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COURT OF APPEALS TO REVIEW ELDORADO CUSTODY HEARING PROCESS

AUSTIN, Texas – The Third Court of Appeals has decided to hear arguments over whether the State of Texas can place children from the Fundamentalist Church of Latter Day Saints currently in their custody into foster care without giving each of their families the opportunity to defend themselves in court.

The decision comes after Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA), the leading provider of legal aid in Texas, filed a request with the Court to order State District Judge Barbara Walther to hold hearings where each family would be able to respond to allegations of abuse. TRLA is arguing that the children should not be sent to various locations throughout the state until the Court decides whether these hearings should take place.

“These families have the right to have their voices heard in the legal process,” said TRLA attorney Robert Doggett. “The idea that these children can be taken away without giving their families the opportunity to address allegations and fight to stay together is absurd.”

The Court will conduct a hearing on April 29th at 2:00 pm in the matter. Though the State of Texas has said that all of the Eldorado children would be placed into foster care by the end of the week, these developments make it unclear as to whether that will still occur. More than 100 of the children were taken to facilities across Texas on Tuesday.

Added Doggett, “Our hope is that the State will do what is in the best interests of the children. Spreading them out across Texas before the Court makes its decision would only traumatize them even further.”

Established in 1970, Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Inc. (TRLA) is a nonprofit organization that provides free civil legal services to low-income and disadvantaged clients in a 68-county service area. TRLA’s mission is to promote the dignity, self-sufficiency, safety and stability of low-income Texas residents by providing high-quality legal assistance and related educational services.

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