

## January 31, 2024 Public Policy Committee Minutes

**Public Policy Committee Members:** Brady Werger, Caitlin Owens, George Thompson, Emma Bouza, Kevin Harris

**Other Council Members:** Matthew Conaway, Eric Evans, Kristen Aller

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

**Public:** Wendy Anderson

### Welcome

Crowe welcomed all attendees.

### Updates

Crowe stated the House subcommittee did not sign the Area Education Agency (AEA) bill. The Senate subcommittee, however, did sign the amendment. The bill is now moving onto the Education committee. Crowe stated the strategy is to advocate with senators and especially with Republican senators. Aller asked if there will be an open discussion once it moves to the education committee. Crowe stated that there will not be but, comments can be sent to committee members. Harris asked if the amended version doesn't prohibit the AEA's from functioning but, limits their ability to market themselves to schools? Crowe stated she thought this is correct and will send comparisons that the governor's office used to describe the differences between the original bill and the amendment. Crowe stated our strategy is to keep focusing on children with disabilities. Hundreds of pages of comments about this bill have been coming to legislators. Aller stated she didn't understand why people from out of state were at the subcommittee meeting.

Werger stated that Kevin, his caregiver, explained that the AEA's in Iowa are broken up into districts. Instead of having nine different districts, the governor wants to cut it down to four districts. The concerns are that services could be taken away from children that need them. If the governor tries to take away individualized education programs (IEPs), Werger believes people may not be able to graduate. Crowe stated that the changes being proposed by the governor's office are based on standardized test scores for all students and that's not the way to measure success for students in special education. Lovelace, on behalf of the Council sent a letter to the governor asking for a meeting with parent advocates to let them have an opportunity to be heard. She will wait for a response. Aller stated it sounds like the governor is trying to privatize education and put the funds that would have went into the AEA's into the new voucher program. Thompson stated it was counter arguments were brought up during the subcommittee's that they weren't getting rid of the AEA's, but there's a difference between feasible and legal. It would not be possible to use some services if the schools don't go through AEA's for services. Owens stated schools would be given the option to stay with their AEA but, when the system is gutted, they're not going to be effective.

Crowe stated that SF295, guardianship and conservatorship bill will be having a subcommittee meeting today at 4:00 pm. Bill Stumpf will be commenting as an advocate.

Crowe stated the Work Without Worry bill, HSB198, has a subcommittee meeting tomorrow. This bill would help individuals on Medicaid, who are working, have the asset and income limit increased so it does not affect eligibility. Crowe stated that Ben Grauer, who is working on the Blueprint for Change grant, was able to pull together some data for Rep. Josh Turek. Lovelace asked where the data came from. Crowe stated it came from Colorado and Washington states. Employment has risen in those states and less people are using public assistance. Owens stated she spoke with Rep. Josh Turek last week and he said he thought they were going to be able to get the bill to subcommittee with the language about the \$400,000 primary residence cap and non-modified vehicle cap removed. Owens stated it looks like that language is still in the bill. Crowe stated Alex Watters coming to speak about these caps and has a great example of why these limits are not reasonable. Crowe stated one concern is that more people stay on Medicaid. The problem is that private insurance does not cover the things that Medicaid does that help people maintain employment This is a message point.

Crowe stated another one of Rep. Josh Turek's bills got a subcommittee meeting scheduled for tomorrow morning. This bill is the Right to Repair bill, HF2194. This bill would eliminate the need for a prescription and face-to-face appointment to get wheelchair repairs. Crowe stated if you have a permanent disability, you would not have to keep justifying the need for repairing equipment.

Crowe will send out the written testimony that Disability Rights Iowa (DRI) used today in the AEA subcommittees.

## Next Meeting

February 14 @ 3 PM

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

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

March 27 @ 3 PM.

## Action Items

- Crowe will send comparisons that the governor's office used to describe the differences between the original bill and the amendment.
- Crowe will send out the written testimony that Disability Rights Iowa (DRI) used today in the AEA subcommittees.
- Crowe will send information on the Work Without Worry bill, HSB198
- Crowe will send information on the Right to Repair bill, HF2194