



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

STRENGTHENING WISCONSIN FAMILIES

Room 411 South, State Capitol
Madison, Wisconsin

July 15, 2009
10:00 a.m. – 3:45 p.m.

[The following is a summary of the July 15, 2009 meeting of the Special Committee on Strengthening Wisconsin Families. The file copy of this summary has appended to it a copy of each document prepared for or submitted to the committee during the meeting. A digital recording of the meeting is available on our Web site at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc>.]

Call to Order and Roll Call

Co-Chair Taylor called the meeting to order. The roll was called and it was determined that a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Rep. Steve Kestell and Sen. Lena Taylor, Co-Chairs; Sen. Dale Schultz; and Public Members Sheryl Albers, Jon Angeli, Gary Erdmann, Wanda Montgomery, Mary Jo Tittl, and Jack Westman.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED: Rep. Tamara Grigsby; and Public Members John Burgess, Debra Fields, Undraye Howard, Terence Ray, and Lucille Rosenberg.

COUNCIL STAFF PRESENT: Anne Sappenfield, Senior Staff Attorney; and Jessica Karls, Staff Attorney.

APPEARANCES: Kimmie Collins and Jane Penner-Hoppe, Department of Children and Families (DCF); and Richard Schlimm, Chair, Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board.

Approval of the Minutes of the Committee's April 2, 2009 Meeting

Mr. Westman moved, seconded by Co-Chair Taylor, to approve the minutes from the April 2, 2009 meeting. The motion passed on unanimous consent.

Update from the Department of Children and Families

Kimie Collins

Ms. Collins reviewed recent accomplishments of the Department of Children and Families (DCF). She said that the highest priority of DCF is ensuring the safety of Wisconsin children and said that DCF has completed medical evaluations of over 500 children in out-of-home care. She noted that DCF will develop a quality rating system for child care under the recently enacted budget act, and that the budget act contains program integrity initiatives for the child care subsidy program, Wisconsin Shares.

She said that the Casey Foundation will be partnering with Wisconsin to create a system of prevention of child abuse and neglect.

Ms. Collins then discussed DCF's position on each bill draft before the committee. She said that DCF has concerns that WLC: 0346/3, relating to creating a family policy board, creates a duplication of efforts and that DCF believes the bill draft is unnecessary.

Regarding WLC: 0416/2, relating to training for foster parents, Ms. Collins said that the budget act requires statewide training for foster parents and that further legislation is not necessary.

Ms. Collins said that DCF is looking forward to working on WLC: 0416/2, relating to creating bills of rights for foster children and foster parents. She said that many of the rights are currently set forth in administrative rules under s. DCF 56.09, which describes what responsibilities a foster parent has to a foster child.

Regarding WLC: 0434/1, relating to extended court jurisdiction for foster youth, Ms. Collins said that the bill draft would be costly and is not possible in this biennium.

Finally, Ms. Collins said that WLC: 0434/1, relating to training for case managers, is already covered in current administrative rules.

Mr. Angeli said that DCF's position on the family policy board draft suggests that DCF is focusing on collaboration and coordination among agencies instead of with community members and other stakeholders. Ms. Collins said that the Division of Prevention and Service Integration is focused on services integration. Mr. Angeli asked for information on DCF's neighborhood building efforts.

Mr. Westman said that DCF did not understand the family policy board draft if they viewed it as redundant.

Jane Penner-Hoppe

Ms. Penner-Hoppe described the poverty summit that was held in May and said that the report from the summit is on DCF's website. She said that there are work groups on job creation, birth-to-12 education, housing, adult education, supporting families, and building family income and access to supports.

Presentation by Invited Speaker

Dick Schlimm, Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board

Mr. Schlimm reported that the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board met on April 3, 2009 and voted unanimously to uphold its original position to not support or endorse the bill draft to create a family policy board. He said he simply thinks that what has been recently established should be allowed to do its work. He said that he does not believe that reorganizing at the state level at this point is productive.

Co-Chair Kestell said that the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board's lack of support for the family policy board proposal altered his view of the Board. He said that the Board does not have the statutory authority to accomplish the broader goals the family policy board would have and said that the Board and the Early Childhood Council are too narrow in focus. Mr. Westman said that a family policy board has the potential to have much more impact than the current efforts in Wisconsin.

Ms. Tittl said that identifying best practices is a very good foundation and would be a good focus for the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board. She said that the Board needs to do what the Board asks community organizations to do—actually work together collaboratively.

Discussion of Committee Assignment

WLC: 0434/1, relating to training for child welfare case workers

Ms. Karls described WLC: 0434/1. Ms. Montgomery discussed the training requirements for case managers in Milwaukee County and said that a case manager does not go into the field without training because of the structure created for training and supervision. After further discussion, there was agreement that training of case managers is being adequately addressed under current law.

WLC: 0346/3, relating to creating a family policy board and requiring counties to provide prevention resources

Mr. Westman discussed WLC: 0346/3. He said that he has been working on this proposal for 10 years and that the family policy board would elevate the importance of families to the status of natural resources in Wisconsin. He said that the board would create real change in human services in Wisconsin.

Senator Schultz said that change for families in Wisconsin is inevitable and that the committee should continue to strive to do things better and cheaper. Co-Chair Kestell said that he likes the concept of one entity considering broad, long-term effects of state policies on Wisconsin families. Co-Chair Taylor said that she feels there needs to be a step in between the current organization and the board. She said that the family policy board draft is visionary, but that she does not think it is a political reality.

Mr. Erdmann said that he is struggling with the concept of a family policy board, especially its emphasis on strengthening families versus addressing the needs of vulnerable children. He said that he worries about losing the focus on children. Mr. Westman responded that the problem with the current structures in Wisconsin and other states is that they treat children as if they are not part of families.

Ms. Albers said that she likes the family policy board concept because she believes it would give attention to the needs of rural areas as well as Milwaukee. Mr. Westman said that Wisconsin may be able to receive more federal funding if it has a family policy board.

WLC: 0424/1, relating to extended court jurisdiction for certain foster youth under the age of 21 years

Co-Chair Taylor said that she did not want to discuss WLC: 0424/1 but would like to consider a narrower proposal for children who age out of foster care.

WLC: 0416/2, relating to creating bills of rights for foster children and foster parents, and WLC: 0417/2, relating to training for foster parents

There was consensus to discuss WLC: 0416/2 and WLC: 0417/2 at the committee's next meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

AS:jal