

DATE

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

OF THE

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

MINUTES

A meeting of the Human Services Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on July 22, 2014.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Leg. Monica Martinez, Chairperson
Leg. Kate M. Browning, Vice Chair
Leg. Lou D'Amaro
Leg. Kevin J. McCaffrey (excused absence)
Leg. Robert Trotta

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory
George M. Nolan, Counsel to the Legislature
Sarah Simpson, Assistant Counsel to the Legislature
Lora Gellerstein, Chief Deputy Clerk of the Legislature
Diane Dono, Budget Review Office
Massiel Fuentes, Budget Review Office
Tom Vaughn, County Executive's Office
Michael Pitcher, Aide to Presiding Officer
Richard Koubek, Chairman/Welfare to Work Commission
Kathy Liguori, Vice Chair/Welfare to Work Commission
Janet Walerstein, Child Care Council
Dana Friedman, Child Care Council
Rodick Pearson, Suffolk County Youth Bureau
Phillip Beltz, Suffolk County Youth Bureau
Nancy Lynott, Suffolk County Youth Bureau
Beth Maccagli, Suffolk County Youth Bureau
Gwynn Schroeder, Youth Board Coordinating Council
Jason Hann, YBCC
Phyllis Hill, YBCC
Stephany Contreras, YBCC
Annmarie Larosa, YBCC
Alyssa Turano, YBCC
Brittany Bienemann, YBCC
Deborah Delaney, YBCC
Rev. Dr. Larry Washington, YBCC
Janene Gentile, YBCC
And all other interested parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Diana Flesher, Court Stenographer

THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 2:17 PM

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Good afternoon. Do we have all Legislators here? Yes, we do. Sorry, for the delay, but welcome to the Human Service Committee for today. If you could all please rise for the Pledge of Allegiance to be led by Legislator Trotta.

SALUTATION

Again, welcome, and I do apologize for the delay. We will -- we'll begin shortly. Do we have any Public Portion? No Public Portion, no correspondence.

PRESENTATIONS

We'll go straight into the presentations. We have two today: First one being conducted by the Welfare to Work Commission. We have Dr. Richard Koubek, Janet Walerstein and Dana Friedman, who -- they will be discussing the Childcare Report, an abridged version of *Who's Minding Our Kids*. And we've also been joined by Kathy Liguori. Sorry, Kathy.

DR. KOUBEK:

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Madam Chair, thank you for this opportunity to present to your Committee. My name is Richard Koubek. I'm Chair of the Welfare to Work Commission and I'm joined today by our Vice Chair Kathy Liguori and by two members of our Child Care Committee, Dana Friedman of the Early Years Institute; and Janet Walerstein of the Child Care Council of Suffolk.

And we're here to present on our report, which you have received several copies by now titled "Who's Minding the Kids? Meeting the Challenges and Creating Opportunities for Quality Child Care and Early Learning in Suffolk County." This report came about amid a national conversation about the importance of child care and early learning. And it grew specifically out of President Obama's 2013 State of the Union where he called for a national effort to improve those two areas.

The report is probably the most comprehensive assessment of child care in Suffolk County that's ever been done. And as Legislators you can actually use this, and your Aides can use this, as a resource to help constituents navigate probably one of the most complicated areas of public policy that families have to deal with.

Unfortunately, the core conclusion of this report is that while the benefits of quality child care and early learning for children ages birth to five are indisputable, adequate funding has significantly lagged behind the rhetoric to create these programs.

For me the most stunning finding in the report was that during the preschool years from birth to age 5, 85% of a child's brain development occurs; 85% in those five years. And yet 95% of our funding in this country for education goes to grades ages five and beyond. That's a disconnect. Dana Friedman will be describing next after I'm finished how validated research studies have documented the long-term benefits of quality -- and I want to stress quality childcare and early learning.

Other studies have demonstrated that every dollar spent on childcare stimulates the local economy from seven to \$19 depending on the variables being used. Despite the proven benefits in 2012 US expenditures on child care fell to a ten-year low. And unfortunately as this report was being put together, we learn that Suffolk County was going to receive only \$580,000, a very small percentage increase, in our Child Care Block Grant bringing us to about 31 million despite the fact that we have said again and again we need 40 million to meet the needs, particularly the working poor families, and that's our stress, working poor families, in Suffolk County.

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We were happy to see that on June 13th the County Executive raised the eligibility for child care to 160% of the Federal poverty level. That's about \$38,000. It should be 48,000. That's the true poverty level for Suffolk County for a family of four. So we're really behind; really behind in what we're providing.

The problem, as we have reported to you repeatedly for the last five years, is that the formula the State uses to create its Child Care Block Grant allocations is flawed. So while we got 580,000, Nassau County got something like \$9 million, which is a ridiculous differentiation.

Part of the reason that child care is so important now is that we have a nation -- a nation, not just a County, where both -- both parents are working. It's a reality. And so in our report we point out that there are 226,000 Long Island children under the age of five with an estimated 133,000 working parents; yet there are only 62,000 licensed child care providers in UPK programs; another disconnect.

In addition, and this is really what any parent knows, or in my case grandparent helping out the kids, parents with two kids using licensed child care have to pay typically in Suffolk County \$27,000 a year. That's about what it cost to go to a SUNY school for the kids to go to child care. They're averaging about 16% of their household income while the State recommends that only 10% of income be spent on child care.

Results, is that a lot of parents are placing their kids in inferior programs, unlicensed programs, and sometimes dangerous situations. And by the way, this is not babysitting that we're talking about. This is education. My colleagues will provide more depth on that.

