaining 20% for costs associated with administration of the Program. The amount of reimbursement varies based in part upon the applicable federal Title IV-E penetration rate.

For the most recently completed fiscal year, the Juvenile Court spent \$376,648.81 for attorneys representing indigent parents and children. Using the most recently published penetration rate of 32.94%, participation in the Program would have resulted in approximately \$124,068.12 in Title

IV-E reimbursement attributable to those expenditures, of which approximately \$99,254.49 would have been remitted to the City of Columbus after OCA's 20% administrative retention.

The proposed MOU is for two years and has a retroactive start date of July 1, 2026.

Analysis: A resolution is needed to allow the City Manager to execute the Memorandum of Understanding.

Financial Considerations: There is no direct financial contribution required from the City to participate in the Program. OCA will retain 20% of Title IV-E funds reimbursed from the City's qualifying expenditures to cover OCA's costs of administering the Program, with the remaining 80% remitted to the City.

Legal Considerations: Any agreement involving the City of Columbus requires Council approval.

Recommendations/Actions: Approval is requested to allow the City Manager to execute Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Columbus, the Juvenile Court of Muscogee County, and the Georgia Office of the Child Advocate for participation in the Quality Legal Representation IV-E Program to allow the City to receive reimbursement for a percentage of fees paid by the Juvenile Court to attorneys for parents and children in dependency cases.

Execution of the MOU is required for the City of Columbus to participate in OCA's Quality Legal Representation IV-E Program and receive its share of Title IV-E reimbursements obtained through the Program.

A RESOLUTION

NO.

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE CITY OF COLUMBUS, THE JUVENILE COURT OF MUSCOGEE COUNTY, AND THE GEORGIA OFFICE OF THE CHILD ADVOCATE FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE QUALITY LEGAL REPRESENTATION IV-E PROGRAM.

WHEREAS, the State of Georgia provides a statutory right to counsel for parents and children in certain child welfare proceedings pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 15-11-103, and counties and juvenile courts are responsible for implementing and paying for this right to counsel; and

WHEREAS, Title IV-E of the Social Security Act permits federal reimbursement of certain costs associated with independent legal representation of eligible children and parents in child welfare proceedings; and

WHEREAS, the Georgia Office of the Child Advocate administers the Quality Legal Representation IV-E Program to assist participating jurisdictions in enhancing the quality of legal representation in dependency proceedings and obtaining available Title IV-E reimbursement for qualifying legal-representation expenditures; and

WHEREAS, participation in the Program will permit the City of Columbus to receive a portion of Title IV-E funds reimbursed based upon qualifying expenditures for legal representation provided to children and parents in dependency and related child welfare proceedings; and

WHEREAS, the City of Columbus, the Juvenile Court of Muscogee County, and the Georgia Office of the Child Advocate desire to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding establishing their respective responsibilities for participation in the Program;

NOW, THEREFORE, THE COUNCIL OF COLUMBUS, GEORGIA, HEREBY RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:

That the City Manager is hereby authorized to execute a Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Columbus, the Juvenile Court of Muscogee County, and the Georgia Office of the Child Advocate for participation in the Quality Legal Representation IV-E Program.

Introduced at a regular meeting of the Council of Columbus, Georgia held on the 8th day of September 2026, adopted at said meeting by the affirmative vote of _____ members of said Council.

Councilor Allen voting	_____.
Councilor Barnes voting	_____.
Councilor Chambers voting	_____.
Councilor Cogle voting	_____.
Councilor Cook voting	_____.
Councilor Crabb voting	_____.
Councilor Davis voting	_____.
Councilor Garrett voting	_____.
Councilor Huff voting	_____.
Councilor Tucker voting	_____.

Lindsey G. McLemore, Clerk of Council

B.H. “Skip” Henderson III, Mayor