

BUDGET REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES

Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the 2026 Interim

September 2, 2026

Call to Order and Roll Call

The third meeting of the Budget Review Subcommittee on Health and Family Services was held on September 2, 2026, at 10:30 AM (ET)/9:30 AM (CT) in Room 129 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Craig Richardson, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Craig Richardson, Co-Chair; Representative Wade Williams, Co-Chair; Senators Stephen Meredith and Karen Berg; and Representatives Samara Heavrin, Kimberly Poore Moser, Robert Duvall, Ken Fleming, DJ Johnson, Rebecca Raymer, Lisa Willner, and Nick Wilson.

Guests: Russell Cox, President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO); Dr. Steve Hester, Senior Vice President and Chief Clinical and Strategy Officer; and Renee Murphy, Senior Vice President and Chief Marketing and Communications Officer, Norton Healthcare.

LRC Staff: Sara Rome and Jennifer Luttrell.

Approval of Minutes

Representative Fleming moved to approve the minutes from the June 3, 2026 meeting. Senator Meredith seconded the motion, and the body approved the minutes unanimously.

Norton Children's Pediatric Village

Russell Cox, President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO); Dr. Steve Hester, Senior Vice President and Chief Clinical and Strategy Officer; and Renee Murphy, Senior Vice President and Chief Marketing and Communications Officer at Norton Healthcare, provided an overview of the Norton Children's Pediatric Village.

In response to Senator Berg's inquiries, President Cox highlighted the pediatric village's potential to serve as a central hub for the region. Addressing workforce concerns is crucial to managing challenges and allocating resources effectively statewide. Training in Emergency Department Services (EDS) serves as the primary defense, allowing flexible resource deployment, which may require a regional approach because covering all 120 counties is impractical. Regional operations can also enhance transportation options for rapid patient access. Dr. Hester added that pediatric-trained emergency room physicians,

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along with administrative teams and nursing staff from hospitals statewide, should assess local facilities to ensure they have the equipment and training needed for pediatric cases, both in trauma situations and overall health care.

In response to Representative Duvall, President Cox explained that Norton West Louisville Hospital was established in the most underserved part of the community. Partnering with Dare to Care, the hospital promotes healthy nutrition and access to food. Additionally, Norton is working with the Department of Agriculture on the "Food is Medicine" initiative to improve community perceptions of food and nutrition. Dr. Hester said these programs aim to educate families on healthy eating and food preparation so they can thrive.

Dr. Hester explained to Representative Williams that Norton Healthcare is integrating mental health professionals, like psychologists and social workers, into primary care offices for direct access to services. This model has been effective in addressing the common concern of futility raised in listening sessions.

In response to Representative Moser, President Cox and Dr. Hester said Norton Healthcare is partnering with Kentucky's educational institutions to promote healthcare careers. The Norton Scholars program pays students' tuition in exchange for a 2- to 3-year work commitment. Norton is also using risk scores to evaluate the long-term effects of life-changing events on families.

In response to Representative Willner, President Cox emphasized the importance of providing support through a partnership with Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC) and through research.

In response to Representative Fleming, President Cox said Norton Healthcare is using technology to enhance treatment plans and approaches, with the goal of better addressing patients' immediate needs and improving care integration. Dr. Hester noted that Norton has established programs with various specialists who review surgical cases weekly, and they plan to expand this model to include additional disciplines. President Cox mentioned that they will present a detailed program to the committee in 2028.

In response to Senator Berg, President Cox said addressing mental health care requires ongoing connection to remain effective.

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 11:54 AM (ET)/10:54 AM (CT).