So every study that you'll be hearing about that shows these incredible results when kids get quality child care and early learning is based on funding and the funding not there. And the funding challenges are enormous. So here's the result -- here's the bottom line for Suffolk County: Affluent parents, surprise, get quality child care. Working parents, working poor parents have to struggle. Poor parents it's impossible.

So we have some recommendations which you'll be hearing about in a few minutes, but I thought at this point if Dana Friedman would take over, I'd like you to hear what the research shows about the benefits of quality -- quality child care and early learning which are outlined in our report. Dana? You have to push the button.

MS. FRIEDMAN:

Good afternoon. My name is Dana Friedman. I'm the founder and President of the Early Years Institute, a regional non-profit organization committed to improving school readiness, particularly for our most vulnerable children. We do this work because we believe that success in school and beyond is determined largely by the experiences that children have before they ever get to school. We know that if children start behind, they often stay behind. And a compelling body of longitudinal research has shown that investments and quality early child care programs can yield substantial savings for both schools and society.

We know that 85% of brain growth occurs by age five. So it makes sense to be concerned about the environments in which these young children spend time. Those experiences will shake the architecture of the brain and the foundation for all future learning and social relationships.

The first five years create brain connections that influence behavior, social, emotional development as well as physical health. The notion of self-regulatory capacity, that's the ability to control your behavior, is what we hear about most from kindergarten teachers that children do not have. And that is across the economic spectrum.

In addition, many children face various stressors during these years that can impair their healthy

development. Early childhood intervention programs are designed to mitigate the factors that place children at risk of poor outcomes. What's most important to recognize is that the benefits accrue only when the programs are high quality.

When children have the proper supports and stimulation from the time they're born until they enter kindergarten in high quality programs, the research has shown that they're less likely to need special education, remediation or grade repetition which significantly reduce school costs.

High quality experiences also lead to longer term benefits for the children since the research shows that they're less likely to become juvenile delinquents. In fact, that's the highest cost savings because the cost of incarceration is so high. And these children who have quality early learning experiences have also been shown in the research to be more likely to graduate from high school, have jobs and families and homes well into adulthood compared to children who did not have these early learning experiences.

We also note from economic research, led by Nobel Laureate James Heckman, that all of society benefits from quality early childhood education with an estimated return conservatively of \$7 on every \$1 invested. The local economy that Janet Walerstein will talk about benefits with goods and purchased by the program, taxes and wages paid to the caregivers and support that enables parents to attend work and produce income for their families.

So we know how much money we save if we provide quality early care and education. And we know how much we lose if we don't; and how much early childhood contributes to the local economy. We also know exactly what we need to do stimulate early learning and maximize a child's potential.

So the question we posed in this -- throughout this Commission Report is why are there spaces for only 46% of children under five whose parents work? Why do over 75% of Long Island families find child care unaffordable based on an estimate of having to pay more than 10% of their family income to find it? Why do only 60 of 118 elementary school districts offer pre-K on Long Island? Why are so many child care and early childhood programs not providing quality and having the support they need to do so? And why on Long Island are only families earning less than \$46,000 for a family of four eligible for subsidies? Why do we do so little to help children when they comprise 24% of the population, but 36% of the poor?

The course of political leaders who are promoting investments in early childhood is encouraging from President Obama to Governor Cuomo to Bill de Blasio, Ben Bernanke. A poll just released this week by the First Five Years Fund finds that 71% of voters, including 60% of Republicans, support greater Federal and State investments in early childhood education. Importantly these same voters are willing for Congress and the President to spend now in order to capitalize on the economic return on investment from early childhood education as documented by economist James Heckman.

However, the gap between rhetoric and reality is stunning. In the current economy we're actually losing grounds on our investments and young children and their families. We're reaching only a fraction of those who need access to early care and education opportunities, much less ensuring that those opportunities offer high quality.

The report given to the Suffolk County Legislature is a gift, a gift of clarity, facts and analysis explaining what's preventing the children of Suffolk from getting the best start in life, along with practical solutions for improving child outcomes in school success. The Emperor's Clothes have been removed and it's clear for all to see the ways that inefficiencies in our policies and funding streams are robbing children of opportunities to reach their full potential and preventing parents from earning a livable wage. It also presents reasonable solutions because we know how to fix these problems, which is as much about infrastructure as money. And that requires leadership.

Thank you.

DR. KOUBEK:

Thank you, Dana. So the report came out of a process that was about a year long. It was driven by our Child Care Committee chaired by Kathy Liguori. And we assembled some of the smartest people in -- on Long Island in the area of child care. Dana is one of them and Janet Walerstein -- anybody who knows this Legislature knows Janet Walerstein and the many years she has fought for quality child care. So, Janet, give us a sense of the industry right now.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

I'm glad you included me in "the smart ones." I mean that's a good title. (Laughter)

Good afternoon. My name is Janet Walerstein and I am the Executive Director of the Child Care Council of Suffolk and have been for the last 29 years.

Thank you all for this opportunity to hear from the Commission and to listen to the experiences not only from the practitioners but from the parents as well in this report. As long as I've been in the early childhood field, which is over 50 years, Suffolk County has always been exemplary in its support and realization of how important early care and education is in the development of young children and their growth and their ability to thrive.

So it's not with this body, nor this administration, that has let us down. The subsidy dollars that come down from the Federal government into the State, the CCDBG, as we affectionately call it, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, whereby it is then allocated to the counties is totally inadequate. It is within that transaction that Suffolk has suffered a severe loss over the last seven to eight years. The formula used to calculate the amount given to the County is based on past claims rather than future need. And the demographics are changing rapidly.

The Commissioner of DSS has given the State a tool to calculate how it can be planned when they asserted they had no way of determining future need. Child Care Council of Suffolk hears the pleas from parents because that's what we do. We help parents find the child care; we help them in the subsidy. We are at the Department of Labor five days a week. And we hear the pleas from parents who just need a little help for a short period of time so they can work knowing their children are in an environment for healthy growth.

