

Suffolk County Legislature



Richard Koubek, PhD., Chair
Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair

AYESHE ALLEYNE
Wyandanch Homes and Property
Development Corporation

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Catholic Charities

PEGGY BOYD
Family Service League

BARBARA DEFINA
Suffolk County Community College

CHRISTINA DELISI
For Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory

BARBARA EGLOFF
Eastern Suffolk BOCES

LEGISLATOR THOMAS DONNELLY

CHARLES FOX
EOC - Suffolk, Inc.

DON FRIEDMAN
Empire Justice Center

KIMBERLY GIERASCH
Suffolk County Department of Health

GRETA GUARTON
LI Coalition for the Homeless

MICHAEL HAYNES
Long Island Cares, Inc./
Harry Chapin Food Bank

RICHARD KOUBEK, PhD
Gerald Ryan Outreach Center

ELLEN KRAKOW
Nassau/Suffolk Law Services Committee,
Inc.

RICHARD KREBS
Suffolk Works Employment Program,
Suffolk County Department of Labor,
Licensing and Consumer Affairs

KATHY LIGUORI
HabiTots Child Care Center

CHRISTIAN LIMBACH
Suffolk County Association of
Municipal Employees

JOHN O'NEILL
Commissioner, Suffolk County
Department of Social Services

JEFFREY REYNOLDS, PhD
Family and Children's
Association/LICADD

RACHEL SEILER, PhD
Community Development Corporation
of LI

MICHAEL STOLTZ
Association for Mental Health and
Wellness

LUIS VALENZUELA, PhD
LI Council of Churches

WELFARE TO WORK COMMISSION
of the Suffolk County Legislature
c/o Clerk of the Legislature
725 Veterans Memorial Highway
Smithtown NY 11787
631-499-6725

March 2018

To: Members of the Suffolk County Legislature:

The Welfare to Work Commission is pleased to provide you with our annual report of 2017 Commission activities as well as our 2018 Commission goals. As you can see in the attached report, the Commission was again very active in 2017, by:

1. Continuing to pursue these goals in our 2012 report, "Struggling in Suburbia: Meeting the Challenges of Poverty in Suffolk County":
 - a. Making recommendations on staffing levels at SCDSS and SCDOLL&CA.
 - b. Monitoring the privatization of the County's health centers.
 - c. Supporting Suffolk County bus service.
2. Assessing the impacts of federal tax and spending reductions on Suffolk County human services.
3. Expanding educational opportunities for SWEP clients by creating a pilot for the delivery of coordinated SWEP work experience, training and education and child-care services at Suffolk County Community College.
4. Supporting the newly-created Suffolk County Child Care Commission.
5. Continuing to advocate for a change in the State's child-care funding formula that underfunds Suffolk County's child-care needs.
6. Supporting development of a County "Americans with Disabilities Act" policies and procedures.
7. Exploring supportive housing options for people with behavioral health challenges

The Welfare to Work Commission generally meets monthly, sometimes more often through our committees. All Commission members are volunteers who, individually or through their agencies, contribute many hours toward creating policies and practices that support people leaving welfare for work as well as working-poor people in Suffolk.

Yours truly for the Commission,

Richard Koubek

Richard Koubek, PhD, Chair

Kathy Liguori

Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair



Welfare to Work Commission of the Suffolk County Legislature

Annual Report of 2017 Activities And 2018 Goals

March 9, 2018

As required by the 15th Resolve of Resolution No. 181-2003, the Welfare to Work Commission of the Suffolk County Legislature is pleased to submit its annual report containing the Commission's goals for 2018 and a summary of its activities for 2017.

Welfare to Work Commission's 2018 Goals

1. Continue to pursue these goals in the Commission's 2012 report, "Struggling in Suburbia: Meeting the Challenges of Poverty in Suffolk County":
 - a. Review and make recommendations about staffing levels and access to services at the Suffolk County Department of Social Services (SCDSS), Suffolk County Department of Labor, Licensing and Consumer Affairs (SCDOLL&CA) and Suffolk County Department of Health (SCDOH).
 - b. Receive updates on the privatization of the County's health centers under Hudson River Health Care and its impact on the provision of health-care services in Suffolk County.
 - c. Invite the Suffolk County Department of Transportation to present to the Commission updates in County bus services and continue to monitor Suffolk bus service as it relates to the needs of poor and near-poor people.
 - d. Create a scoring tool to measure supports provided to working-poor people by companies seeking a Suffolk County IDA benefit.
2. Continue to pursue recommendations in the 2014 Commission report, "Who's Minding the Kids? Meeting Challenges and Creating Opportunities for Quality Child Care and Early Learning in Suffolk County," with special attention to supporting increased State funding for child care while continuing to address

inequities in Suffolk's State Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) allocation due to the inadequate CCBG formula used by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS.)

