

# **INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

## **Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the 2023 Interim**

**August 24, 2023**

### **Call to Order and Roll Call**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Local Government was held on Thursday, August 24, 2023, at 11:00 AM, in South Wing C, Room 101-104 of the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center in Louisville, Kentucky. Senator Robby Mills, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Robby Mills, Co-Chair; Representative Randy Bridges, Co-Chair; Senators Cassie Chambers Armstrong, Greg Elkins, Michael J. Nemes, Brandon J. Storm, Damon Thayer, Phillip Wheeler, and Gex Williams; Representatives Adam Bowling, George Brown Jr., Jonathan Dixon, Steven Doan, Deanna Frazier Gordon, Chris Freeland, Mary Beth Imes, Matt Lockett, Michael Meredith, Rebecca Raymer, Sarah Stalker, and Pamela Stevenson.

Guests: Mayor Craig Greenberg, Louisville/Jefferson County Metro Government; W. Bryan Hubbard, Kentucky Opioid Abatement Advisory Commission; Bryanna Carroll, Kentucky League of Cities; Alan Keck, City of Somerset; Alecia Webb Edgington, Life Learning Center; Suzie Razmus, City of Corbin; Gary Moore, Boone County; Dan Mosely, Harlan County; Lauren Carr, Graves County; and Jim Henderson and Shellie Hampton, Kentucky Association of Counties.

LRC Staff: Mark Mitchell, Christopher Jacovitch, and Logan Schaaf.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Upon a motion and a second, the minutes from the July 24, 2023, meeting were approved.

### **Welcoming Remarks**

Craig Greenberg, Mayor, Louisville/Jefferson Metro Government welcomed the committee to Louisville. Mayor Greenberg noted Louisville's momentum toward becoming safer, stronger, and healthier and thanked the General Assembly for passing 2023 House Bill 3, which provided assistance for the youth detention center, House Bill 207, which allowed law enforcement agencies to create their own wellness programs, House Bill 380, that will help with officer shortages that many police departments are facing, and House Bill 551, that expanded sports wagering in Kentucky.

The mayor affirmed that he looked forward to initiatives that will not only benefit Louisville, but the Commonwealth, as well. Louisville hopes to augment public safety, expand economic development, and provide universal pre-k.

### **Opioid Fund Distribution to Local Governments and the State**

W. Bryan Hubbard, Executive Director of the Kentucky Opioid Abatement Advisory Commission (KYOAAC) provided an overview of grants that were announced in April 2023 to be awarded in September 2023. Kentucky will receive a total of \$842 million in annual disbursements through 2038. Half goes to cities and counties directly, with the remaining half going to KYOAAC to be distributed through grant awards. The funds must be used for opioid abatement purposes as set out in KRS 15.291. KYOAAC awarded over \$8 million to 24 organizations in April of this year.

Mr. Hubbard noted several specific awards and provided extra detail on three awards. Operation Unite received an award. Its mission is to reduce substance misuse and decrease overdose deaths through prevention, education, and the dissemination of information. Operation Unite will provide quarterly reporting on its actions. Volunteers of America was another recipient of grant money. It will provide a combination of family recovery court and recovery community center programs in Clay, Lincoln, and Pulaski counties. It will also provide supporting services to help individuals achieve and maintain sobriety. Volunteers of America will, in addition to other data points, provide information on the number of cases served each year, client satisfaction surveys, and details about weekly harm reduction meetings. The YMCA of Greater Louisville was the last recipient to be discussed. The YMCA will expand its YNOW mentoring program to overcome barriers to success to minors who have been impacted by the incarceration of a parent due to drug use. The YMCA will provide quarterly reporting on such points as outcome assessment measures, and verification of mentor and youth participants.

In response to a question from Senator Wheeler, Mr. Hubbard said, speaking as only one of eleven commissioners, that there are three long-term strategic goals to fight the opioid crisis. Kentucky must develop a child-based prevention infrastructure that connects children whose families have been impacted by the opioid epidemic to reliable sanctuary, stability, and their individual spirituality. In addition, all barriers than can be removed to individuals who are trying to achieve long-term recovery should be removed. Lastly, Kentucky must explore its “Manhattan Project” opportunity which is remaining open to any therapy that can deliver results that are better than any existing treatment models presently in use. Many resources are being used in abstinence-based treatment and medically-assisted treatment that primarily consist of suboxone and methadone. Some of the companies that produce opioids also produce these drugs. Exploration is being conducted on the potential therapeutic modality that may be able to diversify, expand, and improve upon the existing treatment infrastructure—an infrastructure that is working very

hard, yet not delivering results quickly enough or at the scale needed to overcome the epidemic.

Senator Wheeler suggested that Kentucky should consider allocating one-time resources to existing treatments that will provide access to additional federal resources.

