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4 **SENIORS & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE**
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6 **OF THE**
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8 **SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**
9
10 **MINUTES**

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14 A meeting of the Seniors & Human Services Committee of the Suffolk
15 County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative
16 Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725
17 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on November 10, 2020
18 via hybrid in person and Zoom conference.
19

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21
22 **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

23 Legislator Sarah S. Anker, Chairperson
24 Legislator Samuel Gonzalez, Vice Chair
25 Legislator Thomas Cilmi
26 Legislator Steven J. Flotteron
27 Legislator Jason Richberg
28

29
30
31 **ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

32 Presiding Officer Robert Calarco, Legislative District No. 7
33 Legislator Al Krupski, Legislative District No. 1
34 Legislator Tom Donnelly, Legislative District No. 17
35 Sarah E. Simpson, Counsel to the Legislature
36 Dan Dubois, Chief Deputy Clerk/Legislature
37 William O'Brien, Budget Review Office
38 Dorothy Cavalier, Aide to Legislator Anker
39 Robert Braun, Deputy Bureau Chief/County Attorney's Office
40 Dr. Richard Koubek, Chair/Welfare to Work Commission
41 Rebecca Sanin, President/Health & Welfare Council of Long Island
42 And all other interested parties
43

44
45
46 **MINUTES TAKEN BY:**

47 Diana Flesher, Court Stenographer
48

49 **MINUTES TRANSCRIBED BY:**

50 Kim Castiglione, Legislative Secretary
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1 **THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 11:34 AM**

2
3 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

4 Okay, welcome to the Seniors and Human Services Committee meeting.
5 Let's rise for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Presiding Officer
6 Calarco.

7
8 **SALUTATION**

9
10 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

11 Please remain standing for a moment of silence and prayer as we
12 think of those not only fighting for this country but, you know,
13 fighting this terrible pandemic and in gratefulness for those that
14 are saving lives on the frontline and our essential workers.

15
16 **MOMENT OF SILENCE OBSERVED**

17
18 Thank you. Okay. We do not have any resolutions today, but I do
19 need to read this statement. In-person public comments will not be
20 permitted during this meeting. Instead, comments related to this
21 committee may be provided through the submission of three minute
22 phone messages to (631) 853-3685, via e-mail at
23 clerk.legislature@suffolkcountyny.gov or mailed to the attention of
24 the Clerk's Office at the Suffolk County Legislature, William H.
25 Rogers Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New
26 York, 11787. Submitted comments will be distributed to
27 Legislators.

28
29 **PRESENTATION**

30
31 Okay, so we do not have resolutions. We do not have
32 correspondence. We're going to -- we do have a special
33 presentation.

34
35 **LEG. CILMI:**

36 Sarah, I see Bob Braun in the room. I'm wondering -- it's always
37 good to see you, Bob, but I'm wondering why you're there.

38
39 **MR. BRAUN:**

40 Just to keep you company.

41
42 **LEG. CILMI:**

43 Very good.

44
45 **MR. BRAUN:**

46 No, I -- this is my committee so I just wanted to see what was
47 going on and I'm always available for consultation if necessary.
48 Or if you're telling me to leave, I'll leave.

49
50 **LEG. CILMI:**

51 Please stay.

52
53 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

54 Okay. We do have a presentation by Richard Koubek. He is the
55 Chair of Welfare to Work Committee, and also Rebecca Sanin, she is
56 the Health and Welfare Council of Long Island, and they will be

1 presenting the response, Suffolk County's response to COVID-19. So
2 if one of you would like to take the podium we have -- Dick is now
3 going to give us a review of the report, and I have distributed
4 those reports to the Legislators that are part of this committee.
5 If you are online or if you'd like this report I can have my Chief
6 of Staff also send the report to you. Welcome.

7
8 **DR. KOUBEK:**

9 Thank you, Legislator Anker and members of the committee. Thanks
10 for this opportunity. This is my first trip back to the
11 Legislature since February and so I'm getting used to all the new
12 technology; it's fascinating. So as the members of the Legislature
13 you know too well that Suffolk County, like the rest of the nation,
14 has been devastated by the tragedy of COVID. And so between April
15 and July of this year, the Welfare to Work Commission has devoted
16 every one of our meetings to exploring how Coronavirus has been
17 impacting the people of Suffolk County. And we drew primarily from
18 our own members who represent various agencies that serve the
19 County, as well as we had some presenters who came in to provide
20 some insights. And these agencies, both government and community
21 based, have been our essential workers and our first responders,
22 and I must tell you, I was incredibly impressed with the work that
23 they were doing.

24
25 Here are some of the most important points in our report. What we
26 did was after four or five months of doing this work we decided
27 this was the kind of information that the Legislature should know
28 about. I was, as Chair, as I said, really, really impressed with
29 what these agencies were doing, both government and private.