3. Continue to plan, implement and evaluate a pilot for expanding on-site educational and work opportunities for work-eligible TANF and Safety Net (SN) SWEP clients at Suffolk County Community College and Eastern Suffolk BOCES toward the goal of creating SCDSS and SCDOL "hub centers" for the delivery of multiple SWEP services, including work experience, education, training and child care.
4. Explore strategies that encourage Suffolk County contract agencies to participate in the SWEP program and to accept SWEP clients.
5. Monitor 2018 federal budget impacts on TANF law and policy with special attention to education and training opportunities for SWEP clients.
6. Assess the implementation of the new Suffolk County "Americans with Disabilities Act" (ADA) policies and procedures at SCDSS, SCDOL and SCDOH.
7. Explore barriers to housing for Suffolk residents with behavioral-health challenges and release a report to the Suffolk County Legislature on this topic.
8. Assess the impact of the substance abuse epidemic on communities/people of lower socioeconomic status with special attention to the effects on children and young people.
9. Assess the impact of federal immigration policies on Suffolk County.

Activities Pursuant to the Commission's 2017 Goals

Pursue Recommendations in the "Struggling in Suburbia" Report

The Commission continued to pursue these recommendations in our 2012 poverty report, "Struggling in Suburbia: Meeting the Challenges of Poverty in Suffolk County"

1. ***Expand educational opportunities for SWEP clients.*** Due to previous efforts by the Commission, the Suffolk County Department of Social Services (SCDSS) and Suffolk County Department of Labor, Licensing and Consumer Affairs (SCDOL&CA), opportunities have been created for Suffolk Works Employment Program (SWEP) clients to attend SCCC while they are also fulfilling their work requirement at SCCC. Due to staff changes at SCCC, there was a decrease in SWEP client participation in the pilot in 2017. The Commission will make increased participation a 2018 goal and will continue to monitor the pilot throughout 2018. Commission members received a tour of the SCDOL "One Stop" Center at the April, 2017 meeting, during which they learned that an average of 345 of the 1,200 non-exempt Temporary Assistance clients are in education and training programs. Of these 21 are attending Suffolk County Community College.
2. ***Recommendations about staffing levels at the SCDSS and SCDOL&CA.*** The Commission's poverty report highlighted the need for appropriate staffing at SCDSS and SCDOL&CA. Following release of County Executive Bellone's 2017 budget, the Commission consulted with SCDSS and SCDOL&CA as well as with the

Legislature's Budget Review Office and found that proposed staffing levels were adequate for SCDSS and SCDOL in the proposed 2018 budget.

3. **Monitor the privatization of the County's health centers.** The Commission periodically received updates from SCDOH on the status of the County health centers, which were found to be providing adequate services.
4. **Monitor Suffolk bus service as it relates to the needs of poor and near-poor people.** The Commission's poverty report emphasized the need for expanded bus service. Despite appeals from the Commission, 10 underutilized bus lines were eliminated in 2016, most on the East End. The Commission will invite Suffolk County Department of Transportation officials to a meeting in 2018 to receive updates on the Suffolk bus system. On January 30, 2017, Commission Chair Richard Koubek joined Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory and other Nassau and Suffolk government officials and community leaders at a Vision Long Island press conference calling upon the Governor and State Legislature to increase funding for Long Island bus service.
5. **Score IDA applicants on their supports for working-poor people.** In 2014, the Commission drafted a scoring tool that the IDA could use to assess applications for IDA grants. The scoring tool included such categories as: hiring union workers, minority contractors and local workers; paying the County living wage; prioritizing economically-stressed communities; providing child-care assistance to workers; providing on-the-job training; hiring Public Assistance recipients and long-term unemployed workers. It is the Commission's hope that this scoring tool might provide a model for all IDAs to use in Suffolk County and would thereby raise the standard for IDA grants at both the town and County levels. The tool has been submitted to Sarah Lansdale, Director of the Suffolk County Planning Department, for her input and should be presented to the IDA in 2018.

Child Care

1. **Child Care Commission:** The Welfare to Work Commission holds a seat on the Suffolk County Child Care Commission and receives monthly reports of its activities. The Child Care Commission held a very successful summit for May of 2017. Commission members Richard Koubek and Kathy Liguori are participating in the planning of a 2018 summit.
2. **CCBG Formula:** The Commission continued to assess the State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) formula that has underfunded Suffolk County child care since 2008.

ADA Policies

Discussions between interested parties and the County attorney about a County ADA policy concluded in 2017 with the adoption of County ADA policy. SCDSS has developed a required online ADA training for all employees, which it shared with the Commission. SCDSS is adapting the County policy to its policies and procedures. The Commission will monitor SCDSS, SCDOL&CA and SCDOH adaptations of the County ADA policy throughout 2018.

