

BUDGET REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES

Minutes of the 1st Meeting of the 2023 Interim

June 7, 2023

Call to Order and Roll Call

The 1st meeting of the Budget Review Subcommittee on Health and Family Services was held on June 7, 2023, at 10:30 AM in Room 129 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Danny Bentley, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Danny Bentley, Co-Chair; Senator Donald Douglas, Co-Chair; Senator Amanda Mays Bledsoe, Representative Jason Petrie, Representative Brandon Reed, Senator Karen Berg, Senator Lindsey Tichenor, Representative Adam Bowling, Representative Ken Fleming, and Representative Lisa Willner.

Guests: Eric Friedlander, Secretary, Cabinet for Health and Family Services; Lesa Dennis, Acting Commissioner, Department for Community Based Services, Cabinet for Health and Family Services; Jennifer Hancock, President & Chief Executive Officer, Volunteers of America; Lisa Lee, Commissioner, Department for Medicaid Services, Cabinet for Health and Family Services

LRC Staff: Miriam Fordham, Kevin Newton, and Benjamin Thompson.

Status Update on Social Worker Recruitment and Hiring

Secretary Friedlander and Acting Commissioner Dennis provided information regarding the number of social workers employed by the Department for Community Based Services (DCBS).

In response to a question from Chair Bentley, Ms. Dennis noted that there are just over one thousand social workers employed by the DCBS.

In response to a question from Representative Willner, Secretary Friedlander noted that the acuity level for children receiving services for behavioral and mental health issues had increased over the last five years. Ms. Dennis noted that the DCBS is working with the federal government on a five year prevention plan.

In response to questions from Representative Petrie, Secretary Friedlander stated that the DCBS was short on social worker hires for Fiscal Year 2022. The DCBS had hired an additional twenty-five social workers. Secretary Friedlander noted that he was unaware of any plans to utilize the funds designated for additional social workers for another purpose.

Funding for Substance Abuse Recovery Services

Ms. Hancock provided an overview of the substance abuse recovery services provided by the Volunteers of America.

In response to a question from Senator Douglas, Ms. Hancock noted that recovery courts are an additional layer of support for families. Recovery courts allow judges to operate in a therapeutic manner to accelerate family reunification.

Status Update on 2023 Regular Session Senate Joint Resolution 54

Secretary Friedlander and Commissioner Lee provided an update on the implementation of Section 3 of 2023 Regular Session SJR 54 which requires the Department for Medicaid Services to examine the reimbursement rates for outpatient pediatric therapy providers.

In response to a question from Representative Willner, Commissioner Lee noted that the cabinet has the funds to pay for a third-party audit as the federal government will pay half the cost.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the subcommittee, the meeting was adjourned at 11:46 AM.