

COMMISSION ON RACE & ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY

Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the 2022 Interim

August 23, 2022

Call to Order and Roll Call

The 3rd meeting of the Commission on Race & Access to Opportunity was held on Tuesday, August 23, 2022, at 3:00 PM, in Room 129 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Samara Heavrin, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator David P. Givens, Co-Chair; Representative Samara Heavrin, Co-Chair; Senators Karen Berg and Whitney Westerfield; Representatives George Brown Jr., Nima Kulkarni, and Killian Timoney; Hannah Drake, Dr. OJ Oleka, and Erwin Roberts.

Guests: Cathy Dykstra, President & CEO of Family Scholar House; Danita Hunt, Family Scholar House Graduate; Dr. Roland Johnson, Interim President, Kentucky State University; Dr. Daarel Burnette, Chief of Staff & COO, Kentucky State University; Dr. Gerald Shields, CFO, Kentucky State University; Dr. Aaron Thompson, President, Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education; Dr. Marty Pollio, Superintendent, Jefferson County Schools.

LRC Staff: Brandon White and Brett Gillispie.

Family Scholar House

Cathy Dykstra, President & CEO of Family Scholar House (FSH) and Danita Hunt, FSH Graduate, presented to the commission. FSH's mission is to combat poverty by helping families to gain access to quality education and achieve self-sufficiency. FSH manages both residential and non-residential programs dedicated to this mission. They are headquartered in Louisville and are particularly focused on Kentucky, but they serve 34 states. Their services are focused primarily on single parent households and at-risk children, and they provide families educational and financial resources as well as housing assistance. FSH has outreach centers servicing several colleges and universities around the Commonwealth, including Kentucky State University (KSU). Additionally, they operate a web app called myky.info, which helps families connect with free resources available to them in their area. Ms. Dykstra provided demographic information on the population served by FSH. Additionally, she provided a broad overview of FSH's demographics broken down by program. Ms. Dykstra emphasized childcare as a key issue facing FSH

participants. Other than the residential program, FSH's services include comprehensive academic coaching, apprenticeship coaching, family advocacy, and financial education. FSH provides services to 32,864 households across the Commonwealth.

Danita Hunt provided testimony about her experience with FSH. She described how FSH made a positive impact on her life and how she was able to pursue a career and care for her daughter as a result of aid she received from FSH. She came to FSH due to her relocation with her daughter to escape an unhealthy relationship. Because of the assistance she received, particularly the stable housing that FSH afforded to her, she was able to obtain a college education including a master's degree. Additionally, her daughter has been able to become valedictorian of her high school class and has been awarded a full academic scholarship from the University of Louisville.

In response to a question from Hannah Drake, Ms. Dykstra stated that FSH is measuring graduates' success based on their education, whether or not they graduate to stable employment and/or move on to graduate studies, whether they come off of government benefits, and whether they are able to access stable housing. Additionally, FSH tracks whether or not the children who participate in their programs go on to college as a separate metric from their other educational statistics.

In response to a question from Representative Kulkarni, Ms. Dykstra said that there are FSH locations in Covington and Elizabethtown, and that they are working to expand to locations outside of Kentucky.

In response to a question from Erwin Roberts, Ms. Dykstra said that there are two single fathers on the path to graduation, and that there is a pre-parent program that targets people who were formerly in the foster care system. 40% of the participants in the pre-parent program are male.

In response to a question from Senator Givens, Ms. Dykstra stated that FSH has 26 full-time staff and 26 part-time staff. Many of those staff are FSH graduates. They are receiving approximately \$1 million in funding annually, as well as an undefined amount from SNAP ENT. FSH was also awarded a \$2.8 million public health grant from AmeriCorps.

In response to a question from Senator Givens, Ms. Hunt said that she was motivated to succeed in FSH by the example of her mother working and caring for her while pursuing an education. She was motivated by the example of her grandmother and by her love for her daughter.

Kentucky State University & the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

Dr. Roland Johnson, Interim President, Kentucky State University (KSU); Dr. Daarel Burnette, Chief of Staff & COO, KSU; Dr. Gerald Shields, CFO, KSU; Dr. Aaron Thompson, President, Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education presented an update on the future of KSU. The remarks covered four key areas:

- Restoring KSU's purpose and financial viability – The presenters discussed prioritizing programs at KSU based on their financial viability and the impact they have on the student body.
- KSU's transformation – The presenters talked about how they plan to improve leadership and organization at KSU and increase the institution's resources and partnerships.
- Enabling an intended future for KSU – They detailed a three phase plan to first stabilize KSU, then improve its performance, then ensure its sustainability.
- The road ahead

The presenters also reaffirmed their commitment to HB 250 and the importance of KSU as an institution.

