

Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Poverty Reduction Oversight Task Force

08/26/2019 | 8:30AM-11:30AM

J.A. Cherberg Building / Conference Room ABD
304 15th Ave SW, Olympia, WA 98501

Minutes (for review and confirmation at next quarterly meeting, November 2019)

I. Welcome and Introductions

Meeting convened by Senator Hans Zeiger and Dept. of Social and Health Services Secretary Cheryl Strange

Quorum met by task force members (or designee) in attendance as follows:

Jim Baumgart, Rep. Michelle Caldier, Sen. Jeannie Darneille, Sen. Manka Dhingra, Erin Frasier, Diane Klontz, Nam Nguyen, Daisye Orr, Tim Probst, Nicole Rose, Maria Siguenza, David Stillman, Cheryl Strange, Sen. Hans Zeiger.

Additional attendees:

Michael Althausser, Dawn Eychaner, Diane Giannobile, David Hlebain, Susan Kavanaugh, Tedd Kelleher, Melissa Kenney, Alexis Marx, Alison Mendiola, Lori Pfingst, Babs Roberts, Josephine Tamayo Murray, Suzy Young.

- **Taskforce concept and legislative review** by Babs Roberts & Senator Zeiger
 - Overview of the Task Force:
 - Action oriented group
 - Seven requirements laid out in the legislation [RCW 74.08A.505(4)]
 - Five-year plan due December

II. Task Force Business

- **Confirm prior meeting minutes**
 - Minutes confirmed as written

III. Updates on 2SHB 1603 Implementation

Babs Roberts, DSHS

- Rule changes to TANF/WorkFirst effective 7/28. New time limit extension for homelessness, and permanent WorkFirst non-cooperation disqualification removed.
- Outreach mailer sent out in August. Approximately 3000 mailers.
 - Sen. Darneille suggests putting language on the client portal (Washington Connection) to explain new eligibility rules. DSHS will look into adding this.

IV. DCYF – Update on Phase 2

Nicole Rose, DCYF

- **Child Care Subsidy Transition:**
 - Weekly team meetings held to focus on transition with goal for providers and families to have seamless experience while program transitioned from DSHS to DCYF administration.
 - New phone number implemented to redirect families to DCYF.

- *Data shows that families experienced great service levels during transition, supported by ongoing workgroup and partnership between DCYF & DSHS.*
- *Three phased approach: Phase 1 and Phase 2 focused on implementation, Phase 3 will evaluate what went well in previous phases.*
- *Juvenile Rehabilitation Transition:*
 - *Experienced a seamless transition as well. Multi-phased approach - lessons learned in Phase 1 were applied to Phase 2 of transition.*
- *Rep. Caldier: Families in communities are experiencing the issue of childcare providers closing shop and parents are having a harder time finding providers. Is there information on the number of providers that have closed recently?*
 - *DCYF can provide information on provider exits. There has been feedback from providers indicating issues with implementation of the electronic attendance requirement. Recent Subsidy increases are a win. Still working with how to recruit providers into the field.*
 - *Rep. Caldier: Even with increase, due to insurance and minimum wage increases, it is difficult for providers recruit staff for these jobs.*
- *Sen. Darneille: The pressure of wage increases on operating costs is great. The average cost/family \$800/child, which affects family planning decisions. Is there a chronology of subsidy increases, rate increases, and what level of services children receive based on cost available? How do we put investments into perspective? Concern with losing institutional knowledge due to closing facilities. Providers are unable to recruit to meet staff qualifications specified in new licensing rules.*
 - *Rose: DCYF is attempting to honor existing provider group and balance staff education and experience with where community is. Difficult when staff education and experience directly affects child outcomes. Exploring community based training for providers. Also, looking at the possibility of month rates to mirror private childcare market.*
- *Rep. Caldier: How many families are applying for subsidy vs. getting it?*
 - *Rose: Will make that information available.*
- *Sen. Darneille: More partnership with employers needed. Employers contributing towards childcare needs to be discussed more. Idea of investing in a workforce, which is raising the next generation of workers for the community. Should government bare full cost?*
 - *Roberts: Childcare Collaborative Task Force is currently looking at affordability and availability of childcare, and bringing employers into the conversation.*
- *Sen. Darneille: Need to explore on-site childcare as an option for employers – show benefits of onsite childcare. What is state’s role to incentivize childcare as a service that comes with being an employee of a company?*
 - *Roberts: This is part of the CCTF discussion– onsite childcare benefits.*
- *Rep. Caldier: How many folks are getting a subsidy? Can we get the information delineated by activities the parent is doing (i.e. in school (FT/PT), hours working; types of jobs people have). Is it possible to do an analysis of what job settings could support onsite childcare? What about job settings that cannot support onsite childcare?*

- Roberts: Acknowledging some jobsite can accommodate onsite childcare while others cannot. That is where the employer subsidizing childcare can come in.