30
31 So here are the main findings. Some of these you already know,
32 some may be new to you. We were really upset at the degree to
33 which Latinos and African Americans have been disproportionately
34 affected by COVID-19, and all you have to do is look at the Newsday
35 daily accounting and look at districts like Legislator Gonzalez's
36 district, who came to speak to us. Devastating.

37
38 We were stunned, but I think we all know now about the
39 unprecedented level of food insecurity, and we had in Paul Pactor
40 from Long Island Cares. They have a seat on the Commission, and
41 when he reported in April or May it was just stunning. Fifteen
42 million pounds of emergency food are expected to be distributed
43 this year, which is about twice what they normally do. I was
44 really moved by the fact that 68% of the people who came into
45 pantries in April and May were first-timers. And it's a difficult
46 thing for anybody to go into a pantry. To go in for the first time
47 suggests that you're in serious trouble. Some of the increase that
48 we report in food insecurity we believe came from delays due to the
49 devastating economic impacts, the delays in getting unemployment
50 insurance and then the Federal stimulus funds, and that situation
51 has improved somewhat, but they're still on the frontline with tens
52 of thousands of people needing emergency food.

53
54 We were impressed by the County's 311 response and -- which worked
55 with eight towns to provide emergency food, particularly the people
56 who are homebound, and we were really impressed learning about the

1 significant number of people who just stepped up to form pop-up
2 pantries to serve their neighbors.

3
4 We were really upset that the thousands of undocumented immigrants,
5 many of whom were essential workers, then lost their jobs, get no
6 support. No Federal support, no State support; they're on their
7 own. Private charity is doing what they can.

8
9 We were concerned about an impending homeless crisis. As you all
10 know, there are moratoria on evictions, however, there is no
11 moratoria on paying rent. So when these eviction moratoria end,
12 right now it is scheduled to end in December, December 31st,
13 people are going to go two, three, four, six months in rent and no
14 one knows how they're going to resolve that. We were concerned
15 that there are programs to assist people with rent arrears, but
16 very often to access that money you have to demonstrate that you
17 can -- you get one month and you have to demonstrate that you can
18 continue on your own to pay the rent and with the current economic
19 situation, that's not likely for many people.

20
21 We found that the regulations regarding class size for childcare
22 centers, all understandable, you know, limiting class size to ten,
23 is going to put a tremendous burden on private and even subsidized
24 childcare centers. And we heard that there may be a significant
25 number who just can't make it and will have to close.

26
27 We learned that there was a welcomed increase in Telemedicine,
28 folks who are able to access, particularly mental health services
29 by phone, but to our shock, 20% of those who were seeking the help
30 don't have WiFi service so they have to go to a local library and
31 speak to their counselor over a computer in a library. Not good.
32 I wish I had good news, but this was a difficult report to give to
33 you.

34
35 We discovered that New York State has a terrific set of protocols
36 for reopening, but the burden for enforcing them goes to the County
37 and that there were, as far as we could determine, no real
38 enforcement mechanisms other than in the case of restaurants
39 removing the liquor licenses.

40
41 We were happy that Suffolk Department of Labor, Suffolk Department
42 of Social Services, has gone to remote accessing of services,
43 that's terrific, and we're hoping that can continue after COVID.
44 There might be some good things coming out of COVID.

45
46 And lastly, we were concerned that with all of the budget crisis
47 that you're facing, and I feel sorry for all of you, the situation
48 we're in is a mess. We don't know what's coming from the Federal
49 government to assist you, but our concern is that these agencies,
50 these frontline agencies who have been, as I said, essential
51 workers, may suffer some severe cutbacks that will prevent them
52 from doing their services as we go into 2021.

53
54 So, finally, some thanks. Special thanks to Dr. Pigott, to Rosalie
55 Drago and Frances Pierre, your Commissioners. They were wonderful.
56 Special thanks to Vanessa Baird-Streeter, who came to speak to us.

1 Special thanks to James Andrews from the Labor Department
2 overseeing the enforcement of the protocols. Special thanks, as I
3 said, to Paul Pactor. And to Jennifer Rojas, the Executive
4 Director of Childcare Council who came in to speak us.

5
6 And very special thanks to these agencies, and I'll conclude with
7 this. The Family Service League, the Long Island Coalition for the
8 Homeless, Empire Justice Center, EOC of Long Island, The
9 Association of Mental Health and Wellness, Nassau Suffolk Law
10 Services, Wyandanch Homes and Property and Marks of Excellence
11 Child Care, all out there, frontline people doing the work.

12
13 So this is a snapshot of what our members were experiencing, and
14 what I thought would be good is if Rebecca Sanin from Health and
15 Welfare could give you some oversight of the big picture and of
16 what Health and Welfare has been doing with VOAD, so I invite you
17 up.

