FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
September 10, 2015

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Governor Baker Appoints Maria Z. Mossaides as Child Advocate
Seasoned Children’s Rights Champion Tapped to Head Office of Child Advocate

BOSTON – Governor Charlie Baker today named Maria Z. Mossaides to the position of Child Advocate. Maria is a skilled attorney, advocate and executive with nearly four decades of experience in child welfare, government and court administration.

“Maria is well known and highly respected for her work to protect our most vulnerable citizens—our children,” said Governor Baker. “She has the knowledge, passion and integrity to provide an independent voice, ensuring children are safe and receive timely, quality services. I thank Judge Garinger for her years of devoted service to the Child Advocate and tireless efforts to support our families and children.”

“I went to law school many years ago to serve as an advocate for children. Child welfare is my soul work,” said Mossaides. “For me to work on a statewide basis to make sure that all children have the opportunity to thrive, I can’t think of a better job.”

Mossaides succeeds Gail Garinger, who retires on September 11th. Governor Baker has named former Commissioner of the Department of Social Services Linda Carlisle as Acting Child Advocate, effective tomorrow, until Mossaides’ appointment becomes effective on October 13th.

Appointed by Governor Bill Weld and then Secretary of Health and Human Services
Charlie Baker in 1993, Carlisle received a management award from the Child Welfare League of America as well as statewide recognition for improving adoptions. Last November, Carlisle also co-chaired Governor Baker’s “State of the State” transition committee, identifying priority issues for the incoming administration. Carlisle has a master’s degree in Public Affairs and Administration from Columbia University.

Mossaides has held senior positions within the Commonwealth’s Executive Office of Health & Human Services, Administration and Finance, and the Judiciary. As a consultant to the US Office of Civil Rights, she helped ensure equal education to minority, female and disabled children. As acting commissioner of the Office of Children, she successfully advocated for changes to permit the reporting of institutional abuse and neglect.

Since 2008, Mossaides has served as Executive Director of Cambridge Family and Children’s Service, which supports youth and strengthens families in more than 100 cities and towns across Massachusetts. She has also served on the board of the Children’s League of Massachusetts, including as its chair from 2012 - 2014. The League is an umbrella organization that represents over 80 private organizations and individuals that collectively advocate for public policies and quality services for children and families.

“Maria’s vast experience as an advocate, lawyer and executive in both the public and private sectors provides the perfect platform for the Commonwealth’s Child Advocate,” said Marylou Sudders, Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, who chaired the nominating committee. “She will use data to understand systemic issues that impact the lives of children in the Commonwealth and her ability to work closely with the Legislature and the many stakeholders will ensure that policy solutions can be adopted and implemented.”

In 2008, the Legislature passed a law establishing the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) to ensure children placed in the care of the Commonwealth receive humane and dignified treatment, examine on a system-wide basis the care and services provided to children and advise the public and government on how to improve services to children and families.

The process for selection of the Child Advocate is also delineated in law and consists of a 14 member nominating committee representing state human service agencies, non-profit child advocacy agencies, the juvenile court, the social work professional association and social work union.

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