V. Drivers of Homelessness in Washington State Presentation

Tedd Kelleher, Dept. of Commerce

- Washington housing sales prices have been increasing. Rentals prices plateaued in 2018, but are now on the rise and not only in city centers. Fixed income households are the most impacted by these increases in housing cost. Impact also depends on where someone is located within the state.
- In aggregate, Washington housing affordability is the best it has been since 2012. This is due in part to Washington having more well-paying jobs today than it did back in 2012. Though as rents increase, homelessness increases
- There is no correlation between providing subsidized housing and less people working.
 - Pfingst: In other words, providing support is not a deterrent to working.
 - Kelleher: Statistically there is only a 3% displacement.
- Family stability is increasing in Washington State (marriage in particular is on the rise).
- According to preliminary data, Washington State appears to rank ninth in the nation in its homelessness crisis response system (though it is most likely average compared to other states).
- There is a general lack of housing supply, whereas the economy has not kept pace with growth of population.
 - Baumgart: Population growth is significant and keeps growing. 45,000 units were built this past year across the state's market, which is the highest build rate since the recession. However, this build rate is not keeping pace with growth.
- There is a strong relationship between higher incomes and higher rental rates. There are no good examples of high-income areas with lots of low rental options.
 - Probst: Are there any examples of high-income areas with low homelessness rates?
 - Kelleher: Not aware of any examples.
- Weather patterns in a given area influence how much people are willing to spend on housing.
- According to "Up for Growth", if Washington State adopted pro-grow strategies, housing prices would be 4.3% less. What communities to emulate (incremental pro-housing policies): Houston/Dallas, King-Snohomish-Pierce.
- Rep. Caldier: Housing in smaller Washington communities are impacted greatly by surges in military personnel. How do we balance out for this?
 - Baumgart: The Governor's Office has requested support from the Military/Navy on this issue, particularly for family housing.
- Sen. Zeiger: Is there any data on the impact of homelessness on intergenerational poverty? Do we know the ACES level of the homelessness population?
 - Kelleher: A relationship exists, considering your parents income and your community are predictors of individual success.
- Sen. Darneille: Traditional systems of intervention (i.e. Section 8 vouchers) are not as effective as they once were. Are we tracking traditional systems against those actually housed?

- Kelleher: Due to the availability of data today, we can make educated decisions regarding what could be next steps. There is a cost benefit to housing the homelessness (i.e. decreased impact on emergency health care system).

VI. Strategic Plan

Babs Roberts, DSHS

- DSHS is required to deliver a five-year strategic plan by December. The Task Force's advisory body, the Governor's Poverty Reduction Workgroup, currently has 150 initial recommendations under review for their 10-year strategic plan. Intent is to develop and align the 5-year plan coming out of this Task Force with the recommendations coming out of the Poverty Reduction Workgroup, particularly focusing on: Intergenerational Poverty, TANF/WorkFirst, and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Walked through an initial review of recommendations from the Governor's Poverty Reduction Workgroup, which fall into six "themes."
 - Ensure we are not re-traumatizing participants by asking them to retell their story.
 - The fiscal subsidies 'cliffs' are perceived to disincentive incremental wage increases.
 - Continue to enhance efforts to ensure equity & cultural competency (Focus on bias and history of discrimination).
 - Common professional development (trauma-informed, empathy, strength-based approach, human centered).
 - Probst: Interactions with advocates & those we serve this past year have been incredibly valuable. There is disconnect between how systems have developed and who they are intended to serve. There is opportunity to create something better – a system built around those that are using it.
- Criminal Justice/Re-entry (Support families of incarcerated, Re-entry Preparation/Resources)
 - Sen. Darneille: Re-entry Council has been working on eliminating the question from housing applications that speaks to felony convictions as a means to improve access to housing for this population.
 - Baumgart: The Governor's office is working with Veterans Affairs to improve the connection of incarcerated and/or recently released Veterans and their families to supports provided by VA.
 - Strange: Working with Department of Corrections to connect those released with supports and services.
 - Sen. Darneille & Sen. Dhingra raised the issue of gender responsiveness risk assessment – how is the story different for incarcerated women?
- Benefits/Program Concerns (Agency Coordination, Effective Programs)
 - Coordination between agencies and accountability of agencies needs improvement.
 - Consider restructuring to provide continuum of care and effective assistance.
 - Restore pre-recession program funding levels for TANF.
 - "Families First" versus WorkFirst