The DSS has worked diligently to try to get the eligibility rates up to our usual standards of 200% to 275% of poverty. We now stand at 165% of poverty, which is about \$39,000 for a family of four. Not enough for our high cost of living here.

Another big account that we must keep in mind is that child care is an economic development issue. We lasted a report on child care as an industry ten years ago. And at that time it was a \$600 million industry across Long Island. We've done another study led by the Chief Economist of Long Island -- of the Long Island Association, John Rizzo, under Kevin Law's direction, allowing his time to be spent in this way. It was also supported by the Rauch Foundation and the United Way of Long Island. We are just in the completion stages and will be printing the study by late fall for rollout.

At the first blush, and I really -- I guess I shouldn't be telling you this because we haven't really, you know, nailed it all down, but at the first blush we find that ten years later it is now an \$800 million industry. With these dollars not being exported, they stay on Long Island. That's a huge industry bigger than none other. So to sum up, we need to be looking at how we can expand the pot for child care and how the formula can meet the need. At this point we're receiving about 32 million. It was less but the Governor just added, as you heard before, just added \$500,000 to the fund. However, our need to bring it back to 200% of poverty is \$40 million. We're talking about the backbone of Suffolk County's workforce: The secretaries, line workers, clerks. These are the people who service our communities and fuel our economy. We're asking you as leadership to help

us figure this out and how to convince the State to change their focus. Thank you for allowing me this time.

DR. KOUBEK:

Thank you, Janet. So the planning for this report began literally a year ago in July. And it was, as I said, driven by the Child Care Committee. It led to two public hearings in December; a live in focus groups parents and a parent survey and recommendations; doable, specific recommendations. We understand and we lay out in the report that this industry is controlled by Federal and State regulations and funding streams that you can't control. We know that. So we've come up with what we think are realistic recommendations that this County can act on now in small incremental ways to move us toward the goal of quality child care and early learning. So to lay out those recommendations now, I'm going to yield to Kathy Liguori who chaired the Child Care Committee.

MS. LIGUORI:

Thank you. And thank you for this opportunity to present today. And also thank you for allowing me to be part of this Commission. As volunteers we all work very hard. And I'm proud of the work that we do. And I especially want to thank the members of the Child Care Committee who made this report possible.

And as you Legislators, as you consider these recommendations that I'm about to present, it's important to iterate that regardless of income, these recommendations affect all families that need to work and who have children. So just please remember that.

From a macro perspective, the Commission welcomes the apparent national momentum toward expanding and improving quality child care in early learning. This has been evidenced by the White House Early Learning Initiative and the US Department of Health and Human Services developing more stringent national child care and early learning standards, which is scheduled for implementation later this year. We also have New York State's plan to fully implement full day prekindergarten for four-year-olds -- for all four-year-olds by the year 2020. That's a vision.

From a micro perspective, I want to talk about Suffolk County. We believe that there are affordable specific actions that you can take now to mitigate the barriers to quality child care and early learning for all families. And they are, number one, the lack of a coordinated child care and early learning delivery system. Child care and early learning is a patchwork of silos, which is not cost-effective. Suffolk County has no single department or agency charged with coordinating child care and early learning service programs, thereby fostering a disconnected network of programmatic silos.

We commend the County Executive and/or the Legislature to convene a forum -- I'm sorry, we recommend the County Executive and the Legislature to convene a forum to consider a countywide coordinating agency for all child care and early learning programs. We also recommend that you should create a Suffolk County Early Childhood Learning Commission to recommend policies and procedures for developing a coordinated quality child care and early learning delivery program. This Commission would be charged with securing data and creating a repository on the status of child care in Suffolk County. They would create a model of school district-shared services pilots encouraging the coordination of child care and early learning services with Community-based organizations in the school districts to overcome the barriers such as the lack of transportation to and from universal prekindergarten wraparound services and possibly reduce the costs for child care in Suffolk County. This Commission would be charged with other things including coordinating child care policies with the Suffolk County's economic development plans and programs.

As DSS administers child care funds for about 4,000 children through the CCBG subsidy, which is the Child Care Block Grant subsidy, they estimate that the children receiving DSS child care represent about 10 to 15% of all children receiving child care in Suffolk. Dana spoke about half -- about the population of being 36% of the poor receiving child care. There's a disconnect there.

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We recommend and are actively working on this now with DSS. It is the exploration of creating with the Office of Children and Family Services a tiered-eligibility standard for subsidized child care that phases out the block grant subsidy as parents increase their earnings, rather than eliminating the subsidy entirely when they cross the income thresholds. We've seen many parents revert back to public assistance because of this.

The second thing is when addressing the lack of consensus about what constitutes quality child care and early learning, we recommend that the County's newly-created commission establish recommendations to providers for evidence-base curricula and recommend qualitative-observations-based evaluations, measures and standards to address preschool children's progress. This is important.

We also want to work with the Suffolk County Department of Health to improve countywide standards and procedures for early diagnosis and diagnosis of intervention strategies for children with special needs. There is a great disconnect here. For parents to find these services, they must navigate through a maze before they can open the door to this silo. There are a lot of autistic children. This is a recommendation that we really need to look at. We recommend that the County should fund the proposed Commission to create public service announcements to educate the community on the importance of early learning and quality early learning and child care experiences and debunk the myth that such experiences are baby-sitting because they're not.

And finally the last barrier of inadequate government funding of child care, Dick spoke about the child care block grant formula that penalizes the County children by not factoring into the formula the actual demand for child care in Suffolk County. We recommend that the Legislature and the County Executive together continue to advocate with the Governor and OCFS for additional State funds for child care that meet the needs of the actual demands for child care for the families that are earning 200% of the State income standard, or also known as the Federal Poverty Level.

