

**Welfare to Work Commission
Of the Suffolk County Legislature
Minutes of the June 6th, 2014 Meeting**

Present: Richard Koubek, Chair; Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair; Lisa Pinkard for Leg. Monica Martinez ; John Nieves; James Andrews; Jacky Horsley for Ray O'Rourke; Ellen Krakow; Debbie Joseph; Charles Fox; Peggy Boyd; Nina Leonhardt; Barbara Egloff; Kimberly Gierasch; Michael Haynes; Don Friedman; Marjorie Acevedo; Michael Stoltz; Joan Travan; Luis Valenzuela; Steve Chassman

Excused: Sr. Lisa Bergeron; Gwen O'Shea; Rob Greenberger;;

Guests: Dana Friedman, Early Years Institute

1. **New Member:** Chair Richard Koubek introduced Steve Chassman who will be replacing Jeff Reynolds on the Commission, representing the LI Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence. Mr. Koubek praised Dr. Reynolds for his intelligent and committed service to the Commission. Dr. Reynolds has been appointed President/CEO of Nassau County's Family and Children's Association.
2. **Minutes:** Mr. Koubek reminded the Commission that the May meeting had been cancelled due to the heavy meeting schedule of the Child Care Committee during the final weeks of the child-care report's preparation. Following a correction, the minutes of the April 25th meeting were adopted unanimously on a motion by Kathy Liguori, seconded by Marge Acevedo.
3. **Child Care Committee:** Mr. Koubek called attention to the final draft of the child-care report, again thanking Child Care Committee Chair Kathy Liguori and the members of that committee for their service. He also thanked DSS staff Dennis Nowak, Robin Barnett and John Nieves who helped draft the report's final recommendations. Ms. Liguori in turn thanked Mr. Koubek for writing the report. Mr. Koubek reminded the Commission that the procedures for adopting a report include consensus for non-substantive changes and separate motions for substantive changes followed by a vote on the full report. Kathy Liguori moved and Don Friedman seconded a motion to adopt the full report. The Commission next entered into a section-by section assessment of the report, with the following discussions and amendments.
 - a. Mr. Koubek noted that a core theme throughout the report is the gap between the empirical evidence supporting quality early learning/child care and the resources government is providing to achieve quality programs. Dana Friedman stated that QUALITYStarsNY is a good example of this gap. QUALITYStarsNY has proven strategies to achieve quality programs, however the State has not provided the funding needed to implement QUALTYStarsNY.
 - b. Mr. Koubek stated that, as the report was in the final drafting stages in May, the New York State Office of Family and Children's Services (OCFS) announced that Suffolk County's Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) would be increased by only \$580,725, compared with a nearly \$9 million increase in Nassau County. This allocation brings the Suffolk CCBG allocation to \$31,364,169 which is well short of the estimated \$40 million needed to meet the actual demand for child care in

Suffolk. This OCFS decision necessitated several amendments to the draft report that had been circulated to Commission members.

