

Government Administration and Elections Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, August 11, 2010

10:00 AM in Room 2B of the LOB

The meeting was called to order at 10:13 AM by Chairman, Slossberg

The following committee members were present:

Slossberg, G; Spallone J, McLachlan, M; Candelora, V; Minor, C; Morin, R; Mushinsky, M.

Senator Slossberg introduced Julia Evans Starr, the Executive Director of the Commission on Aging for her presentation on Long Term Care.

See Meeting Materials for presentation by Julia Evans Starr.

Rep. Mushinsky discussed the unpredictable service fee and co pays for homecare. She mentioned that this is one of the roadblocks to accessing great care. She mentioned an anecdote where a person stopped receiving homecare because her co pays were fluctuating and she would no longer pay it and was therefore dropped by the program. Ms. Starr said that this has happened to over 1000 people in Connecticut. The Commission on Aging has been dealing with this problem for a while and is working on a solution. One of the options is to pool all of the people and set a budget so each of the people enrolled in the program has a set rate.

Senator Slossberg clarified that this is just one of the programs that the state is working with and this highlights the work that the commission has to do.

Representative Morin spoke about work force development, and mentioned that the people who do the most work get paid very little, earn no benefits but are still held to very high standards. We need to address that this issue exists and need to work on a solution.

Ms. Starr spoke about family care givers, in response to Rep. Morin. She mentioned that they are the backbone of caring for elders in CT. She understands that without benefits and proper pay that we cannot always expect the homecare workers programs to be very well developed.

DSS received a series of grants which help fund ADRC's. In connection with the 1-800-CHOICES and are trying to build off of that system. Speaks to the possible need for DSS reorganization.

Sen. Slossberg mentioned that although she has used the 1-800-CHOICES it is not well known and people are still unclear as to where to go for help.

Senator Slossberg asked about the Commission on Aging and DSS proposals, and if it was concrete and if it was something that CEOA would be able to see. Ms. Starr replied that they have ideas, but would be happy to work on something concrete to bring to the Commission.

Senator Slossberg wants to know which specific things need to be done first to get to the savings.

Ms. Starr replied that each of the pieces are related, and each of them need to be addressed. Leadership at the very top of the executive branch needs to give time and consideration to the nursing home plan to address this need.

Senator Slossberg wanted to know if we need one agency or one waiver or both here in Connecticut?

Ms. Starr replied that a group of experts with waivers which are convening this month and early fall to address new opportunities under the new health care plan. They would be happy to share with CEOA but it will take some time because it would be a National program to make suggestions to help the individuals who receive these services.

Senator Slossberg asked what specifically we need to do to start working on this.

Here's what we need to do:

1. Giving dedicated focus to this issue because its complexity it has not been given the attention that it needs.
2. Addressing the scope and quality of institutional care, streamlining the agencies which deal with long term care, then looking at the waiver making sure that it is rebalanced and makes sense.

Senator Slossberg advocated that we need to fight for our seniors as a state and encourage them to purchase long term care insurance and follow through make sure the proper consumer protections are in place to help them.

Pete Gioia introduced himself and began his presentation.
See Meeting Materials for his presentation.

Mr. Gioia mentioned that multiple departments and entities will need to come together to achieve these Long Term Care goals.

Representative Mushinsky also thanked Mr. Gioia for his work and suggested somebody at OPM to work on this project.

Mr. Gioia suggested that whomever is in charge of this project needs to be directly responsible to the Governor, has serious oversight by CEOA, is senior and has authority.

Representative Spallone asked for clarification that we were talking about Medicaid patients. He also asked if as a state, could we be more proactive to educating our middle-aged citizens and preparing them for their elderly years?

Mr. Gioia believes that the state has a role and can play a very strong role in preparing our middle-aged citizens for what is to come.

It was reiterated that \$2.5 billion out of Connecticut's \$19 billion a year budget is spent on long term care. Aside from payroll, it is the greatest line item in the budget.

Representative Spallone mentioned that California decimated their home care program due to dire financial circumstances. Mr. Gioia replied that sometimes under pressure the best decisions are not made but we need to be cautious in making the right choices.

Representative Mushinsky wanted to make Mr. Gioia aware that we have PRI staff for our Commission and they're great.

Senator Slossberg asked if any of the cost savings is related to cost avoidance from ER visits. Ms. Starr replied that the cost savings model was based on a whole program and that this could be additional savings if we were to get the appropriate home care systems set up.

Senator Slossberg asked if the commission wanted to talk now about recommendations or if they would like to digest this information before discussion.

Representative Minor stated that CEO is the group that has been at the forefront of taking initiative and is concerned about bringing people to the table. This is the issue that we need to overcome. Getting the Legislature involved should be our first step.

Senator Slossberg respectfully disagreed, stating that the leadership is in contact with her and that we should get the work done and make it as a roadmap for the next governor and the next legislature.

Representative Mushinsky suggested a letter from CEO signed by members and leadership, asking current Governor to start working on a strategy to get us to the next streamline system by appointing someone in OPM to work on this. This letter could include combining waivers, single point of entry, educating residents on long term care.

Representative Minor agreed that this letter was a great start, but we need a big item to make this work.

Senator McLachlan also agreed with Representative Minor's comments that the lack of movement is frustrating to both sides of the aisle, and this is a great opportunity to bring this Commission's work to light during this campaign cycle. He also stated that although there are some complicated ideas, but some are also very simple and can be readily implemented.

Senator Slossberg stated that the chairs will work on drafting a letter and attaching the studies as an appendix, and cc both gubernatorial candidates so that they have it.

Representative Mushinsky made the motion
The motion was 2nd.

It passed unanimously.

Representative Candelora asked for clarification on what would be included in the letter. It is expected that a draft will go around before it is sent out.

Expectation is that our next meeting will be the last week in August which includes the first week in September, and will be announced asap.

A motion was duly made and seconded to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:42 AM.

Administrator

Kate Shea
Committee Clerk