We also recommend that the Legislature in partnership with the County Executive significantly increase County funds for child care and assess the contribution Suffolk County has made in the past with the emphasis on incrementally expanding the number of children in families earning up to 200% of the Federal poverty level who could receive the child care subsidy as they have -- may have in the past but currently are not.

We also recommend that the County Industrial Development Agency should use a company support for child care as one criterion for awarding the company an IDA grant or tax abatement. This support might include child care subsidies for their workers and in-kind assistance to child care providers used by their workers in return for parents receiving tuition discounts.

And finally we ask that the Legislature and County Executive consider establishing a Suffolk County Children's Trust Fund to which individuals and corporations would be awarded a tax incentive for contributing to this fund. This fund could address the unmet needs of young children. One example might -- of the use might be adding to the Suffolk subsidies for parents who earn more than the 165% of the State income standard for eligibility of the child care subsidies.

In this report not only do we define these and many other challenges, but we offer other recommendations which we believe are solutions; recommendations that are not necessarily costly but rather a wise investment.

Once again I thank you for this opportunity.

DR. KOUBEK:

That concludes our formal presentation. And if you have any questions, we'd be happy to answer them.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Thank you. I just want to say you did a phenomenal job with this report. And once I started working alongside with you in January I just have seen so much progress that this Commission has done. And I appreciate all your hard work. And obviously children are dear and near to me so everything that I have seen in this report, it's something that needs to be done. And I understand that. And I hope that we can move forward with obtaining more funds. And because as a teacher and as an administrator, I dealt with a lot of parents not having child care service where I had to have students stay home because they could not go to school because they had to take care of their sister or their brother because mom and dad could not find child care for that day.

And I can't speak for the other Legislators here, but I know at least in my office now, we get at least two calls a week asking for child care services. And unfortunately they do by a couple of dollars are above the poverty line, but they still can't receive those services. So hopefully we do find some sort of remediation for this and help as soon as possible for our kids.

Any questions? Legislator Browning.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay. I had a couple of questions. I think, Dick, I overheard you say that the State income standard was 160%. Is it 160 or 165?

DR. KOUBEK:

The County is 165.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay. And when a family now exceeds that income standard, and I don't think there's anybody here from DSS right now to answer the question, is that -- because my understanding was that there's a timeline when they now exceed the standard to -- I thought it was the six-month period when you exceed the standard that you -- you have like a six-month period to kind of get yourself together before you actually lose; am I -- is that incorrect?

DR. KOUBEK:

I'm going -- in the report we -- one of the focus groups included a woman by the name of Keisha Bailey. Keisha Bailey received a 75 -- she was earning about \$32,000 a year. She was getting the subsidy. She got a 75-cents-an-hour increase, which put her over the cap. As soon as she went over the cap, she lost her child care. It was over. She filed a Fair Hearing. And during the Fair Hearing she was told you can keep your child care -- she had several kids receiving child care in the center. When she lost the Fair Hearing, and that took months, you know, for the litigation to come to a conclusion, she found out from the State that she owed \$17,000 in child care funding that she had received because she had gone over the cap by eight dollars a week, by the way. So it's a cliff. And I think maybe my colleague --

LEG. BROWNING:

Right. But I think that could be why -- maybe she -- maybe they cut her off that -- sooner rather than giving her the six months because of what she owed them. That could be a possibility. You know, I can't go in -- you know, obviously I don't really think it would be really appropriate to talk about her personal issue, but I think we could follow up with DSS and -- because it was my understanding that there is a six-month period once you exceed that income standard, that, you know, you continue to receive just to help you to get back on your feet after that.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

Well, I think also she went for a Fair Hearing, you see. And the Fair Hearing holds your child care in place --

LEG. BROWNING:

Right.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

-- for that period of time. And she lost the Fair Hearing. So that's -- and she is recouping. She has to recoup that money. But -- but since the eligibility has gone up to 165%, which is, you know, woefully too low, we keep a record at the Child Care Council of people who are over eligibility. And we've been calling them. And DSS also sent out a letter to them, so they have a waiting list of people who are just over the line. So -- and this woman has been reinstated in child care. But -- so that -- that's how the -- I think you were asking about, you know, what happens to the people who are over eligibility.

LEG. BROWNING:

Yeah, you know, at one point in time you're eligible because you fall within that 165. But like you said, if you get a pay raise, if you get like 75 cents --

MS. WALERSTEIN:

That's right.

LEG. BROWNING:

-- a dollar pay raise an hour, and now you're exceeding the 165%, there is no time period where they -- grace period where they say, *okay, now you're earning more money so giving you kind of some wiggle room to be able to wean you off it*, if you know what I mean.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

Right. There's no sliding fee scale. There's no --

LEG. BROWNING:

No, I'm not talking about a sliding fee scale. I'm just saying that there's no period where you continue to receive it to get yourself --

MS. WALERSTEIN:

Right.

LEG. BROWNING:

-- used to not having it, if you know what I mean.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

Yes, it's sustainability, right.

MS. LIGUORI:

To my knowledge, especially working with the parents themselves, they have a six-month authorization where they have to recertify. DSS is looking to change that unless they have done this so far, is to make it for a year to certify -- recertify. At that six-month period, if they are not eligible, if they're a dollar over that 165%, they lose their care. There is no transition period.

