

June 2, 2023 Legislative Committee Minutes

Attendee Legislative Committee Council Members: Jean Willard, Matthew Conaway, Roxanne Cogil, Amber Gale

Absent Council Members: Kristen Aller, Brady Werger, Brittney Drinovsky, Hugh Kelly, Mark Smith, Rob Roozeboom

Council Staff: Brooke Lovelace, Carlyn Crowe

Public: Emma Bouza

Crowe welcomed everyone and stated that there were council members who wanted to attend but couldn't participate today so she talked to them individually and will share their input as appropriate. We will attempt to find a common time to meet that works for as many as interested in participating, and you don't have to be on the council to be on the committee.

Legislative Agenda for Next Year

The governor signed 65 bills yesterday finishing out this legislative session. She vetoed one bill. It was not related to our agenda.

On our legislative agenda this year we had three main priorities. The first was to fully fund healthcare services and community-based supports. The DD Council wanted to address the workforce crisis in both rural and urban areas by increasing direct support professionals (DSPs) wages and finding other ways to recruit people to the profession. One thing that did happen last session regarding this is that there was funding added for public guardians. Priority two was to support an inclusive and accessible community including transportation, adult changing tables, accessibility of parks and public spaces, and also how businesses hire people with disabilities. The third priority was to reduce and eliminate waiver waiting lists. There is a transformation of the waiver process occurring now that could take a year or more. Anything that was introduced that had to do with changing waivers did not really go anywhere because of this.

Willard asked Crowe to describe the role of the DD Council and what it does to influence legislative change. Lovelace stated we share the legislative agenda with each legislator to educate them about what legislation we would like to see drafted. Willard stated this helped and she believes there is bipartisan support in the legislature for things that help people with disabilities. She also likes the idea of providing sample legislation. Willard also asked how the DD Council can join forces with other organizations that have shared goals. Crowe stated it may be time to have the DD Council come up with ideas on how to make change and suggest these ideas to the legislators. Also, Crowe stated that we may need to change our approach and suggest ideas to the majority party that are feasible and work with other organizations that have similar goals. Cogil stated that we may want to form a coalition or have

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Amy Campbell ask the Iowa Association of Community Providers (IACP) if they would like to spearhead a coalition for the DSPs related to the workforce issue.

Crowe stated that a big topic now with the majority party is employment. We could consider this in our legislative agenda related to people with disabilities. We know people want to work, but there are barriers and explain all the things it takes for someone with disabilities to get employed and stay employed. Transportation is a big issue when it comes to employment.

Another big topic currently is education, which emerged in an unexpected way this session. We need to look at what's going on in school systems to make sure that kids with disabilities are getting the services that they need and that their rights are not being infringed. Funding is going to be decreased because of the Area Education Agencies (AEA) cuts.

Crowe plans on having a strategy session with Amy Campbell and anyone is invited to join. This session is to get Amy's feedback on what is realistic and who may work on our priorities from a legislative perspective.

Cogil suggested that the DD Council meet with the Governor's office and talk to her about the workforce shortage and Future Ready Iowa, how we can integrate people with disabilities so people with disabilities are part of that Future Ready Iowa initiative. Crowe stated that this year they also set up an office of apprenticeship and we want to make sure people with disabilities are included with this, if possible. Cogil stated that supports for people with disabilities needs to be something we focus on.

Crowe stated another big topic is diversity, equity, and inclusion or DEI particularly in education. There are a lot of misconceptions about what that means but in the workforce side of things, it means the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce.

Emma Bouza stated that there was a bill introduced last legislative session by Rep. Josh Turek about teaching the history of disability. It didn't get a lot of traction last session, but he is willing to reintroduce it. Lovelace stated this topic will be addressed at the Make Your Mark! conference.

Lovelace stated that one broad topic we talked about last year was the Vocational Rehabilitation piece. They could be drawing down a lot more funds than what they are and this could be our specific ask this year.

Emma Bouza stated another thing she is working on is legislating an alert system. It is a purple alert for people with disabilities when they elope or wander.

Lovelace suggested having retired legislators look at our finalized priorities before they are sent out.

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Crowe stated that if anyone is interested on working on a certain section, that includes specifics, please let her know. The headings would be Education, Workforce Development, Inclusive Communities, and Healthcare and Medicaid Waivers.

Legislative Committee

Crowe stated she would like to discuss the role of the legislative committee and how we want it to function in the coming year. Kevin Harris and Brady Werger could not attend this meeting but would like to be members of the legislative committee. Also Mark Smith said he would like to stay on even though he's leaving the Council.

Cogil stated that it may be more impactful to have people with lived experiences speak at subcommittee meetings during session, but she understands that is sometimes hard to do since there is not much notice given of when the subcommittee meetings will be. Cogil said that someone could read someone else's personal story if they are not able to be there and that could be impactful.

Lovelace stated that under the Community Inclusivity goal, we should have an action step about voting and not to make any more restrictions on voting.

Lovelace stated we will need this committee's help on identifying stories that go with our agenda items.

Crowe stated it is helpful to have committee members give ideas about strategy during session. Crowe stated having more examples, more stories, and items to leave behind are very helpful.

Cogil suggested we try to get 100 people with disabilities to bring their legislators to work with them.

Next Meeting

6/30/2023 at 12 PM.

Action Items

Let Crowe know if you are interested on working on a section of the legislative priorities.

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