In response to a question from Senator Givens, Dr. Thompson stated that KSU's minority enrollment is up by 14.1% with a 6.9% decrease in overall enrollment, and the degree output for underrepresented minorities is up 41.3% with an overall increase of 17.8%.

In response to a question from Senator Givens, Dr. Johnson emphasized the experience of himself and his team in dealing with issues like those faced by KSU. Dr. Burnette added that retention would be a difficult problem to tackle, and that the university is losing about 60% of its students before they graduate. Dr. Shields said that the number one issue that he has faced as CFO is accountability and accuracy.

In response to a question from Dr. Oleka, Dr. Johnson stated that KSU's funding comes from three main sources: local/donor funding, state funding, and federal funding. Dr. Johnson also said that he was unsure of the exact amount of time for KSU's institutional transformation plan, and Dr. Burnette estimated 3-4 years as the timeline to not only stabilize the institution, but also to begin to build the infrastructure to meet its mission.

In response to a question from Hannah Drake, Dr. Johnson said that KSU is looking for students with intellectual vitality. He added that KSU is looking for students with curiosity, a passion for learning, and the grit to work hard for their educational goals.

In response to a question from Representative Kulkarni, Dr. Thompson said that universities such as KSU can have trouble retaining students due to several factors. Roughly 20% of students who leave during their freshman year leave due to academic

reasons, but that more commonly, the students are leaving due to the university social, emotional, and cultural misfit with the capabilities of the university. Students leaving KSU during their sophomore, junior, and senior years either no longer see the value of a college education or are experiencing financial difficulties. Students need greater access to aid, mentoring, internships, and tutoring, and that KSU needs to improve on its infrastructure to allow students the opportunity to learn and succeed both inside and outside of the classroom.

Jefferson County Public Schools

Dr. Marty Pollio participated in a question and answer session with the Commission regarding the JCPS new student assignment plan. Dr. Pollio believed that the previous JCPS student assignment plan was possibly the most racially inequitable system of any major metropolitan area in the United States.

In response to a question from Senator Givens, Dr. Pollio stated that children's classroom performance is strongly correlated with their socioeconomic status. He added that 25.2% of JCPS students on free or reduced lunch achieved proficient or higher test scores while 53.8% of non-economically disadvantaged students achieved these scores.

In response to a question from Senator Gives, Dr. Pollio said that JCPS is planning pay increases for educators and staff at high poverty schools in Jefferson County in order to attract quality candidates. He added that they have replaced a \$1,500 stipend with a \$8,000-14,000 addition to a teacher's salary and a \$10,000 addition to a principal's salary in order to attempt to reduce staff turnover.

In response to a question from Senator Givens, Dr. Pollio said that they have seen improvements in the achievement gaps and graduation rates for JCPS students, but COVID has negatively impacted lower income students at a greater rate than higher income students.

In response to a question from Hannah Drake, Dr. Pollio stated that JCPS implemented a racial equality commitment in 2018. He said that JCPS is committed to fostering a diverse learning environment. He added that since 1984, 95% of students bussed out of their communities in order to achieve diversity in JCPS schools were Black students from West Louisville. Dr. Pollio believes that this inequitable bussing has had a negative impact on student belonging for our neediest children in this community.

In response to a question from Dr. Oleka, Dr. Pollio said that he is looking for teachers who have the will to work with children, and that is more important than already having the skill set.

In response to a question from Dr. Oleka, Dr. Pollio said that concentration of poverty and homelessness in certain JCPS schools negatively impacts the students in those schools. Additionally, many of the students in these schools are English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. The challenges on school personnel to meet these needs is great, and he believes that labeling struggling schools as “failing” is not constructive or helpful to the faculty and staff working under these conditions at struggling schools. Louisville is one of the most heavily segregated large cities in the United States, both in terms of race and socioeconomic status. JCPS has been asked for many years to bridge this gap of diversity in the school system when there is no diversity in the surrounding community. As a result of these factors, the burden of diversifying JCPS schools has been placed on lower income students who are bussed outside their communities for school, while wealthier students have not faced this same burden. He is hoping to alleviate some of these issues by better funding at-risk schools and incentivizing talented teachers and staff to work in these schools.

In response to a question from Erwin Roberts, Dr. Pollio said that placing metal detectors in JCPS schools is impractical due to the number of staff that would be required to manage them, but that it is not impossible. He added that children are having greater access to illegal firearms and that this issue needs to be addressed.

In response to a question from Senator Berg, Dr. Pollio believes that there is a correlation between trauma and poverty, and that the strongest negative impact on students is childhood poverty.

With there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:18 p.m.