LEG. BROWNING:

Right. Effective immediately. Okay. I understood. I've always believed that there was a time period, a grace period, to help them wean themselves off it. But --

DR. KUBEK:

If I could just add, at the focus group where Keisha Bailey told her story was an attorney who was also at the focus group to talk about how as an attorney with a two-income family, they were having trouble paying for their child care. And he said *why isn't there some sort of sliding scale?*

So at our last Commission meeting, he attended. His name is David Welsh. And he actually came with a proposal. And we presented it to Dennis Nowack, who heads the Child Care Unit and we're going to look seriously at coming up with a phaseout, just what you're talking about. But we don't have the power to do that. We'd have to go to the State and have the State do that.

LEG. BROWNING:

Right. Okay. And I know there was a lot -- some conversation about UPK. And I don't believe UPK falls under DSS at all; am I correct?

MS. LIGUORI:

Correct.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay. And that's funded by --

MS. LIGUORI:

New York State Department of Ed.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay. So are you -- so then you were saying there's 46% of the kids who are -- well, no, I shouldn't say are eligible. That there's only spaces for 46% of Long Island's children for UPK; correct?

MS. LIGUORI:

Forty-six percent of the children are eligible.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay, it's on page -- page six.

MS. FRIEDMAN:

It's not just UPK. It's for all child care, head start, pre-K nursery school, for whatever is licensed, certified by various public agencies. Only about 46% of the children presumably who need it by virtue of their parents working. There are many children whose parents don't work who still want to avail themselves of a group experience before kindergarten.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay. So that -- okay, the way I was reading this it was saying 46%. I thought it was universal pre-K.

MS. FRIEDMAN:

No, far more -- it's only about 8,000 children on Long Island who go to pre-K.

LEG. BROWNING:

Yeah. And out of curiosity again, here we go, it's a State-funded program. And if we can show that there's only 46% of these kids -- so basically what you're saying is that the other 60% you would like to see that the County would pick up the 60%. No?

MS. FRIEDMAN:

Remember, we're not just talking about four-year-olds. These are children zero to five. So in the younger grades --

LEG. BROWNING:

Right.

MS. FRIEDMAN:

-- they're far more likely to be at home. But you still have a percentage of children age four that have not had an early childhood experience in a group setting.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay. I'm just -- I'm glancing through this, as we're here. Thank you, Kathy. I got the copy this afternoon. So -- okay. But, again, if it's only 46%, what are we doing with the 60%? Well, should I say 54%? So --

DR. KOUBEK:

We're not suggesting the County pick up that tab. This has got to come from the Federal government --

LEG. BROWNING:

(Laughter)

DR. KOUBEK:

It's got to come from the State government.

LEG. BROWNING:

Right, right.

DR. KOUBEK:

And, you know, we have a particular beef, and you've heard us talk about it at this Committee many times, with the State over the CCBG formula that just keeps underfunding us at a ridiculously low rate.

LEG. BROWNING:

Oh, yeah. Okay. Well, we will certainly see what we can do to try and get a little bit more push for the 54%. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Thank you, Legislator Browning. Legislator D'Amaro.

LEG. D'AMARO:

It's an overwhelming scenario presented because -- first of all, I want to say great report. I mean, I'm just looking at it now, but it's a wonderful report. I know the effort that goes into doing something like this. And I want to say thank you. But it's an overwhelming problem because addressing the need for child care and early learning -- and I agree with you about the need -- or how important it is, rather, and I guess you're basing your conclusions on studies that you've looked at and how children, if they are experiencing early learning or not, and what the outcomes are on a macro level. And it's more beneficial to have the early learning. And, you know, I think that's common sense almost; makes sense to me anyway.

But the problem is that why do we have the need? Why do we have the need? Because we have all these children that could benefit from this type of early learning and child care and programs, but yet there doesn't seem to be remotely enough facilities or funding to go around to provide it.

And we also are in a society where you don't have one parent that stays at home anymore that can be a caregiver or raise children traditionally. Going back 40 and 50 years, that was more the case. So we have a population of children that are victims in a sense of being put in a situation where both parents are forced to work outside the home so they're not getting the attention whether it's early learning or just childrearing, whatever it is. Being raised by a parent, I think, is extremely beneficial as opposed to being raised by a babysitter or someone else. So it's a very daunting challenge to try and address that. Because I think -- and I saw your recommendations here. And I

want to ask -- I have a few specific questions about them, but just overall, there's a lot -- there's much more change that needs to occur than simply saying, you know, can we lower the eligibility standards or do a sliding scale for that. Because you're never really getting at the root of the problem and why cannot -- why we cannot afford to provide the child care that we know that we should have. It should be a number one priority, education, child care, it all ties together. So it's very overwhelming to even think about this type of situation that we face. And as someone in a position who -- looking at your recommendations may have the ability to somehow impact that problem is interesting.

But I want to look at your recommendations very quickly. And the first -- you know, a coordinating agency and then an Early Learning Commission, just give me a concept of -- let's say we had this Commission. Now, this Commission doesn't have any kind of mandatory jurisdiction over any provider. What's the role of this Commission? How does this Commission help to solve the problems that we're facing in this area? What does it do?

MS. LIGUORI:

First of all, there is no data on child care. The Commission will be able to convene and create a repository of information whether it is the number of slots that are available, the number of slots that are available that are unfilled even though there's a disparity of the number of slots that -- or there are not enough slots to cover the number of children that there are. Okay? So there's -- child care is a very complicated issue. As you said, it's overwhelming. But we need to look at the whole thing and peel back the onion and see what the issues are. We want to talk about special needs children and their placement. It's very difficult for families to receive child care for their special needs children.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Well, if I had a child now with special needs and needed placement, what would I do?

MS. LIGUORI:

You would -- right now you would either try to take them to DDI for their aftercare program; or find your own private care.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. So I'm trying to understand the role of the Commission.

