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Press Release

Akerman and National CASA/GAL Association for Children Announce 2020 Recipient of Academic Excellence Scholarship for Foster Youth

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Related People

Beth Zafonte

Akerman LLP, a top 100 U.S. law firm serving clients across the Americas, and the National Court Appointed Special Advocate /Guardian ad Litem Association for Children (National CASA/GAL Association) today announced Idelia Robinson-Confer, of Greensburg, Pennsylvania, an incoming junior at California University of Pennsylvania, as the 2020 recipient of the Akerman Academic Excellence Scholarship.

The Akerman Scholarship, which awards $2,500 a year for up to four years of higher education, is funded through an endowment established in 2015 as part of the firm's historic $1 million pledge to the National CASA/GAL Association. The endowment supports young adults who have spent part of their childhood in the foster care system, by helping minimize the financial burden of higher education. The honorees demonstrate outstanding academic commitment and readiness for success.

"Idelia possesses the grit, resilience, and drive necessary to achieve her dreams," said Beth Zafonte, chair of Akerman's Philanthropic Council. "She has the proven perseverance to flourish in life, having risen above obstacles and roadblocks that no child should not have to endure. The Akerman

Scholarship will ease financial constraints and help Idelia achieve her goals."

"Fostering the futures for all of our youth is an important initiative of National CASA/GAL Association. Our partnership with Akerman is just one of the many ways we are able to help exceptional youth like Idelia achieve their full potential," said Tara Perry, CEO for National CASA/GAL Association. "We are committed to supporting and strengthening older youth and expending resources to youth who are preparing to age out of foster care."

Robinson-Confer is a dedicated advocate for homeless youth in foster care, drawing from her own experiences when she entered the foster care system at the age of 13. She is actively involved in organizations and initiatives that directly address the needs of local neglected youth. Robinson-Confer testified on two occasions in support of resources for homeless youth before members of the Pennsylvania State House. Influenced by her own struggle owning proper clothing, as a high school student she organized a clothing drive for children in foster care. The overwhelming response led to part of the contributed clothing being donated to the Children's Bureau. In 2017, her outstanding leadership abilities were recognized with the Judge Feliciani Youth Leadership Award, presented to young adults in Westmoreland, Pennsylvania, who have displayed outstanding commitment to their community and volunteerism.

As a college student, Robinson-Confer has excelled in her studies, while continuing her advocacy by helping establish an on-campus organization in support of fellow students in foster care. Robinson-Confer is pursuing an undergraduate degree in psychology while maintaining a 4.0 major GPA. She is also pursuing a minor in Leadership Studies. Upon graduation, she aspires to leave a positive impact on children and youth who have similarly experienced the foster care system. She wants to help children in foster care understand that their background does

not stop them from being successful. Robinson-Confer, a first-generation college student, will also pursue a master's degree.

Robinson-Confer was nominated by Florence Jenkins, her CASA volunteer since entering the foster care system. In their six-year relationship, Jenkins has advocated on behalf of the wellbeing of Robinson-Confer during court proceedings. Studies demonstrate the invaluable benefits a CASA volunteer brings to a child's life. Children with a CASA/GAL advocate are more likely to do better in school. Only 46 percent of youth in foster care earn a high school diploma, compared to 84 percent of all students nationwide. Only 15 percent of foster youth attend postsecondary institutions, with only about one percent completing college due to insufficient support, lack of appropriate guidance, and unmet financial needs. The goal of the Akerman Scholarship is to help these students afford higher learning so that they will be more successful after they age out of foster care and live independently.

About Akerman
Akerman LLP is a top 100 U.S. law firm recognized among the most forward thinking firms in the industry by *Financial Times*. Its more than 700 lawyers and business professionals collaborate with the world's most successful enterprises and entrepreneurs to navigate change, seize opportunities, and help drive innovation and growth. Akerman is known for its results in middle market M&A and complex disputes, and for helping clients achieve their most important business objectives in the financial services, real estate and other dynamic sectors across the United States and Latin America.

About National CASA/GAL Association for Children
The National CASA/GAL Association for Children, together with its 950 state and local member programs, supports and promotes court-appointed volunteer advocacy so every abused or neglected child in the United States can be safe, have a permanent home and have the opportunity to thrive.

The National CASA/GAL Association offers leadership and support to the network of programs and leads its continued growth. nationalcasagal.org.