18
19 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

20 Thank you, Dick, for the report. All right, we're going to
21 sanitize the podium. And, again, as we're waiting for that to get
22 done, you know, it has been real important to know what the Welfare
23 to Work folks, you know, how they're handling COVID. Because, you
24 know, when we experience this type of challenge it's those folks
25 that are in greater need that we need to really focus on, and it's
26 been an honor to work with those organizations, you know, including
27 Health and Welfare Council of Long Island. Again, we have Rebecca
28 Sanin here to talk a little bit more about what our committee has
29 been doing. But we really need to make sure that those needs are
30 met. I mean, that's where we are.

31
32 As a government, we have limitations, unfortunately, but we still
33 have responsibility and accountability to take care of those who
34 are not able to take care of themselves, whether it's food or
35 shelter or health concerns. So we have our wonderful
36 not-for-profits that, you know, come in and partner with government
37 -- that have partnered with Suffolk County. So, again, I want to
38 thank you both for your service to our residents here in Suffolk.
39 Go ahead, Rebecca.

40
41 **MS. SANIN:**

42 Sure. Good morning, everyone. It's wonderful to see you either
43 virtually or in-person here. I'm Rebecca Sanin. I'm the President
44 and CEO of the Health and Welfare Council of Long Island. Most of
45 you know us really well, but just in case, we're an umbrella
46 organization for the non-profit sector. So we work with over 200
47 non-profits across Nassau and Suffolk County, we say from Elmont to
48 Montauk. And one of the roles that we play that's really critical
49 is we run the VOAD, and VOAD stands for Volunteer Organizations
50 Active in Disaster. It's a national model. There's a nation
51 model. There's a State VOAD. We sit on the State Board and we run
52 the effort for Long Island, which means that we manage disaster
53 relief for the health and human service delivery system here in our
54 region.

1 So starting in March when this crisis really hit, we immediately
2 started engaging in meeting twice a week. Normally, the way we
3 work in terms of our disaster relief work is we meet every other
4 month and we plan for in blue sky times for what are we going to do
5 if there is a hurricane, what is the sheltering requirements that
6 might exist now, what are the donation management plans. We work
7 very closely with FRES in that process. We have agreements with
8 them, Memorandums of Understanding. We work together very closely,
9 but in a crisis we respond and so we started meeting twice a week.

10
11 We had FEMA on every call, Division of Homeland Security and
12 Emergency Services, our State, Suffolk County was on every call.
13 Vanessa Baird-Streeter represented all of you so well in terms of,
14 you know, what the County's role is and what was happening. And
15 then, of course, we invite localities and then we would bring in
16 national speakers. We would bring in our U.S. Senators, we would
17 bring in our State Senators. We'd bring in national organizations
18 that were doing critical work in disaster response. And the idea,
19 of course, being to push out information, as much as possible, to
20 the between 150 and 200 participants that were on every call. That
21 was extremely successful in terms of making sure that everybody was
22 informed and aware of what was happening.

23
24 And then the real work begins, right? What is emerging as the
25 crises in Suffolk County, and there are four areas that we are very
26 focused and I want to make sure the Legislature is aware of this
27 because these are all issues that are going to impact you and your
28 constituency. Certainly the first is nutritional equity, you know,
29 emergency food. You know, I think it's really unconscionable that
30 here in Long Island we have such an extraordinary amount of folks
31 who are hungry. We know our SNAP enrollment as a region has gone
32 up 50% year over year, which means that we're seeing more and more
33 folks who are in need of emergency food. So we're looking at how
34 we engage in systems transformation because, you know, the
35 definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again,
36 right, and we need to make some changes and we'll be looking at the
37 County to be good partners in that work.

38
39 But just to share an example. One of the things that we did that
40 was really meaningful, we went to the Hispanic Federation and
41 secured a \$100,000 grant and were able to get it matched by World
42 Central Kitchen, which is an international relief organization, and
43 we were able to bring them to Long Island to provide food in
44 Huntington Station and Roosevelt. And what that did, in Huntington
45 Station we provided, you know, hundreds and hundreds of meals each
46 week. What that did was invested in local economy, because instead
47 of providing, you know, a box of canned goods, what they did is
48 they invest in local restaurants and so each meal is \$10 a meal and
49 restaurants can then count on some economic stability and viability
50 as we're feeding folks nutritious, balanced meals that really
51 promote human dignity, right. When you think about a family member
52 of yours hurting, maybe being hungry, you want to provide them with
53 a hot meal, you want to give them something that says, you know,
54 there's love in this form of giving. And so that was a very
55 successful effort and took place all summer when many people were
56 hurting and struggling.

1 But we have a nutritional equity subcommittee that meets that
2 includes Long Island Cares and Island Harvest of course, as well as
3 many other organizations like Catholic Charities, that do important
4 work in the hunger space. And we are working on, you know,
5 advocacy points with the State as well as, you know, process
6 planning, right.

7
8 The second issue that we know has increased during this crisis is
9 domestic violence and child abuse. You know, this has been a
10 unique crisis in that in many cases when there is a disaster you
11 are not told to shelter in place, right, you're not told *stay*
12 *inside* with folks who you might have unhealthy relationships with
13 or unsafe relationships with. And so we know that children, for
14 example, had a lot less adult eyes on them, you know, because they
15 were home, right. They weren't in school, they weren't interacting
16 with other adults in their lives who could provide forms of
17 protection.

