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Statement from Candice Jones, Director, Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice on the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability Advisory Recommendation

SPRINGFIELD –Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) Director Candice Jones today issued the following statement:

“On February 12, the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) announced the closure of the Illinois Youth Center at Kewanee as part of the State’s strategy to further shift towards a model of rehabilitating youth that aligns with national best practices, strengthens youth outcomes and improves community safety.

“Since that time, the Department has followed the process outlined in State law to move forward with the closure of IYC-Kewanee. We have met with employees, legislators, community leaders and youth advocates to provide context, answer questions and plan for the future.

“Last week’s advisory vote by the Members of the Illinois Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability is disheartening. It is hard to justify keeping a facility open when the Department has excess capacity, outcomes for youth are poor, and the State’s resources are sparse.

“We must focus on a meaningful dialogue about how to change Illinois’ juvenile justice system to improve public safety through better youth outcomes.

“While we are disappointed in the advisory recommendation from the Illinois Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability, we recognized the potential for a vote against closure and the need to outline next steps if the Commission made such a vote. The Department will move forward with closure of IYC-Kewanee in recognition of national best practices based around high-intensity individualized services for high-risk youth in its facilities. We will continue to work with IYC-Kewanee employees to secure placement in IDJJ or other State agencies’ vacant positions.

“By closing this large, maximum-security facility, IDJJ will be able to transition to developing smaller, regional treatment-focused facilities that are proven to be more effective in rehabilitating youth. That’s good for taxpayers, youth, families, and our communities.”

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