

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the 2025 Interim

October 22, 2025

Call to Order and Roll Call

The fifth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Families and Children was held on October 22, 2025, at 1:00 PM in Room 149 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Danny Carroll, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Samara Heavrin, Co-Chair; Senator Danny Carroll, Co-Chair; Senators Shelley Funke Frommeyer, Rick Girdler, Keturah J. Herron, Amanda Mays Bledsoe, Stephen Meredith, Robin L. Webb, and Gex Williams; and Representatives Emily Callaway, Mike Clines, Stephanie Dietz, Steven Doan, Robert Duvall, Daniel Elliott, Kim Holloway, Kimberly Poore Moser, Sarah Stalker, and Nick Wilson.

Guests: Lesa Dennis, Commissioner, Department for Community Based Services (DCBS), Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS); Roger McCann, Director, Division of Family Support, DCBS, CHFS; Elizabeth Groginsky, Secretary, New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department; Shanna Crockett, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Specialist, Advocate, Papillion Center; and Holly LaFavers, Parent, Advocate.

LRC Staff: Logan Bush, Ben Payne, Cameron Franey, and Becky Lancaster.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the September 24, 2025, meeting was made by Senator Meredith, seconded by Co-Chair Heavrin, and approved by voice vote.

New Mexico's Child Care Program

Elizabeth Groginsky, Secretary, New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department, discussed the formation and composition of the Early Childhood Education and Care Department, and the process for the expansion of pre-kindergarten.

In response to Chair Carroll, Secretary Groginsky discussed initial, ongoing, and future investments in the Early Childhood Education budget for pre-kindergarten, percentages

of participating children, capacity for in-home early childhood education centers, range of growth in facilities, and benefits for facility owners to sustain a profit.

In response to Co-Chair Heavrin, Secretary Groginsky stated the expansion of in-home facilities was created through the staff family care network, early system childhood system coalitions, and other traditional partnerships. She stated the Early Childhood Education and Care Department is a cabinet of its own standing.

In response to Senator Funke Frommeyer, Secretary Groginsky stated there is an increase in the number of institutions with two- and four-year certificates for early childhood education programs and the maternal workforce participation rate is 10 percent higher than national standards.

In response to Representative Holloway, Secretary Groginsky stated New Mexico is ranked 22 in the United States for supplemental poverty rate. However, the kindergarten readiness assessment shows 75 percent of children are on track in all areas of development, and these measurements will be used to track how the investments into early childhood education are making an impact in long term outcomes.

Program Funding Cuts to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Lesa Dennis, Commissioner, DCBS, CHFS, discussed TANF block grant purposes, use of block grant funds, Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (KTAP) cash assistance, TANF transportation support services, TANF programs member growth and expectations for TANF spending, TANF supports for caregivers, needed budget realignment to serve safely, youth in nontraditional placements, and DCBS outreach programs.

In response to Chair Carroll, Commissioner Dennis stated DCBS cut 35 percent of benefits per recipient as opposed to cutting the number of recipients of SNAP and KTAP benefits; DCBS has been working closely with the provider community to allow for additional services and supports needed for the nontraditional youth placements; and DCBS has made adjustments within the budget to cover programs and reduce costs.

In response to Senator Webb, Commissioner Dennis discussed the budget cuts to the cash assistance program and the transportation support program; how DCBS is working with families to connect them with other resources in the community; and the reduction in KTAP benefits is allowed because the regulation states upon availability of funding.

In response to Senator Williams, Commissioner Dennis discussed how TANF funding is used to help families stay together, workforce supports, and other avenues that work with families.

In response Representative Moser, Commissioner Dennis stated DCBS reviewed the projections for state FY 2026 and based the reductions on what was needed to complete the budget for that year. She discussed the work requirements for eligible participants for the Kentucky Works Program (KWP) and the need for transportation assistance in rural areas.

In response to Senator Meredith, Commissioner Dennis stated DCBS would need approximately \$32 million additional funds to fully fund SNAP and KTAP.

In response to Senator Funke Frommeyer, Commissioner Dennis stated DCBS has case managers that work with KTAP and KWP participants and partner agencies to find employment and training opportunities and data on two-parent household participation rates.

In response Representative Callaway, Commissioner Dennis stated individuals must submit monthly documentation to DCBS with at least the minimum hours of participation completed to receive the transportation services; early program growth projections were based off of historical data; and the unexpected growth and need for the programs has resulted in the reduction of coverage.

In response Representative Stalker, Commissioner Dennis stated DCBS is working on a budget request, evaluating the programs, and working with out-of-home care staff to make them aware of available services and benefits.

In response to Chair Carroll, Commissioner Dennis stated the cost associated with care for youth with complex needs is the most for nontraditional out-of-home care.

Roger McCann, Director, Division of Family Support, DCBS, CHFS, discussed federal SNAP changes under H.R. 1 regarding administrative cost-sharing, payment error rates, citizenship requirements, Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) eligibility, SNAP education funding, work requirements, and training of staff to implement all of the changes.

In response to Representative Stalker, Mr. McCann discussed able bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD) qualifications regarding special needs youth, and recommended seeking assistance from local DCBS offices for parents or guardians with questions.

In response to Senator Funke Frommeyer, Mr. McCann stated federal regulations specify how often benefits are paid, and any changes would need to comply with those regulations. He stated he has concerns with added transaction costs to implement more frequent disbursements.

Discussion on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Shanna Crockett, FASD Specialist, Advocate, Papillion Center, discussed FASD characteristics, comorbidities within the FASD diagnosis along with behavior and cognitive issues, barriers to getting FASD diagnosed, her experience with her daughter diagnosed with FASD, support for alcohol-free pregnancies, and services provided by the Papillion Center.

Holly LaFavers, Parent, Advocate, discussed the social and health challenges, FASD statistics, her difficulties receiving services for her son diagnosed with FASD, lack of processing skills due to FASD, the FASD Respect Act benefits, and lack of FASD knowledge by health and educational professionals working with children.

In response to Representative Callaway, Ms. Crockett stated that prenatal damage from drugs typically works its way out of a baby's system by the age of seven, whereas the prenatal damage from alcohol does permanent damage to the child and a brain scan can show gray matter on the brain.

In response to Senator Williams, Ms. LaFevers stated many parents will look for other diagnoses to be able to receive benefits and supports for their child with FASD.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:02 PM.