MS. LIGUORI:

Okay. So we would look at -- we would like at data, first of all, and collect all of that data. We would look at -- at the County's Economic Development programs and see how we could create opportunities for businesses to be involved, perhaps maybe becoming a business seal of approval, family-friendly seal of approval for those businesses that participate in this child care funding program.

We would look at encouraging the coordination of child care and early learning services within the community-based organizations, school districts, to help the families overcome barriers of child care. Everyone operates differently so we really want to try and coordinate all the services together to -- to make it available and -- make the information available to the families among many other things. We want to look at the tiered eligibility standard for -- income eligibility for receiving the child care services. We would want to see if there's a way to expedite communication directly between the child care providers and the Department of Social Services so those families do not have the disconnect of child care. Perhaps it's just a matter of them sending in their payroll vouchers and it's not getting to the caseworker so they lose their child care for two weeks.

One of the opportunities would be to create a pilot for the school districts and the child care providers to work together, that if they are providing a half day UPK program and there is not a place for that child to go to after for a wraparound service, that's -- those children are receiving the

child care subsidy. Right now the County's paying full day for their care. Those children then could possibly participate in the UPK program and then partnering with the child care provider; whereas the County would pay for a half-day rate as opposed to a full-day rate.

So those are just some of the things that we thought this Commission -- this Child Care Commission would help with.

DR. KOUBEK:

Legislator D'Amaro, the Commission we're recommending would be modeled after the Welfare to Work Commission. So it would be a data-gathering as we did with this report. And one of the things I learned early on in this process was, as Kathy just said, and as Dana pointed out, we really lack data. We lack coordinated data.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Yeah, I think it's good to have --

DR. KOUBEK:

-- as much as we do --

LEG. D'AMARO:

-- have information so you can assess the needs and know how to target your resources because they're certainly limited. You know, but I'm looking at the report, it says "procedures for developing a coordinated quality child care early learning delivery system." I think what you're saying is that you -- like right now we have -- when you get into kindergarten, first grade, second grade, you have a school district over that; you have you Boards of Education and then you have eventually the State Department of Education. And then even the Federal Department. So it is a structured mechanism put in place for the delivery of educational services once you start in school, whether it's public or private. It's still pretty much directed by the Department of Education and the State agencies as well. So I think what you're saying is that you would want to see that type of structure, organization, coordination at the early year level.

DR. KOUBEK:

Absolutely.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Because right now all you have are providers, whether they're for profit or not-for-profit, for early learning and day care. They are licensed by the State of New York, I would assume.

DR. KOUBEK:

Some.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Some. And, you know, you can qualify for a license by meeting certain criteria. But after you get that license, you're not in any way in a stream of coordination with maybe when you get into the school district, or what's happening at home, or what's the special need of that particular child; what level are they at; where should they be placed; what's the curriculum within the facility. You know, what is the best methods to teach at that early age. All of this stuff needs to be addressed, looked at, regulated, structured; right? Now, that's almost like creating a whole 'nother -- whole 'nother area for government to come into and use the resources of the government to analyze, assess, coordinate and design ultimately this system to deliver early learning to children.

DR. KOUBEK:

We're actually --

LEG. D'AMARO:

But can the County do that?

DR. KOUBEK:

No. And what's happening is we're moving in that direction with the burst of interest that has occurred about universal pre-K. You know, at least the rhetoric at the White House and then action in New York City, which prompted action in New York State. Maybe Janet or Dana want to comment on what's coming the road. But I know several of the people who testified said, you know, if we're serious about this -- if 85 -- think of it. If 85% of your brain development is ages birth to four, then maybe the entire system should be part of the State Education Department. And one person, not surprisingly, the head of NYSUT -- Dick Ivan, then head of NYSUT -- said the funding should come right out of the public school system.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Well, I have to tell you, that's where I'm going with this. Because if this is as important, if not more important than the rest of the educational years, okay, then why isn't that folded into the educational hierarchy and system that we have in place right now?

DR. KOUBEK:

We're moving in that direction. Do either of you want to comment?

MS. LIGUORI:

One of our recommendations --

LEG. D'AMARO:

By the way the part that is -- the part that is folded in is the funding. It's not enough, but what the State and the Federal government says is that we're going to have this loose network of provider that is not really regulated as to content and how it's done; it's regulated as to, I guess, background checks and things like that, however you get your license, but not the content and not required curricular and things like that. So we'll give you some money for that, but other than that, we're not regulating that or requiring that or approving it or reviewing it, testing it. We're not doing -- we, I mean the government system, is not doing any of that.

DR. KOUBEK:

The thrust of the report and the rhetoric coming out of the Federal and State is -- we're not talking about babysitting and minding kids. We're talking about education.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Yes, absolutely.

DR. KOUBEK:

Education should be funded as education. Janet, you want to jump in?

MS. WALERSTEIN:

The system that's set up now is for labor. The way that the child care has been set up is so parents could work. And the component in terms of early education has never been under, you know, a State Ed.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

However, it is not without oversight. I mean I have to say that the Office of Children and Family Services does licensing. We do all of the educating of providers -- providers have to have in order to maintain their registration and license. They must have classes. The Child Care Council and

other places do that training. It's not just for the safety or health of the children physically, but it is a curriculum that is for the promotion of early education.

LEG. D'AMARO:

So that is in place and there is some structure.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

Well, there is -- there is a structure in place, absolutely. What it needs is more -- is more -- you know, more concern and more funding to be able to support the providers of care, to be able to access and to learn the true --

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. But let's think about that, because the -- take public school, for example, and even private school to some extent, is funded by a broad tax base.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

Right.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right? So -- and then you have the block grants and the State aid and all of that, but it's all -- you know, property taxes, whatever it may be. But before you get into that kindergarten class, before that --

MS. WALERSTEIN:

Right.

