

NH Juvenile Justice Reform Commission  
Legislative Subcommittee Meeting Minutes  
Chair: Cody Belanger

02/21/2023 9AM to 10:30 AM

Attendees: Steven Ranfos, Samantha Morin, Cody Belanger, Alissa Cannon, Mark Rolon

Minutes:

Meeting called to order.

The first item we addressed was to identify and agree what the main goals of the committee should be. It was brought up that most of the relevant pending legislative issues are addressed at by Director Risbam at the Juvenile Justice Reform Commission meetings due to his active engagement in the legislative process

The member present agreed we need to continually monitor the legislature and identify any and all pending and current legislation. The committee should report back any relevant information to the Juvenile Justice Reform Commission for the purpose of supporting or opposing legislation, offering testimony in support or opposition when appropriate

The members present discussed the issue of committee in person participation and how in recent past meetings, we have had a very difficult time getting a quorum to attend in person. Not sure what can be done to correct this situation, but it has resulted in members taking the time to show up in person, only to have the meeting cancelled due to lack of participation

Doctor Morin made the committee aware of the “Young Adult Court Project” that is being considered in Hillsborough County Superior Court. The project is aimed at the 18-to-25-year age group with an eye towards alternative disposition. The program is for those who do not qualify for mental health or drug court and will work towards traditional education, vocational training and counselling in an effort to build education and skills to get the young offenders out of the system

Cody Belanger gave the committee members an excellent overview of the New Hampshire Legislative process and its uniqueness. Cody brought it to our attention that when looking for new proposed legislation that the majority will come from the Children and Family Law Committee and the Judiciary Committee- Cody showed us where we could look to find this information.

The members spent a significant amount of time discussing HB-120- the SYSC legislation. Cody Belanger gave an up to the date analysis of where the bill is at currently. The Bill was retained which means that it can be revisited in the next legislative session. The Bill cancels the current closure date. The House Finance committee completely stripped the bill other than the closure date

SYSC operational costs should be contained within SB-2

Cody Belanger plans on meeting with the Speaker regarding SB 120, to get a better understanding of what is going on with the bill

HB 438- Deals with representation in family court proceedings

HB 455- A new state cause of action for abuse/neglected children who have immigrant status

SYSC proposed locations are still Hampstead, Manchester or Concord- looks like any new facility will be on currently state-owned property

The members spoke at length about what role, if any, this group should be taking in raising public awareness of our position on the new SYSC facility and its operating philosophy.

Steve Ranfos raised the issue of the SYSC proposed population cap- From his experience there was a court mandated cap years ago, yet there were still situations where more youth needed to be in secure detention. There was never a specific process at that time which caused great confusion between everyone- the courts, the police and the SYSC staff. Should some sort of emergency override protocol be built into the new legislation to allow input from all stakeholders and to have a legal process to protect against civil litigation in the event there needs to be a population cap override?

Cody reports that from what he can see-there is no other pending legislation that we need to be concerned with at this time

Committee members discussed the possibility of some of the members making it to any meetings concerning any relevant pending legislation

The members talked about the current commitment numbers-pending adjudication numbers at SYSC- Numbers were up in November/December but not significantly. Still unable to hire new staff, relying on overtime of other trained DCYF workers

We discussed the ongoing lack of non-secure placements- especially the lack of the so called Level 5 Placements which New Hampshire has only one, Hampstead Hospital, yet many placement evaluations come back with a Level 5 recommendation-

Meeting adjourned -Next meeting date has already been set