January 14, 2011

To Chancellor Bantz and the Chancellor's award selection Committee,

I would like to address you in support of Dr. Roberta Hibbard in the hopes that the Chancellor and his committee will select her as the recipient of the 2011 Chancellor's Faculty Award for Excellence in Civic Engagement. For almost twenty years I have worked with and solicited assistance from Dr. Roberta Hibbard. She exemplifies professional service to not only the specialized child abuse community but also to those who benefit from an informed, coordinated and professional response to abuse.

While Dr. Hibbard's Curriculum Vitae is undoubtedly long, I would like to take the opportunity to provide you with a more personal view of just a few of her accomplishments. As some background, child abuse has not always been recognized, certainly not in the area of sexual abuse. During the 1980's police officers began to seek ways to better investigate and identify abuse while prosecutors became more vested in prosecuting these crimes. While detectives could interview children, getting a medical exam for the child from a physician who had knowledge of sexual abuse wasn't always possible. During this time, Dr. Hibbard came to Indiana University and began a specialized program to provide sexual assault exams to children. Although she was not alone in this process, Dr. Hibbard was frequently the voice who provided what investigators and prosecutors needed most, training.

Dr. Hibbard has provided medical advice and education for a multitude of prosecutors, police officers and CPS case workers over the years. As someone who was a new prosecutor in the early 90's, I was and still am greatly indebted to Dr. Hibbard for her willingness to explain the mysteries of anatomy, injuries and normal exams. There were many times when I placed Dr. Hibbard on the witness stand just to explain to the jury that the term "normal exam" didn't necessarily mean that a child wasn't sexually abused, but to explain how sexual abuse doesn't always leave lasting injuries. As an expert she is always as quick to point out when an injury is accidental as when one may be due to abuse. This unbiased view has garnered her great respect among professionals who depend on an honest, experience evaluation of a child.

In addition to the formal trainings she routinely conducted, Dr. Hibbard also made herself available to answer specific questions. Having a physician with her expertise to provide guidance was essential to helping investigators and prosecutors become more knowledgeable and therefore more effective in their duties.

In 1994 Dr. Hibbard approached me with the idea of starting a Child Fatality Review Team in Marion County. Within a few months, Dr. Hibbard had convinced the local coroner and pathologist to join the team and located meeting space. Law Enforcement and CPS were included and in the fall of 1994 the Marion County Child Fatality Review Team began to meet. Dr. Hibbard chaired the first meeting and has chaired the Team ever since. Through these meetings, the members discussed the deaths of children which were not attributable to medical causes. During early meetings we were consistently presented with the loss of infants whose deaths were classified as SIDS but died while sleeping in situations which were unsafe. At this point Dr. Hibbard expanded the team to include members of the SIDS prevention community. This lead to a subcommittee of the team which now provides safe cribs for parents who are unable to afford appropriate beds for their newborns. Over the years new members have been added to address trends identified by the team, all in an attempt to provide a safer community for children.

In addition to the Child Fatality Review Team, Dr. Hibbard has been a consistent member of the Marion County Child Protection Team and the Marion County Child Advocacy Center. The Child Protection Team is composed of various members of the community whose specialized knowledge allow them to review Child Protective Service cases and procedures to provide suggestions for bettering their service to children. During the review process, Dr. Hibbard 's contributions have helped the team properly assess cases to increase the welfare of children in Marion County.

The last community contribution that I would like to emphasize is Dr. Hibbard's participation in the Marion County Child Advocacy Center and through it, Finding Words Indiana. The purpose of a child advocacy center is to create an environment where a multidisciplinary team can investigate child abuse allegations in a child friendly manner. This approach reduces the trauma to the child and helps investigators gain the best information possible to accurately assess the criminal and safety consequences associated with the allegations. Initially the multidisciplinary team included only law enforcement, Child Protective Services and the prosecutor's office. As one of the leading authorities in the state on Child Abuse, Dr. Hibbard's membership on the team greatly enhanced the team's ability to assist children one child at a time. While the Child Protection Team looks to improve the system, the multidisciplinary team at the Marion County Child Advocacy Center is focused on individual children. As a member of the team, Dr. Hibbard's responsibilities are two -fold, to provide medical examinations and care to the children who require exams and then to assist the other team members in assessing what happened to the child and how best to proceed. I don't think that anyone could count the multitude of phone calls Dr. Hibbard has made over the years not only for purposes of routine assessments, but also to alert agencies to emergent situations that require immediate assistance. We have been so fortunate to have her in Indianapolis.

As part of the child friendly environment offered by advocacy centers, many centers including Marion County, provide Forensic Child Interviewers who are included in the multidisciplinary team. Finding Words is an intensive hands on educational program that prepares Forensic Child Interviewers, law enforcement officers, child protection case workers and prosecutors to interview children in a non-threatening but detailed manner. Dr. Hibbard felt that, as members of the multidisciplinary team, she and her associates would benefit from interview training as well. I sat

with her through the week long Finding Words training course. As the course progressed, Dr. Hibbard recognized that the training program could be improved by adding a medical piece. At the end of the week, she volunteered her services to help train future participants and has been doing so ever since. Finding Words provides multiple trainings each year for participants from all over the State of Indiana.

Through the years Dr. Roberta Hibbard has been both a catalyst, for increasing the community's response to child abuse, and the glue which has cemented effective partnerships between stakeholders. I would like to thank Dr. Hibbard for her dedication and ask that you consider the benefits she has provided to the community when awarding the Chancellor's Faculty Award for Excellence in Civic Engagement for 2011.

Respectfully,

Suzanne O'Malley
Assistant Executive Director
Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Counsel
Former Marion County Deputy Prosecuting Attorney