18
19 So we know domestic violence and child abuse continue to be a
20 significant issue, and there are roles the County really needs to
21 play if there is a second speak. You know, I think if there is an
22 additional spike where we see a very significant increase, we need
23 to think about domestic violence shelters very specifically in
24 terms of what they struggle with when it comes to self-quarantining
25 because of their size and how to create automatic transfers to
26 hotels with support and supervision from HRH, from your Federally
27 qualified health centers, right, in terms of medical needs as well
28 as food provision from our amazing food suppliers, Long Island
29 Cares and Island Harvest. So, I mean, I think there's really very
30 meaningful things that we can do there if there is another crisis,
31 and I look forward to sharing that with you if we see that spike
32 come up. But we are working every week to make plans to address
33 what see as very much an increased need and, of course, those
34 meetings are all with the CEOs of all the various domestic violence
35 organizations in Suffolk County.

36
37 A third issue that is really, really concerning to me is issues
38 around legal needs. So we have a working group that we're chairing
39 with Touro Law School to address what we are already seeing as
40 legal needs specifically related to landlord tenant law. You know,
41 we've certainly seen plenty of folks engaging in illegal evictions
42 and we've seen folks trying to get around the moratorium, and we
43 understand it, right, because this moratorium impacts homeowners as
44 well as renters, because so many homeowners in Suffolk County rely
45 on rental income in order to pay their mortgage. So we know people
46 are hurting very significantly, but we know that when this
47 moratorium is over, you know, we're really going to be in a
48 difficult space when it comes to addressing destabilization of
49 housing, which will have a very significant impact in Suffolk
50 County if we don't have a strategy.

51
52 So we're working very closely on that right now, but I will tell
53 you it's the biggest issue that we get calls about right now, is,
54 you know, *I can't pay my rent, I'm six months overdue* and, you
55 know, *I know my contractual obligation is going to exist at the end*
56 *of the moratorium, what do I do?* We run an emergency food and

1 shelter program at Health and Welfare Council of Long Island.
2 We're able to provide some rental assistance as our organization's
3 getting CDBG funding to some degree, but we know that the need
4 outweighs the resources, and so that's a very big challenge to
5 think about as the Legislative body for this County.

6
7 And then fourth, and I'm leaving this last not because it's least
8 important because it's, quite frankly, very important, is
9 behavioral health. You know, this has been an extraordinarily
10 stressful time from an epidemiological perspective but also from a
11 financial perspective. People are losing their businesses, their
12 jobs, their sense of security. Their predictability has gone away
13 in life, right, and so we see a very significant increase in people
14 needing mental health resources, mental health services, people
15 engaging in substance abuse at higher rates, and the need for those
16 resources to really be invested in cannot be spoken about enough.

17
18 So those are the four areas that we're focusing. I would say a
19 couple of things before I end, and I just really want to -- I hope
20 I inspire you today to just think about your role and how powerful
21 you are in really helping families because you do play such a
22 critical role as Legislators in Suffolk County.

23
24 The biggest lesson that we've learned in COVID-19 is that the
25 well-being of all of us depends on the well-being of each of us.
26 That's the bottom line. And so, you know, Dick referenced the
27 inequity that we've seen on masks, I know that's a funny thing to
28 say when we're all wearing masks, but we have seen the inequity on
29 masks, right, when we look at the disproportionate impact of
30 COVID-19 in communities of color. I don't think that's a surprise
31 to anyone here, right? I think we know that Long Island is highly
32 segregated and that that impacts access to care and access to all
33 sorts of opportunity.

34
35 What I would say to you is, though, that we've really come to a
36 place where we see that the well-being of all of us depends on the
37 well-being of each of us. That's a mandate, right, to you as
38 Legislators to say, you know, what is my role right now in terms of
39 reform. Never has there been a time that is as ripe as it is today
40 for reform and we all have to do that internal reflection. And so
41 as the non-profit sector, as a leader in the non-profit sector we
42 are engaging in meetings, we are bringing national folks to Long
43 Island every other week to talk about transformation because we
44 recognize that as a sector that is often over reliant on County
45 funding, not my organization because we don't take County funding
46 except for in certain circumstances, but our members are very much
47 reliant on County funding.

48
49 We recognize the fiscal crisis that you're facing. There was a
50 fiscal crisis before COVID-19 hit in New York and now we're in
51 really significant -- in a place of significant challenge. And so
52 we realize we have to do work to look at efficiency, shared
53 services, opportunities for mergers and acquisitions, opportunities
54 for organizations that are small to work more closely with larger
55 organizations. Opportunities to make sure that the need is met
56 while we're being responsible as a sector in terms of our work, but

1 that's a cross sector responsibility as well. And so I encourage
2 the County to take that look and to say, you know, the purpose of
3 County Government is public safety and social services and public
4 health, and so are there ways in which the County can think
5 differently about the services that are provided. And I will
6 understand the political implication of what I'm saying, but I
7 would also say that we are in a transformative moment and we have
8 an opportunity as a region to think very differently about what our
9 future looks like and to really rebuild in a way that lifts up
10 every community. And if we want to do that, if we believe that
11 reform is important, if we believe that we can do better for
12 families, there's never been a time that is more ripe than it is
13 today.