- c. Mr. Koubek noted that the final draft of the report now indicates that the Commission will explore the discrepancy between Suffolk's and Nassau's CCBG funding, especially the suggestion in the *Newsday* article that the discrepancy may be due to Nassau investing \$23 million in local funds for child care compared with what *Newsday* reported as only \$3 million in Suffolk local funds for child care. John Nieves stated that he reached out to Nassau DSS to ask how they are funding child care, but to date had gotten no response. Mr. Koubek noted, and Mr. Nieves agreed, that the *Newsday* report may be inaccurate since the \$3 million in additional Suffolk funds for child care in 2013 were actually a DSS transfer of state CCBG funds from TANF to non-TANF (working-poor) families. James Andrews stated that a thorough investigation would require an assessment of overall DSS priorities in each county. For example, Suffolk may spend more on housing the homeless than Nassau. Ms. Liguori stated that the real issue is the flawed CCBG funding formula that does not meet the actual need for child care in Suffolk. Don Friedman asked if Suffolk had ever filed a legal challenge to the funding discrepancy. No one on the Commission knew the answer to this question.
- d. On a motion by Kathy Liguori, seconded by Don Friedman, the following amendment (in italics) was made to the draft report on a vote of 17 Yes; 0 No and 3 Abstentions (James Andrews, John Nieves, Jacky Horsley): Pp 59-60 CCBG Allocation. *Despite Commissioner O'Neill's appeal, OCFS has not altered its CCBG allocation formula and, in May, 2014, announced that Suffolk's 2014-2015 allocation would be \$31,364,169, an increase of only \$580,725 or 1.9% over the previous year. This allocation is below the estimated \$40 million needed to cover the actual demand for child care in the Suffolk and well below Nassau County's CCBG allocation increase of almost \$9 million or 25.6%, despite a comparable if not greater demand for subsidized child care in Suffolk. However, As Newsday reported on June 2, 2014, Last year, Nassau contributed \$23.5 million to the program, and Suffolk provided \$3 million." It is possible that the differential in the CCBG allocation for Nassau County may be due to Nassau's larger contribution of county funds for child care, thereby opening up additional child-care enrolments which are a factor used in the CCBG allocation formula. The reasons for the difference in the Nassau and Suffolk County contributions to child care are unclear and will be explored in detail by the commission and reported to the legislature following release of this report.*
- e. The Commission achieved consensus on the following amendment: P. 68 CCBG Allocation. *The Commission was deeply disturbed to learn in May of 2014 that the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) has again utilized its flawed CCBG formula to essentially flat-fund the Suffolk CCBG program for 2014-2015 at \$31,364,169 which represents an increase of only \$580,725 or 1.9% over the previous year, well below the estimated \$40 million needed to cover the actual demand for child care in the Suffolk and below the State increase in CCBG funds of 7.4%. As reported above, last year Suffolk demonstrated its commitment to helping the working poor by increasing the*

income limit for subsidize child care from 100% to 150% of the FPL and lowering the parent fee from 30% to 20%. Of note is the OCFS/CCBG allocation to Nassau County which was increased by almost \$9 million or 25.6%, despite a comparable if not greater need and demand for subsidized child care in Suffolk. As noted above, one reason for the larger Nassau County CCBG allocation may be the significantly larger county contribution to child care (\$23.5 million in Nassau vs. \$3 million in Suffolk) which provides for larger Nassau County child-care enrollments and possibly the larger CCBG allocation which is based on enrollments. The commission is exploring the reasons for the differential in Nassau and Suffolk contributions to the child-care program, which it will report to the legislature following release of this report.

- f. On a motion by Kathy Liguori, seconded by Mike Stoltz, the following amendments (in italics) were approved on a vote of 17 Yes; 0 No; 3 Abstentions (James Andrews, John Nieves, Jacky Horsley). Pp 71-72 Recommendations.
 - i. *The legislature and county executive must continue to advocate with the governor and OCFS for additional state funds for child care and to change the State's CCBG formula, which consistently underfunds Suffolk's block grant allocation so that the allocation meets the actual demand for child care for families earning 200% of FPL (\$40 million compared with the \$31 million allocated in 2014.)*
 - ii. *The legislature in partnership with the county executive should significantly increase county funds for child care, as Nassau County apparently does, and assess the contributions Suffolk has made in the past, with emphasis on incrementally expanding the number of children in working-poor families earning up to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$47,700 for a family of four in 2014) who can receive the child-care subsidy.*
 - g. A number of other changes were agreed to by consensus, including the removal of Chart 6 which lacked clarity and a clarification of the role DOL plays in making child care referrals, not assignments.
 - h. Seeing no further amendments or discussion, the Chair called the vote on the full report which passed unanimously.
4. **Employment Assessment Committee:** Mr. Koubek and Lisa Pinkard reported that Legislator Monica Martinez met with Commissioner John O'Neill and DSS staff in late May regarding the proposed ADA policy. She has received a copy of the DSS/ADA policy and is in the process of comparing it with the Commission's proposed ADA policy as well as with the "Did You Know?" ADA flyer. She will next arrange for a meeting between members of the Employment Assessment Committee and DSS staff to discuss differences in the two policies. Mr. Nieves reiterated his comments from the April Commission meeting that the Commission's ADA proposal has been submitted to the County Attorney's office for their assessment, which will take up to two months to compare this complex document with federal and state requirements. Mr. Nieves also announced that the "Did You Know?" ADA flyer has been on DSS monitors in waiting rooms since April 7th but has not yet been distributed in hard copy pending final approval by the Commission. Mr. Nieves thanked Nassau Suffolk Law Services for their assistance in developing the final draft. Marge Acevido stated that she spoke with Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory just prior to this

