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Lorraine Ausley Honored with 2025 Chiles Advocate Award

The Chiles Advocate Award acknowledges decades of leadership and commitment to advancing child welfare in Florida

TALLAHASSEE, FL – March 27, 2025 – Lorraine Ausley, a dedicated champion for Florida's children, has been named the 2025 recipient of the prestigious Chiles Advocate Award. This Children's Week Florida™ award, named in honor of former Florida Governor Lawton Chiles and his wife, Rhea, recognizes individuals who have demonstrated exceptional advocacy for the well-being of children and families across the state and around the nation.

For more than 25 years, Ausley has championed for children, teens and families. Her commitment to Florida's future generation began at the Governor's office when she served as Chief of Staff to Lieutenant Governor Buddy MacKay. Here she worked alongside the Chiles family, advocating for an investment in early childhood education. This foundational experience shaped her decision to enter public office, where she served as a legislator for over a decade. Throughout, she remained focused on improving child care, healthcare and support services for Florida's youngest citizens.

"Ausley's work has not only shaped policy at the state level, but also brought lasting change to local communities," said Erin Smeltzer, president and CEO of the Children's Forum, the organizing partner of Children's Week Florida™. "Her unwavering dedication to improving the lives of children is exactly what this award represents, and we are grateful for her continued leadership in this crucial area."

Among her many accomplishments, Ausley was instrumental in the creation of the Florida Children's Cabinet, which has shaped state policy for child welfare. She also played a key role in the establishment of Whole Child Leon, an initiative that has advocated for children in Leon County for over two decades. In 2020, she helped establish the Children's Services Council, further solidifying her commitment to children's advocacy in her community. Currently, Ausley serves as the incoming board chair for the Institute for Child Success (ICS), an organization that works across 30 states to implement innovative programs aimed at improving outcomes for children.



The Chiles Advocate Award will be presented at the Annual Children's Week Florida Advocacy Dinner and Awards Ceremony on Monday, April 14, where state leaders, policymakers and child advocates gather to celebrate those shaping the future for Florida's youth.

For more information about Children's Week Florida™, please visit childrensweek.org or call 850-487-6300.

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About Children's Week Florida™: Children's Week Florida™ is the largest annual event held in the state that celebrates its commitment to children, youth, and advocates. The event, held each year at the Capitol during the legislative session, seeks to elevate the diverse needs of Florida's children and youth to our state leaders while acknowledging their achievements.