14
15 So I'll leave you with that. I really very much look forward to
16 continuing to partner with many of you. Please reach out to me
17 anytime I can be helpful, anytime you want to have a discussion
18 about, you know, some of the ways that we can work together. But I
19 encourage you to remember that, you know, the government sector and
20 the non-profit sector, if we're working separately and coming up
21 with plans separately, if you're evaluating what your funding
22 priorities are when it comes to human services without non-profit
23 sector input across the board, then we're not doing the best we can
24 for families. And so the more that we collaborate, the more that
25 we work together, the stronger Suffolk County will be for
26 generations to come. I thank you so much for your service and for
27 the opportunity to share with you today.

28
29 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

30 Again, I thank you, Rebecca. And, again, with the Health and
31 Welfare Council of Long Island, you know, my Dad in the Navy used
32 to say you're only as strong as the weakest link, and that's
33 exactly what you just said. We all need to be aware that we have
34 the ability to help others. Sometimes we're given challenges just
35 to do that very same thing. So, again, I want to thank both
36 Rebecca and Dick for your presentation.

37
38 You know, I also have to commend, too, on record our DSS
39 Commissioner, Fran Pierre, for the wonderful work that she has been
40 doing; Dr. Gregson Pigott from our Health Department, he's our
41 Commissioner and, you know, again, all the work that he's been
42 doing. You know, the first responders, the FRES, the Suffolk
43 County Police Department in addressing so many of these issues that
44 you just spoke about. You know, there -- I was on the phone with
45 Holly, she's from the Office for the Aging, and how involved
46 Suffolk County has been in making sure that our senior citizens
47 have the food that they need and the, you know, and that their
48 needs are met with medication or maybe services from our DSS
49 Department.

50
51 So, again, I'm looking at our Zoom. Do we have any questions?
52 Legislator Flotteron, go ahead. You're on mute.

53
54 **LEG. FLOTTERON:**

55 Is Dr. Koubek still there, available?
56

1 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

2 Yes.

3
4 **DR. KOUBEK:**

5 I'm here.

6
7 **LEG. FLOTTERON:**

8 Thank you. I read through your report actually a month ago, when
9 you sent it out, thank you. Very thorough about the needs in the
10 County for this large population that has been growing because of
11 the virus. But I'm just a little confused. The name of the group
12 is Welfare to Work Commission. I don't see anything in the report
13 about what actions you were able to take say through training, job
14 fair, boot camp, working with Department of Labor, you know, giving
15 a hand up. So I don't know if that's a separate report or?

16
17 **DR. KOUBEK:**

18 That's a separate report, yeah. The focus of this report was on
19 responses to COVID. Although there is an interesting section
20 there, and we were really pleased about this, that the Department
21 of -- you know, everybody who receives public assistance is
22 required to work or have some kind of a work related activity, and
23 during COVID those educational and work responsibilities were
24 suspended, but yet I was really pleased to see that the Department
25 of Labor and Social Services were doing remote enrollments, and
26 they're hoping that can continue, because that increases the
27 process.

28
29 The other interesting thing that we got out of COVID is the Federal
30 requirements sanctioned participants if they failed to meet
31 obligations. And there's a whole bunch of reasons why that
32 happens, but the sanctions were suspended during COVID and there
33 was a comment by Eric Lopez of the Departments of Labor who said,
34 you know, during this time when we didn't have to worry about
35 sanctions, we were really able to focus on the needs of these folks
36 to get training, to get back to work, to deal with their medical
37 problems. So I kind of apologize for the dismal report, but there
38 are bright spots in there and Eric said to us on the Commission it
39 would be great if this could continue after COVID.

40
41 **LEG. FLOTTERON:**

42 So when I asked you, you said that you have another report?

43
44 **DR. KOUBEK:**

45 No, I said that would require another report.

46
47 **LEG. FLOTTERON:**

48 Okay. Because, again, that's really the main part of the committee
49 I thought was Welfare to Work and give them the proper training,
50 connect them to the organization such as our Department of Labor,
51 because I know from even trying to get things done in our own
52 personal homes, I'm hearing that people -- I had a roof leak, for
53 example, recently. He just doesn't have enough employees. He
54 can't get people. So there's jobs out there. Connecting is where
55 I think government needs to spend an equal amount of time to really
56 give these people a hand up, not just a handout.