LEG. D'AMARO:

-- it's just a miniscule amount in comparison to the entire education --

MS. WALERSTEIN:

Right.

LEG. D'AMARO:

-- that comes afterward. So the problem comes down primarily to what every problem comes down to, is lack of funding. Because if you -- the reason why you don't have enough day-care providers is because there's not enough funding to go around to pay for it. There's no demand in that sense.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

Well, we have -- we have, you know -- we have providers of care. What they lack, some, is the training and the skill building. Because you're getting people who are coming from various areas. But the pay for a child care provider is so low they cannot sustain themselves. So you're not getting people who are really skilled who are going to look at this as a career.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. Your problem is that you can't afford to pay that. I'm talking in a general, overview sense.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

Right. It's costly.

LEG. D'AMARO:

It's very expensive. And I'm not saying that day-care providers or early education providers should not have higher pay. They should.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

Absolutely.

LEG. D'AMARO:

But it's a vicious cycle at that point. How do you afford that? How does the working poor or working parent, a single mom, whoever it may be, afford to pay that? So that's why this problem should be addressed more as -- from, let's say, at a State Education level, where you have that broad tax base.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

Right.

LEG. D'AMARO:

And you have the funding available to provide it just like it's mandatory to provide education to every person in the State.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

Well, the State of Oklahoma did that, you know, in terms of -- they came in actually through the back door, to be able to fund pre-K. But learning doesn't start at age four. And so -- you know -- and children are coming into -- out of care -- into care at age six weeks when a parent has to go back to work after taking leave for maternity.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

So we're looking at, you know, a public will that needs to be --

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

-- made aware of the critical periods of -- that we spoke about of birth through age five.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. But if you said to the public I'm going to charge you a little bit more but the return is going to be for all of your children, they will have access to early learning, you might be pleasantly surprised at the type of response you would get.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

That may be, but also it may also be, and this is part of the, you know, of the rhetoric that you hear nationally, you know, that, you know, *daddy should go to work and mommy should stay home with the children*. I mean you alluded to that kind of thinking, you know, that -- except poor mommies should go to work. So you're getting that kind of thinking also that, you know -- when I hear remarks like, *oh, yes, thank God my child didn't have to be in daycare*, you know, alluding to the fact that somehow that's less --

LEG. D'AMARO:

I don't think that those are the factors, though. I think the factor now is, you know, we are not excelling nationally in education. And there are many reasons for that, but we may want to consider -- one of the reasons is the children don't have access to the early -- early learning.

So my question is if you're a parent at home, and you have the means to send your child to early learning, but choose not to -- because let's say there's one parent at home, it could be mother, father, whoever it is, all right, just by way of example, is it more beneficial for the child at that age to be home? Or is it more beneficial to be in the early learning, even though they don't have to necessarily do it for for daycare purposes?

MS. WALERSTEIN:

That's very, you know, dependent upon who the parent is and what the situation is, what the environment is for a child, what -- you know. And it's parent choice. It's parent options, you know.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Because we don't have those options when it comes to -- when you get older, you have to go school. I mean you can be home-schooled, but there is a requirement that you are then educated. See, what I'm saying is this should be a continuation of that. If the benefits, you know, as you cited at the beginning of the report, the 85% of the brain develops in the first five years and things like that, if there's such a tremendous advantage, then shouldn't it just be mandated at that age also?

MS. WALERSTEIN:

All right. It's okay with me, but, you know, it would have to be (laughter) --

MS. FRIEDMAN:

We have not yet mandated kindergarten --

MS. WALERSTEIN:

Right.

MS. FRIEDMAN:

-- in this State. And so school districts are looking at a very interesting thing, as kindergarten's been on the chopping block in potential budget debates. They've got four-year-olds and they don't have five-year-olds and then you come back at six. The system is deeply flawed. And to your question, Janet, right, it does depend on the family, but but we do know from the research that just about every child -- even if you're coming from a wealthy home or not --

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right.

MS. FRIEDMAN:

-- will benefit from a group experience before they get to kindergarten.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay.

MS. FRIEDMAN:

So for ages zero, one, two, three, okay you can be home with your family if you have a family that's able to provide the stimulation and the nurturing that we know leads to better outcomes for children. So for children in poverty, it may be better for them to be in a group-care experience. It depends very much on the home and the family. But I don't think you can -- we can't means test the program. That's been the problem all along. We tried to do that with universal pre-K. It's hardly universal because we haven't paid for all the children who could use it. But the fact is it would never have gotten passed --

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right.

MS. FRIEDMAN:

-- if it was only a program for low income children.

LEG. D'AMARO:

I agree with you. It's very difficult to --

MS. WALERSTEIN:

Also, the social, emotional piece of what's happening in early childhood --

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

-- that, you know, the way we live today, you don't see children out on the street or having groups of play, you know. And there are things that happen on the playground or in a group setting where you learn how to negotiate. You learn how to -- how to work with others. And that's very lacking in children who are not in that kind of environment.

DR. KOUBEK:

One of the -- there were a number of *a-huh* moments for me. I am a professional educator. I did not know that New York State does not mandate kindergarten. I did not know that. I thought -- I thought the argument was over whether it should be half-day or full-day. Turns out every district in New York State chooses to have kindergarten but they're not required to. So a district could opt out. That was a shocker.

The other shocker for me was to look at the typical child care provider's salary, which is \$27,000 a year. And a typical New York State public school teacher salary which is the reverse, 72,000. And that speaks volumes to the point you're making, Legislator D'Amaro.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. It's a system that -- we've identified the fact that it's important to deliver this service to children at a very early age. And it should have just as much emphasis on that as we do on the rest of the child's educational development. But it does not. So short of getting, you know, solving that problem here now, which we're not going to do, I do appreciate that you put -- there are some things that -- like the coordination with the payouts from -- what was it, DSS, direct communication between child care providers, that's all important to make sure that, you know, piecemeal per child, that the right coordination's going on, the right communication's going on and things like that. And those are the types of recommendations -- I appreciate that you came up with some concrete things that we could actually do.