In response to a question from Representative Bridges, Mr. Hubbard said that the thought was to perhaps devote \$42 million to ibogaine treatment research through a public private partnership over the next six years. The entity would need to match the grant.

In response to another question from Representative Bridges, Mr. Hubbard said that the distribution of moneys in general is a result of the grant submissions presented to the commission. In the first round of awards, the commission reviewed around 70 applications. Of those, 24 were deemed to be legally compliant and socially consequential. The commission strives to make a good geographic distribution of resources in consideration of the geographic origins of the grant proposals.

Representative Bridges asked Mr. Hubbard for a list of grant allocations.

In response to a question from Representative Lockett, Mr. Hubbard said that the commission prioritized transparency and seeks to award grants to entities that provide services, rather than to those that seek to line pocketbooks.

Ms. Bryanna Carroll, Director of Public Affairs with the Kentucky League of Cities (KLC), provided an overview of city-oriented uses of the opioid abatement grant money. Cities received their first allocation of opioid settlement funds last December. There are no time limits on when the funds may be obligated or expended. In light of the devastation of opioid abuse, the funds are miniscule, but cities are trying to put the funds to the best use. Cities are using the funds to buy naloxone, pay for emergency services for substance abuse, provide training for personnel, and to provide education about opioid use and disposal. Many cities are pooling their resources and leveraging the moneys.

Mayor Alan Keck, City of Somerset, noted the success of the Life Learning Center in Covington, and said that Somerset needed a similar program. Drugs have torn the community apart, and the money, gratefully accepted, will not fully cover the damage. The money received by Somerset must be leveraged with programs like the Life Learning Center, as well as private employers.

Ms. Alecia Webb Edgington, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Life Learning Center, noted that her service with the Kentucky State Police brought her in and around the world of narcotics. About 35 years ago she met philanthropist William P. Butler. He developed a program aimed at assisting people out of poverty. The Life Learning Center's curriculum was developed therefrom and assists people in dealing with substance

abuse, mental health issues, and criminal convictions. The Life Learning Center couples a continuum of care and education in a 12-week program built upon five pillars: physical, financial, emotional, relational, and spiritual. For people to regain their dignity, they must have a job at a living wage or getting a post-secondary degree. The Life Learning Center's activities are data-driven. Only 32 percent of the center's \$2 million budget is from state or federal funding. The balance is community sourced. The center has 283 employer partners. The center has two key measures: recidivism rate (of which participants experience an 8 percent rate, while the national average is 83 percent) and the amount of money put back in the workforce (of which the center has put back in, to date, \$4.8 million).

Mayor Suzie Razmus, City of Corbin, discussed Corbin's award from the settlement. Citing familiarity with Eastern Kentucky University's Scholar House, which is primarily for substance abuse disorder affected single parents wanting to further their education, the mayor noted ECU's campus in Corbin. Adding a Scholar House program in the city within the campus would be a desirable use of settlement funds, but only with the help of partners, such as Volunteers of America.

Judge/Executive Gary Moore, of Boone County, discussed his involvement with the National Association of Counties' (NACo) opioid task force. The settlement was not based on population, but on the direct opioid impact to states. Boone County consulted with local officials and created a segregated fund to receive the settlement moneys. Boone County's first priority is to provide police, or first response, navigators. They will assist with calls involving drug use so that police and other first responders can focus elsewhere. Another priority deals with substance abuse disorder and mental health treatment in jails. The county will fund an assessment person to work with the courts to facilitate the best placement for individuals with these issues outside of the jail. The county will provide funding for its drug strike force so that Boone County will not be a preferred locality in which to sell drugs. The county is also providing gap funding for the Northern Kentucky region in general.

Judge/Executive Dan Mosely, of Harlan County, discussed his region's issues with opioids. Harlan County benefitted from Operation Unite, and coalitions were formed therefrom for recovery. The coalitions are comprised of persons who are committed to assisting individuals out of addiction and toward recovery. The Harlan County region also has a good treatment ecosystem. Kentucky is leading the way in recovery efforts. One initiative in Harlan County is a one stop shop for people wanting help involving Casey's Law. Another use of funds that will be used in jails is the purchasing and use of the Bridge device. This wearable electronic device assists with lessening withdrawal symptoms.

Ms. Lauren Carr, Project Coordinator with the Graves County Agency for Substance Abuse Policy/Prevention, noted her family's experience with substance abuse disorder involving her brother. Her experience contributed to her professional pursuits in helping others with substance abuse disorders. Shame and stigma are pervasive throughout the

Commonwealth, no matter the size of the locality. Harm reduction is a way to use settlement moneys, and a syringe exchange program is a component of harm reduction.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.