

## February 16, 2024 Public Policy Committee Minutes

**Public Policy Committee Members:** Caitlin Owens, George Thompson, Kevin Harris, Julie Bergeson

**Other Council Members:** Matthew Conaway, Roxanne Cogil, Eric Evans

**Council Staff:** Carlyn Crowe, Lindsay Hommer

**Public:** None

### Welcome

Harris and Crowe welcomed all attendees.

### Updates

Harris stated the Area Education Agencies (AEA) bill has some verbiage changes. Crowe stated the Senate Education Committee passed a different version of the bill that nobody has seen yet. The House passed their new bill out of subcommittee and the Education committee and it's a much better version than the Senate's. The bill changes the funding stream a bit so that school districts have more control over the funding but, they still have to contract with the AEAs. The bill does move all the power for special education under the Department of Education (DE). The bill of the week this week will be on this bill. The chair, Skyler Wheeler, said the bill is still a work in progress. Crowe and Bouza are trying to set up a meeting with Skyler Wheeler on Tuesday of next week to go over some concerns with the bill. The House bill would assign five DE employees to each AEA and additional staff in Des Moines. This would be to make sure they are complying with federal and state requirements. All budgets for AEAs would get approved by the DE instead of local AEA boards. Operational sharing was brought up a lot and the bill does not allow for this. This will affect social workers and other specialists especially in the rural areas.

Crowe stated the Work without Worry bill passed out of Health and Human Services on Wednesday. The Rehab Technology Repair bill was attached as an amendment. Cogil stated they took out the age cap on the Work Without Worry bill because it costs too much. Owens stated that she just learned that the Medicaid for Employed Persons with Disabilities (MEPD) program is used a lot to get people on Medicaid.

Cogil stated that the non-medical switching bill is ready for the floor.

Crowe stated there are the bill on behavioral health and MHDS reorganization passed. Some people are still not happy with this bill because it is not specific enough about what will happen with disability and aging services.

Crowe stated there are some bad voting bills that passed too that they are still working on.

Crowe stated the Senate bill about boards and commissions is very comprehensive. The House version is not as comprehensive and keeps some boards and commissions. They'll have to compromise if both pass their respective chambers.

Floor debate starts next week in the legislature so there are fewer committee meetings scheduled.

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Harris asked if there were any bills we were watching that didn't get out of committee. Crowe stated the Intellectual disability (ID) diagnosis and waiver waiting list bills didn't go anywhere. Several others we will list in infoNET.

Crowe thought there was suggested a small budget increase for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). Evans stated he had not heard anything.

On Tuesday, Governor Reynolds has accepted a request to meet with Crowe, Lovelace, Werger, Bouza, and Harris. This will be to discuss the special education bills/proposals. Crowe would like to weave in employment and workforce in this conversation.

There will also be a meeting with Kelly Garcia and Mackenzie Snow a week from today about the AEA bills.

Crowe stated groups will be coming in every week for the next few weeks for Capitol Advocacy Day trainings. The DD Council could have done ten grants this year. Some groups are coming who are not receiving grants. She is actually traveling to Iowa City for Systems Unlimited and REACH trainings and those groups will come later for a Capitol visit.

Harris is still trying to understand how this committee will function. Crowe stated other advocacy groups are using different strategies for talking about policy and bills they support or oppose. So if you have ideas for how to reach advocate and legislators, even if they are outside the box ideas, let the group know. Crowe and Harris asked for ideas on strategies.

Harris stated there is a DD Council Facebook page and an InfoNet Facebook page. Branding needs shored up. Crowe has been looking into how many people use the Take Action Center. It isn't used that much to send letters. People may be looking at the bill tracker though. Crowe stated it may be worth thinking about to make the Facebook page(s) more interactive. Harris suggested targeted marketing to get more likes.

### **Next Meeting**

February 28<sup>th</sup> @ 3 PM

March 13<sup>th</sup> @ 3 PM

March 27 @ 3 PM

Cogil suggested moving meetings to Fridays at 3 PM. Harris will send email to ask members if this time will work.

### **Action Items**

Harris will send email to ask members if Friday at 3 PM is a better meeting time.

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