1 **DR. KOUBEK:**

2 So one of the things we focused on since we were created in 2003,
3 Legislator, is the Federal requirements are very, very restrictive
4 about the amount of time that public assistance recipients can use
5 for training and education. Simply put, it's only one year. And
6 we have been arguing, I mean, we can't change it, you can't change
7 it, this comes from the Federal government, but we have done
8 everything we can to call attention to the fact that more of their
9 required responsibilities should be in education and training.
10 That's the path out of poverty. But we, you know, Federal regs are
11 what they are and it's a total of one year allowed.

12
13 **LEG. FLOTTERON:**

14 Yeah, no, I would love to learn like, again, I read your report, of
15 how we were able to help even with those boundaries of one year.
16 What are we doing creative of matching them up with training and
17 boot camps and how are we getting our, you know, getting more
18 people back to work if possible. And I, again, I think it's a lot
19 of times that connection with employers that are looking for people
20 that maybe have the right type of training, if it's something we
21 have to do with partnership even with our community colleges and
22 everything else but, you know.

23
24 **DR. KOUBEK:**

25 We had a pilot, Legislator, with Suffolk Community College and we
26 really made an effort to increase the opportunities for people who
27 are on public assistance to one, go to the Community College where
28 they are taking courses while they're fulfilling their work
29 requirement, so we have a report on that. I'll get that to you and
30 you will see in there the great job that the Department of Labor is
31 doing and the frustrations they've encountered. I'll send that
32 over to you.

33
34 **LEG. FLOTTERON:**

35 Also, do you have things set up with say our local trades and
36 everything else and trade unions and everything else?

37
38 **DR. KOUBEK:**

39 Yes, yeah.

40
41 **LEG. FLOTTERON:**

42 There's a lot of good paying jobs and sometimes the training is not
43 as long like compared to going to four years of college or
44 something. Thank you.

45
46 **DR. KOUBEK:**

47 Labor is subcontracted by the Department of Social Services to get
48 the folks into work and educational responsibilities and settings,
49 so they've been doing a great job. But, you know, the problem they
50 face which is very frustrating, which is why I'll send you this
51 report we did, is the Federal regulations that limit the amount of
52 time to be in those worthwhile educational and training settings.

53
54 **LEG. FLOTTERON:**

55 Okay, but there are still tons of jobs which you don't need more
56 than 12 months to be trained for, I mean, you know.

1 **DR. KOUBEK:**

2 Yeah, well, the goal is to get people into jobs that pay more than
3 the minimum wage, because if you place somebody in a \$15 an hour
4 job on Long Island, you know, with rent and transportation costs
5 and everything else, you wind up circling back into public
6 assistance, so. Our goal was to get more people into Suffolk
7 Community College. That was our goal and it's very tough.

8
9 **LEG. FLOTTERON:**

10 Yeah, but college -- it's really getting the trade because, again,
11 most \$15 an hour jobs, minimum wage, you don't need any training.
12 I mean, that's minimum wage.

13
14 **DR. KOUBEK:**

15 Exactly.

16
17 **LEG. FLOTTERON:**

18 I mean, my own kid does -- lifeguards, they're shortages of,
19 they're paying \$20 an hour. You know, just an example, of things,
20 you know, it's a couple of weeks of training.

21
22 **DR. KOUBEK:**

23 This has been our passion and our obsession as a Commission.

24
25 **LEG. FLOTTERON:**

26 Okay. And, again, just pointing out, even as one little summer
27 part-time career, there's a shortage. The hotels and stuff can't
28 get lifeguards.

29
30 **DR. KOUBEK:**

31 Yes.

32
33 **LEG. FLOTTERON:**

34 Okay, thank you.

35
36 **DR. KOUBEK:**

37 Thank you.

38
39 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

40 Also, I wanted to mention, too, is that Suffolk Community College
41 has a wonderful program with our Veterans. Unfortunately, we have
42 an issue here in Suffolk, there's a lot of homeless Veterans.
43 There's a lot of Veterans in need and they have a specific program
44 that will train those Vets, you know, how to repair cars, you know,
45 like start them on a career path and that's just an example.
46 Again, it's similar to what also is being offered with these
47 programs that Dick was talking about. So, again, Legislator
48 Richberg has a question for you.

49
50 **LEG. RICHBERG:**

51 Thank you, Mr. Koubek. It's good to see you again. I feel like we
52 see each other at least once or twice a week now. So I want to
53 thank you because your committee puts together, I mean, I think
54 you're supposed to put together one report a year, and so your one
55 report a year is usually your end of the year report that details
56 the things that Legislator Flotteron is requesting. But

1 periodically, especially I think during Hurricane Sandy you did
2 something similar, I think after Hurricane Irene, your committee
3 has put together other reports on, you know, needed issues. I
4 think after the financial crisis you sort of -- you guys did a deep
5 dive into what's going on and how it's affecting us in Suffolk
6 County, so I want to thank you for that.

