



May 30, 2026

National Associate for Counsel for Children
2026 Promoting Excellence Award for Outstanding Law Student

Dear Nominating Committee for the 2026 Promoting Excellence Awards

My name is Chris Henderson. I am the Executive Director with the Colorado Office of the Child's Representative ([OCR](#)), a state agency that gives children/youth a voice in legal proceedings through high-quality legal representation that protects and promotes child/youth voice, rights, and interests. I have represented children involved in the child welfare and delinquency systems since 2004. In the early 2000s, I attended law school in California on a full tuition scholarship, just as Ms. Davis is doing at the University of Colorado Law. I am honored to write this letter of recommendation for Ms. Davis, and I highly recommend her for the 2026 Outstanding Law Student Award.

I have known Ms. Davis for five years, as a member of OCR's Lived Experts Action Panel ([LEAP](#)). LEAP is a group of young people with lived expertise in Colorado's child welfare, juvenile delinquency, and/or truancy systems who participate in OCR's efforts to create and improve laws, policies, and practices in ways that advance youth voice, rights, and interests. In the time I have known Ms. Davis, I have observed many characteristics that would make her an excellent lawyer and a person who deserves recognition as an outstanding law student. I will highlight three here – her experience with the child welfare system, her skills and experience, and her demonstrated commitment to public service.

Ms. Davis has lived experience.

When Ms. Davis was six years old, she and her siblings entered the foster care system after their mother passed away. Years later, Ms. Davis and her siblings reunited with their father, only to endure years of abuse and neglect. Throughout those years – while Ms. Davis and her siblings were facing things no child should ever have to face – Ms. Davis fought and advocated for herself and her siblings. She cared for her siblings. She worked whenever she could to support them. She spoke with school personnel about what was going on in her home. She repeatedly called Child Protective Services (CPS) on her own family, reporting concerns asking for help. Then, one day while sixteen-year-old Ms. Davis was at work, she received the call she had been fighting for - a caseworker was coming to pick up her and her siblings. The worker asked her to pack everyone's belongings. She left work, rushed home, and did exactly that. And, as demonstrated by the examples provided throughout this letter, she has been actively engaged in systems advocacy ever since.

Ms. Davis has beaten the odds.

A *Colorado Sun* [article](#) reported that “[c]hildren who grow up in foster care in Colorado have lower graduation rates than any other group – including kids who are homeless. Only 40% of foster teens graduate from high school on time, according to Colorado Department of Education data. Ms. Davis not only beat those odds by graduating from high school in four years, but she graduated with a 3.5 grade point average. Not only did Ms. Davis enter Denver University as an undergraduate student, but she graduated with a 3.76 grade point average and a minor in Social Sciences. In addition to her academic success, she participated in leadership programs and mock trial, worked two jobs, and studied abroad. She is now attending the University of Colorado Law School where she is



earning a 3.38 grade point average and participating in mock trial and Women's Law Caucus, and Public Service Pledge.

In addition to her academic prowess, Ms. Davis is an excellent communicator. In addition to hearing her deliver pre-prepared speeches and presentations to large and small audiences on numerous occasions, I have also heard her speak on an impromptu basis during LEAP meetings, while training new OCR attorneys, in a podcast, and in a presentation to a national audience. During each of these events, Ms. Davis demonstrated natural communication skills. She is one of those rare people who neither needs to be nor seeks the spotlight, but shines when she is in the spotlight. Her substance is intelligent, wise, thoughtful, and concise. Her delivery is eloquent, poised, and strong. After a recent event, feedback included, "Your voice [...was] incredibly impactful [...s]everal [audience members] have shared [...] that they really enjoyed the session and we even had a few [audience members] drive down just for your session."

Ms. Davis is a dedicated public servant.

Before LEAP, Ms. Davis volunteered at her church, in fundraising activities, at a thrift store, and through a tutoring program. In her LEAP application, she indicated she wanted to pursue a law degree and career "to help right some of the wrongs within the [foster care] system and child rights", she had advocated for these and other such things for some time, and she "want[ed] to make a difference in others' lives" and "be part of change." As a LEAP member, she has done exactly that. Examples follow.

- She provided valuable input about the questions OCR asks during attorney interviews, resulting in the addition of interview questions related to interviewee's education and experience related to trauma and how interviewees would prepare young people who must testify in their cases.
- She trained new OCR attorneys, providing practical tips based on her experiences in the system and with her attorney Guardian Ad Litem ("GAL").
- She participated in a state committee developing training curricula for department of social services caseworkers. This work included, but was not limited to, Ms. Davis's participation in a [podcast](#) explaining the importance of youth voice - why young people aged 12 and older with child welfare cases should be represented by Counsel for Youth ("CFY") who represent the direct interests of such youth, rather than an attorney Guardian *Ad Litem* ("GAL") who represents what GALs determined is in the best interests of youth.
- She completed the national [Foster Youth Internship Program](#) overseen by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, a D.C.-based nonprofit that raises awareness about the needs of children without families. Her project recommended that Congress support stable foster home placements by reintroducing the Trauma-Informed Care Act and adding provisions requiring 25 hours of post-traumatic stress disorder training and additional resources to provide effective trauma-informed therapy for youth in the system.
- Ms. Davis completed Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) training and will advocate for children in child welfare cases.



In closing, Ms. Davis has told me that she would like to become a lawyer, judge, and Supreme Court Justice. If past performance is any indicator of future success, I have no doubt that Ms. Davis will achieve these or any other goals she sets for herself. I look forward to saying, "I knew her when...." And for the reasons outlined in this letter, I strongly recommend that she be selected as the 2026 NACC Promoting Excellence, Outstanding Law Student.

Please contact me if you need additional information. It is always a pleasure to share information about Ms. Davis.

Sincerely,
/s/

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