Supportive Housing Work Group

In the fall of 2015, the Commission revisited its 2007 report on the lack of affordable housing in Suffolk County, noting that little has been accomplished providing safe, affordable housing for very-low income residents earning under 50% of the Area Median Income. This housing vacuum was found to be especially onerous for people with behavioral-health challenges, especially those who are chronically homeless. The Commission created a Supportive Housing Work Group that met with stakeholders throughout 2017. Among the topics covered by the Work group were:

1. Identifying the unserved and underserved homeless population.
2. Profiling the chronically homeless population.
3. Exploring the Continuum of Care network of services for the homeless.
4. Assessing the “Housing First” model for sheltering homeless people.
5. Assessing the SPOA system for providing housing to people with behavioral health challenges.
6. Identifying innovative programs to serve the homeless, including: Community Housing Innovations’ “Transitional Housing Program”; Family Service League’s “TLC Emergency Housing Program”; Concern for Independent Living housing options; tiny homes.

On June 9, 2017 the Supportive Housing Work Group met with representatives of the New York State Department of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) and Office of Mental Health. Both OASAS and OMH were well represented at the meeting by key decision makers, a few of whom were teleconferenced in from Albany or New York City. Participants agreed that this was a very lively and productive session. There was consensus among a number of the Long Island participants that funding for Suffolk County supportive housing has not kept pace with the need and that the process for applying for these funds needs to be streamlined.

The Supportive Housing Work Group will continue to meet in 2018 with the goal of releasing a report, with recommendations, to the Suffolk County Legislature.

Changes in Federal Funding for TANF and Human Services

1. **Public Hearing on Federal Social Welfare Funding Reductions:** The Commission hosted an October 10, 2017 public hearing on the potential negative impacts that the proposed federal 2018 budget might have on Suffolk County human-services programs. The Commission heard three hours of testimony from 13 nonprofit and government agency representatives as well as Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory, Education and Human Services Chair Legislator Monica Martinez and Legislator Leslie Kennedy. The testimony about the impacts of \$5.2 trillion federal cuts to human services programs such as Food Stamps, Section 8 Vouchers and Medicaid were summarized in a report sent to all Suffolk County legislators as well as the County Executive,

major department heads and State and federal elected officials who represent Suffolk County.

2. **Press Conference on the Impact of Federal Tax Cuts:** On December 18, 2017 the Commission hosted a joint press conference with the Legislature and County Executive on how the proposed federal tax reductions, projected to add \$1.5 trillion to the federal debt over ten years, might lead to even further human-services cuts. Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory, Deputy County Executive Jon Kaiman, members of the Commission and a Suffolk resident who will be impacted by further program cuts, spoke at the press conference, which was covered by News 12 LI.

Opioid Epidemic

1. **State Oversight of Sober Homes:** The Commission received periodic updates on the opioid crisis in Suffolk County. In addition, the Commission held a joint meeting with the Suffolk County Sober Homes Oversight Board in September to update the status of sober homes in Suffolk County. Participants from both bodies concluded that the New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) continues to not regulate sober homes, alleging that sober-homes residents have completed treatment and therefore do not fall under the Department's aegis. OASAS does not consider sober homes to be part of their treatment continuum and argues that it does not have the staff to monitor sober homes. State legislation requiring OASS to regulate sober homes has not been adopted.
2. **The DSS Sober Homes Pilot:** The Commission learned at the September joint meeting that the DSS sober homes pilot now has two sober homes operated by Community Housing Innovations and Brighter Tomorrows. Each agency receives an enhanced DSS rate of \$962 per resident per month in return for complying with regulations. Among these regulations are on-site management, curfews, random inspections and other criteria to maintain an alcohol and drug free environment. However, the rate is for DSS clients only who comprise only 15 percent of the sober homes population. All the costs of the sober-homes pilot project are not compensated by State funding, however the lower anticipated recidivism rates among residents will make the pilot cost effective by avoiding future expensive County outlays such as emergency shelters or prisons.

Conclusion

The Commission meets monthly and has created several committees that also meet to pursue issues such as the Supportive Housing Work Group. We look forward to working with the Legislature, SCDSS, SCDOL and SCDOH in 2018 to continue our mission to "evaluate and make recommendations of federal, State and county policies and procedures to move people from welfare to work."

Respectfully Submitted,

Legislator Tom Donnelly, Chair, Education and Human Services Committee

Richard Koubek, Ph.D., Commission Chair, Gerald Ryan Outreach Center
Kathy Liguori, Commission Vice Chair, Habitots Preschool and Child Care Centers

Ayesha Alleyne, Wyandanch Homes and Property Development Corporation
Sr. Lisa Bergeron, Catholic Charities
Peggy Boyd, Family Service League
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Greta Guarton, Long Island Coalition for the Homeless
Michael Haynes, Long Island Cares/The Harry Chapin Food Bank
Ellen Krakow, Nassau/Suffolk Law Services
Richard Krebs, Suffolk County Department of Labor, Licensing and Consumer Affairs
Nina Leonhardt, Suffolk County Community College
Christian Limbach, Suffolk County Association of Municipal Employees
John O'Neill, Commissioner, Suffolk County Department of Social Services
Jeffrey Reynolds, Family and Children's Association/LICADD
Michael Stoltz, Clubhouse of Suffolk
Luis Valenzuela, Long Island Council of Churches