

Conference Subcommittee Minutes

Subcommittee: Mental Hygiene

Date: March 20, 2017

Time: 5:15 p.m.

Place: Hearing Room B, Legislative Office Building

Present:

Senators Robert Ortt (Co-Chair), Fred Akshar, Chris Jacobs, George Amedore, Jesse Hamilton (alternate), John Brooks

Assemblymembers Aileen M. Gunther (Co-Chair), Linda B. Rosenthal, Michael G. DenDekker, Didi Barrett, Jo Anne Simon (alternate), Diana C. Richardson (alternate), Stephen Hawley, Mark Johns (alternate)

Discussion:

1. The meeting opened at 5:25 p.m. with opening remarks from Senator Ortt and the introduction of all present Senators.
2. Assemblymember Gunther made opening remarks and introduced all present Assemblymembers.
3. Senator Ortt thanked members of Senate and Assembly for their work and expressed his wish to improve upon the Governor's initial proposal, including expanded support for children's and veterans' mental health services.
4. Assemblywoman Gunther spoke about the funding additions the Assembly has proposed, including additional funding for the Human Services COLA, providing a livable wage for direct care workers, increased availability of housing for individuals with disabilities, and increased recovery services for those combating substance use disorders.
5. Senator Amedore stressed the importance of providing funding for the compensation of direct care workers and for services for those struggling with addiction.
6. Assemblywoman Rosenthal expressed concern for the budget, and stressed that the legislature continue to support vulnerable populations, those combating addiction, and the importance of access to recovery programs.

7. Senator Hamilton discussed the mental health and suicide crisis the state is facing and stressed the need for more pediatric mental health facilities. Senator Hamilton also discussed the need for adequate compensation for direct care workers.
8. Assemblyman DenDekker discussed the ongoing mental health and opioid crisis, and spoke about the need to provide more funding to vital services, including mental health resources for veterans.
9. Senator Brooks echoed the fact that this is a very critical time for the amount of services needed for both mental health and the opioid crisis. He also showed concern with the staffing levels for direct care workers. He suggested the state should not delay the COLA, and needs to retain and provide necessary services and realistic salaries for workers.
10. Assemblyman Hawley discussed the Assembly minority's support for the \$45 million being provided to direct care workers, and encouraged growth and support in the field. He also called for a more transparent and inclusive budget process for future years.
11. Senator Akshar spoke of the legislature's obligation to provide adequate human services to vulnerable populations, and to look more closely at the current budget proposals in order to find the necessary funding for mental health and addiction services from other areas of the budget.
12. Assemblywoman Barrett urged the need for consensus in both houses for mental health and substance use disorder services.
13. Assemblyman Johns spoke of the Assembly minority conference's ongoing support for the rights of those with developmental disabilities, and suggested the legislature increase aid to that population.
14. Assemblywoman Simon expressed her concern with the need for meaningful access to services for vulnerable populations, and that it is critically important that the resources and skills of the workforce represent the diverse population of the state.
15. Assemblywoman Gunther made closing remarks and adjourned the meeting at 5:43 p.m.

Recording Secretary: Katherine Jesaitis, P&C