Commission meeting who again reiterated his desire that the DSS/ADA policy be released to the Commission and that it be placed on the DSS website.

5. **Letter to Cong. Peter King:** Mr. Koubek distributed a draft letter to Congressman Peter King written by Angela Zimmerman of Molloy College, who served on the Child Care Committee. The letter calls for Cong. King to support the “Strong Start for America’s Children Act.” To date, Cong. King is the only member of the Long Island congressional delegation who has not yet supported the bill. On a motion by Peggy Boyd, seconded by Marge Acevido, the letter (appended below) was adopted unanimously.
6. **Announcements:**
 - a. Mr. Koubek announced that he would be presenting the Commission’s poverty report on a Stony Brook University conference panel on the afternoon of June 6th.
 - b. Charles Fox announced that Mr. Koubek and Gwen O’Shea would be the speakers at a June 19th EOC luncheon commemorating the 50th anniversary of the War on Poverty.
 - c. Mr. Nieves announced that DSS will be having its 7th Annual “Stand Up for the Homeless” event on August 29, 2014. The Department would greatly appreciate the participation of any human services partners to staff tables at the event or assist with services. Commission members were encouraged to email him if interested in being part of the event.
7. **Next Meeting:** July 11th, 9:30 AM in Conference Room A of the DOL “One Stop Center.”

Letter to Congressman Peter King

Dear Congressman King:

Many of us on Long Island have joined the National Women’s Law Center and thousands of others throughout the country to support children and families. In fact, child care and early learning are such important topics for Suffolk County residents that it was the focus of this year’s Welfare to Work Commission’s public hearings and report, “Who’s Minding the Kids? Meeting Challenges and Creating Opportunities for Quality Child Care and Early Learning in Suffolk County.”

As we look explore the many benefits and challenges of care and early education and its impact on our communities and economy in Suffolk County, the coordination of existing resources and the development of new possibilities are paramount. Clearly, the need for affordable, accessible and quality child care is more critical now than ever! **Therefore, we urge your support of the Strong Start for America’s Children’s Act (S. 1697, H.R. 3461) currently being considered in Congress.** To date, 131 representatives from the House of Representatives and 31 from the US Senate have co-sponsored this legislation. **All of the Long Island’s members of Congress have signed onto this bill except for you.**

Families are the foundation of a society. When they are healthy and strong, communities thrive. The Strong Start for America's Children Act recognizes the importance of early development and learning and would make a greater investment in the quality of and access to early childhood education for children from birth through the preschool years. The bill focuses on expansion of home visiting, Early Head Start child-care partnerships, and preschool grants with a significant increased investment. The passage of the Strong Start for America's Children's Act will ensure that children have the high-quality early learning experiences they need to succeed in school, provides parents with the support and peace of mind to be productive at work, and strengthens our economy in the short- and long-term.

In order to expand opportunities for the youngest and most vulnerable Americans, we need Congress to act now. Please join us in supporting this important legislation for our children and families.

Multiple polls, including a new poll from NBC News/Wall Street Journal, show that the majority of Americans think that ensuring all children have access to preschool education should be an absolute priority.

We are available if you have any questions or need additional information. We look forward to your support promoting this important act for our children, families and communities.