7
8 **DR. KOUBEK:**

9 I just want to say, Legislator, that most of the Sandy work was
10 done by Health and Welfare Council.

11
12 **LEG. RICHBERG:**

13 Okay, thank you for the correction. But I want to talk to you
14 about one of the programs that you guys put together early on, is
15 the SWEP Program, right, and I think that sort of goes to what
16 Legislator Flotteron is talking about. So that's a program where
17 folks can intern or work in an office for 20 hours a week with
18 different skill sets in a business and they'll get paid through
19 Social Services or Department of Labor, right, and then they're
20 able to get a career. Is that correct?

21
22 **DR. KOUBEK:**

23 Well, SWEP is actually the Suffolk County manifestation of these
24 restrictions I was talking about that come from the Federal
25 government which was called Welfare Reform, I never really saw it
26 as a reform, back in 1996. And it's basically the approach is that
27 rather than just sitting and receiving public assistance you should
28 be doing something constructive. That makes sense. The problem
29 is, and SWEP is not ours. We oversee SWEP, we look at SWEP, we
30 evaluate SWEP. SWEP is the Suffolk Welfare Employment Program.
31 And that's the program I was discussing with regulations with
32 Legislator Flotteron. That's way too restrictive. So, you know,
33 if we had our way, we would have many more people in education and
34 training, but as I said, we can't do that.

35
36 **LEG. RICHBERG:**

37 So it's funny you said that. So I actually can think of four
38 people, five, actually, who came through that program who actually
39 got employment. Some of them are very close to me. And so they
40 were able to tag into certain businesses and certain industries.
41 They were able to get professional experiences and they were able
42 to convert that into real life job skills.

43
44 And the other program you were just talking about, about job
45 training, we had a person at one point who was in the SWEP Program
46 who also was doing job training with Island Drafting, which is
47 another part of the DSS Program. So they were able to get
48 certified in architecture and computer engineering.

49
50 So I think those are good programs that we should definitely
51 showcase more, and I know that, you know, you've put them in your
52 reports in the past. Maybe we should, you know, probably bring
53 that back around with the Department of Labor, Madam Chair, and
54 Social Services so we can all talk about those, because I think we
55 have a lot of success stories, especially with the SWEP Program and
56 I think we should be showcasing them.

1 **DR. KOUBEK:**

2 We do, we do, and we work closely with the Department of Labor.
3 And they could really demonstrate to you the success stories. I
4 guess it's our nature of our function as a Commission to look at
5 those who aren't succeeding, so that's where we look, at people who
6 have sometimes multiple barriers to work and how do we help them.

7
8 **LEG. RICHBERG:**

9 Right.

10
11 **DR. KOUBEK:**

12 How do we get them, you know, the medical assistance they might
13 need, the counseling they might need.

14
15 **LEG. RICHBERG:**

16 Child care.

17
18 **DR. KOUBEK:**

19 Child care, exactly.

20
21 **LEG. RICHBERG:**

22 There's a lot of issues that could be barriers to success.

23
24 **DR. KOUBEK:**

25 Yeah.

26
27 **LEG. RICHBERG:**

28 So I think we should be looking at the whole issue and not just one
29 symptom, and you're 100% right. I think you're supposed to be
30 looking at the glass half empty and say we need to be doing more,
31 but we can also celebrate a little bit of our successes.

32
33 **DR. KOUBEK:**

34 Yeah, we see the empty part of the glass.

35
36 **LEG. RICHBERG:**

37 Thank you.

38
39 **DR. KOUBEK:**

40 And I must say, prior to COVID we had set as a priority for this
41 year, we never got to it because of COVID, but one of the success
42 stories are those programs that have case management, where you
43 have folks with multiple barriers who work with somebody who can
44 guide them through the process, and there are successful programs.
45 I'm on the Board of Wyandanch Homes and Property. We have 27 homes
46 with residents, mostly single moms, and we case manage every one of
47 them on a weekly basis and we have a high success rate.

48
49 **LEG. RICHBERG:**

50 Thank you for your work.

51
52 **DR. KOUBEK:**

53 Thank you.

54
55 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

56 Okay. We had a few more Legislators join us, Legislator Krupski

1 and also Legislator Donnelly. But Legislator Gonzalez has a
2 question for you.

3
4 **LEG. GONZALEZ:**

5 Hey, Rich. How are you, Rich?

6
7 **DR. KOUBEK:**

8 I'm good, Legislator.

9
10 **LEG. GONZALEZ:**

11 I appreciate you coming on to this committee because, number one,
12 pre-COVID I had the opportunity to really, really be part of the
13 Welfare to Work Committee and everything that was happening and all
14 of the programs that were very, very positive, pre. And it's
15 always good to hear from you, especially now that this COVID virus,
16 you know, what's happening. Many of your programs were helping,
17 pre-COVID, individuals who wanted to go back to school, to get out
18 of Welfare, to have childcare provided as they're going to school
19 at Suffolk County Community College.