- Pfingst: *The segregation/silo-ing of programs has resulted in a confusing system.*
- Sen. Zeiger: *Steering committee could be a model for future coordination between various agencies.*
- Pfingst: *Though members need actual power and to be compensated for expertise.*
- **Education (Access, Support)**
 - *Expand ECEAP access, post-secondary education funding for TANF households, and childcare services to post-secondary students.*
 - *Mental health services for children who live with parents who are suffering from mental health issues.*
 - *Orr: Note that “parent with mental health issue” is included in ACES.*
- **Employment/Workforce (Accessible & Relevant Programs)**
 - *Programs need to be funded adequately, accessible and offer living wage workforce development.*
 - *Programs need to be tailored to those on poverty (cannot assume what was or was not learned in childhood) and offer a broad range of opportunities.*
- **Health (Access, Children/Families)**
 - *Funding and resources for access and availability of mental health services.*
 - *Need to allow time for relationship building between providers and clients.*
 - *Expand school based counseling, teacher trainings, and CPS training.*
 - *Sen. Darneille: Past funding was provided for CPS workers to get Masters in MSW. Have we measured impact of that investment on outcomes for families and children?*
 - *Sen. Zeiger: Collecting data as state government takes investment in data systems?*
 - *Roberts: We need systems that interface or “talk to each other and share data”.*
 - *Sen. Dhingra: Programs need to be user friendly (i.e. applications, forms). Need to leverage technology and invest in technology.*
 - *Roberts: Would allow program leaders to make better and more intentional decisions.*
- **Discussion: Does the path we are on make sense?**
 - *Rep. Caldier: Is there proof all of these efforts will stop intergenerational poverty? What does the data support?*
 - *Pfingst: Evidence base behind conversation nationally and locally. Experiences of those we are serving is a data source as well. Efficiently running programs does not equate to improving the outcomes of those we serve.*
 - *Orr: We need to strive for a balance between the goal of reducing/eliminating intergenerational poverty and mitigating impact of being in poverty today.*
 - *Sen. Dhingra: One option is to find the desired data point and work backwards (i.e. those who have a high school diploma have far less chance of entering criminal justice system).*
 - *Rep. Caldier: What will give us the best bang for our dollar? How do we prioritize?*
 - *Roberts: Recommendations to be prioritized with this group focusing on intergenerational poverty.*

- *Nguyen: Statistically those nations that spend more on reducing poverty have the least amount of poverty.*
- *Pfingst: In those nations, outcomes of families and children are better.*
- *Sen. Darneille: Washington State spends a lot of money measuring/determining eligibility, yet for childcare we want every child to have access.*
- *Sen. Zeiger: Each caucus needs to think about what its anti-poverty agenda is going to be over the next five years.*
- *Sen. Darneille: Can task force review past session bills to pair with recommendations?*
 - *Pfingst: Re-Entry Council is looking at recommendations as well.*
- *Sen. Darneille: Reminder that health impact assessments offered by DOH; pledging to get some proposals to DOH related to this service, and to educate other legislators regarding these assessments.*

VII. Public Comment

- *David Hlebain, Statewide Poverty Action Network:*
 - *Excited about recent TANF/WorkFirst policy changes (2SHB 1603).*
 - *Deep poverty rates have not changed despite changes to poverty rate.*
 - *Relay concern of definition of “homelessness” adopted by DSHS for Time Limit Extensions (excludes “couch-surfing” and “doubling up”). The circumstances and stability of these households is ever changing.*
 - *\$5 million invested with these policy changes; \$19 million swept due to caseload decline.*
 - *We need to shift policies to focus on family stability, rather than compliance.*
 - *How can we reinvest into the program? Consider Child Support pass-through bill from last year’s session.*