20
21 And, yes, Suffolk County also provided -- our Community College
22 provided those courses like automobile, learning how to be a
23 mechanic, a new wave type of mechanic. And the unions, the Long
24 Island Federation and Matty, the building trades, all of the
25 individuals who are assisting and helping those that could not
26 make, you know, could not do college, so that they can make
27 prevailing wages going forward was everything that you were
28 achieving pre-COVID. And to that, Rich, I say, you know, I tip my
29 hats off to the organization for doing a great job, but it's also
30 good to listen to the stop. It's like you applied the brake when
31 COVID hit and now it's becoming very, very, very difficult.
32 Listen, there may be jobs outside, as Legislator Flotteron said,
33 but many of them do not want to be taken by the individuals, by
34 many workers, especially minorities, are afraid of the COVID.

35
36 **DR. KOUBEK:**

37 Yes.

38
39 **LEG. GONZALEZ:**

40 To go into a house, to go into an apartment, to go and be in close
41 contact to individuals, and that is what's pushing back those
42 individuals into working. And I guess it's -- it may be the right
43 time to try to get into a trade, but as you well know, the
44 universities are working differently, the labor unions are working
45 differently. So, you know, we're up against something that we've
46 never seen in our lifetime, and maybe the next, but I appreciate
47 you coming forward and telling us like, listen, my district, my
48 district is a tough district. You know, one and two for positive
49 cases in the Coronavirus and there is fear even though there are
50 jobs out there.

51
52 So my question, Rich, do you see any type of changes in the labor
53 force within the next six months or is it going to stay the status
54 quo as you're seeing as Coronavirus just keeps taking over, you
55 know.

1 **DR. KOUBEK:**

2 I'm really, you know, over my pay grade here. I think somebody
3 from the Department of Labor might want to deal with that. I just
4 don't know, I don't know. I mean, we were working really closely
5 with Suffolk Community College. We had great ideas, we were trying
6 to work around those Federal limitations to get people trained, we
7 had done some outreach to the Long Island Fed and their
8 Opportunities Long Island Program. Everything ground to a halt.

9
10 Well, I have to say interesting but buried in the report, there's
11 mention of the fact that when jobs began to -- when businesses
12 began to reopen, 70 of the Welfare recipients in the SWEP Program
13 volunteered to go back to work, they wanted to go back to work.
14 This is really important because there's a stereotype that these
15 people don't want to work and it's just not true. But 70 were able
16 to go back to work. And one of the things that they've been
17 allowed to do is refuse a worksite that might compromise their
18 health. So the Department of Labor has been great about that. But
19 in terms of, you know, where we're going, I have no idea. I'm
20 sorry.

21
22 **LEG. GONZALEZ:**

23 All right, Rich, thank you. I yield back.

24
25 **DR. KOUBEK:**

26 Thanks for your interest also, Legislator, in our work.

27
28 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

29 Okay. We have another -- Legislator Piccirillo has a question for
30 you.

31
32 **LEG. PICCIRILLO:**

33 Thank you, Madam Chair. Is Rebecca still there?

34
35 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

36 She left.

37
38 **LEG. PICCIRILLO:**

39 She left? Oh, okay. That's okay. Mr. Koubek, maybe you could
40 help me out because I heard her speak about substance abuse and
41 domestic violence. Do you just know on a percentage basis how much
42 it has risen since COVID?

43
44 **DR. KOUBEK:**

45 Yes, I think 40% increase in opioid.

46
47 **LEG. PICCIRILLO:**

48 Yeah. I'm getting calls and I have parents pleading with me almost
49 to the point where they're telling me they'd rather see their kid
50 sit in a jail cell because they can't afford rehabilitation. I
51 mean, this is the point we're at of substance abuse relapses and,
52 you know, Narcan is just a Band-Aid. These kids are overdosing,
53 we're hitting them with Narcan, they're back on the street
54 overdosing again, and there just seems to be no help. I mean, we
55 have to start taking this seriously.

1 We lost more people to the drug epidemic than we lost Korea,
2 Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan combined. I mean, these numbers
3 speak for themselves and if we don't -- you know, I've laid a bill
4 on the table to take money from Jake's 58 Casino and advance more
5 beds for domestic violence and substance abuse, because if we don't
6 nip this in the bud now we're going to have serious problems if we
7 have a second wave of Coronavirus. So any help I can get from you
8 and your organization I would appreciate it.

9
10 **DR. KOUBEK:**

11 Thank you. We'll do what we can.

12
13 **LEG. PICCIRILLO:**

14 Thank you so much. Thank you, Madam Chair.

15
16 **CHAIRPERSON ANKER:**

17 Thank you. Richard Koubek, thank you so much for coming to the
18 Suffolk County Legislature. I'll make one more last round with the
19 Legislators. Any more questions? I see none. And also I want to
20 thank Rebecca Sanin, again, with the Health and Welfare Council of
21 Long Island. Thank you again for coming to this meeting and
22 presenting the COVID-19 presentation. And, again, I see no further
23 business. This meeting is adjourned.

24
25 **DR. KOUBEK:**

26 Thank you very much.

27
28 **THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 11:18 AM**
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