I'm not sure about the Commission. I don't know. I don't -- I think we feel a delivery system in place. And if there are ways we can improve that within the framework of what we have now, I guess that's what you would want the Commission to look at in a sense. So that that might be a function there. But I'm not going to take up any more time, but I appreciate the work that you did here. And it certainly gives us a lot to think about. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Thank you, Legislator. Also just to piggyback on what he was just saying, it's so important, and that there is a disconnect. And unfortunately many students -- well, many children who, you know, go into kindergarten and then forward who have not had the early childhood -- you know, the the early education, you definitely see the difference in a child as they progress through the school years. And it doesn't mean that they can't catch up, because some do. But when you do have a child with special needs, that's where you definitely see the detriment of not having the early education. But, again, you know, I thank you. And I know that Legislator Gregory had a question for you as well.

P.O. GREGORY:

Thank you, Madam Chair. And just to piggyback on somewhat Legislator D'Amaro and you guys were discussing, I think it's perfectly appropriate to -- for the State to really delve into this area. I mean if you look at, for instance, our Free Lunch Program, you know, there are schools that range from, you know, low percentage to 80, 90% of the students getting free lunch. And, you know, the

school and the State's focus has been, *well, you know, from September to June we feed these kids, make sure that they eat, but we don't know what they do you, you know, July, August and when they're out of school.* But to me that's a clear indication of -- those are the students that we're talking about. Those are the families that we're talking about. If they can't afford to buy lunch for their kids, most likely they probably can't afford to pay for day care.

So those are the families and the areas that we should be targeting should the State decide to step in and say this is a responsibility that we want to take over, ensure that our young people, particularly those of less means are getting a proper education so that they can break the cycles of poverty that we see.

And I think you guys do a wonderful job. You know, being commissioned after the welfare reform in the early '90s and the focus being on obviously getting people back to work, whether it's through job training or education. But once they do do that, there was an obstacle that -- obviously that you guys are focused on. And that's -- there's the issue with child care. And a lot of what you do is focused on that. And I respect that and I appreciate that. Looking at the numbers -- I mean I saw a number, I think it was \$27,000. I don't know how many families can really afford that, you know, unless you're making, you know, pretty decent salaries. And it's -- so the cost is high. And obviously it's an important part of our children's early education that we have to provide for them -- for those -- obviously we as parents care about that.

But like -- you know, I think one thing -- one part of the issue that I often see when *Newsday*, you know, writes a story about, you know -- I'm sure they'll write something about this -- this report, and as they have done others and you have press releases, I generally try not to look at the comments section of stories because you see the worst of the worst in people. And but inevitably you always see, you know, comments about, *well, why should I pay for someone who can't afford to have kids?* And it's disgusting but it's true because that's what people feel. You know, you can't ignore that. I mean I think we're kind -- I liken it almost to the discussion that we're seeing now with the kids -- the kids that are migrating here from other countries. You know, they're here, we have to take care of them. They're in holding cells, if you will, and people are losing sight of humanity saying, *well, we shouldn't be taking care of them.* Irregardless of how you feel about immigration policy, these young, you know, children, babies -- not babies, but toddlers in some cases, are very young kids, four and five-years-olds are here, we should be taking care of them. You kind of see the -- people overlooking that aspect of it. And these children, very much the ones that you're talking about, you know, they are -- they're -- they are the consequence of their parents' decisions. They're -- you know, they have no part and play no role in decision-making process, but we lose site on, you know, let's forget about the the parents' decision or parent's decision, let's, you know, do what's in their best interest; not only for them, but really generally for the -- for us as a community. Because if we don't educate these kids, you know, they're going to more likely be on Social Services, more likely going to be through the penal system in the future. So why not allocate the resources now to give them the resource that they need so they can be more successful?

And that's why I really appreciate that you're bringing such a focus on this. Because that's -- hopefully at some point it'll -- you know, we'll get to the level of funding that we need and everyone will get the opportunities that they deserve so that children can be educated. And, you know, that's my wish. I don't know when that's going to happen, but I'm hopeful that it will happen.

So -- and just one last comment, I guess. With the cost being so high, how can we work to lower the cost? What aspects are helping the cost increase? Because \$27,000, I mean -- I think -- I think -- who was it? Someone had mentioned someone's making \$27,000. Obviously that person's not paying \$27,000 in child care cost.

DR. KUBEK:

The salary of a worker actually is the 27.

P.O. GREGORY:

Right.

DR. KOUBEK:

But the cost of child care is the same, 27.

P.O. GREGORY:

Right. I mean my kids are older now. I remember when I was in Texas I was in military and I paid \$800 a month, I thought that was a lot. I had two kids. Eight hundred dollars a month. This was, you know, early '90s, you know. So it's -- you know, obviously it's far beyond that now, but I can't imagine, you know, what -- you know, people who don't have college degrees, they're not making, you know, a lot of money. I mean if you're making \$50,000 after taxes and you're still -- you know, that means half of your salary, maybe even more of your take home pay is going to -- that's crazy. So how can we work on that? I mean I know Suffolk County, Long Island is a high-cost-of-living -- living area. We have to pay people a certain amount in order to sustain themselves. And that obviously has factored in, but are there other costs or other things that are helping increase the cost of providing child care? Janet's looking at me like she wants to throw a sneaker at me.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

Are you speaking about the \$27,000?

P.O. GREGORY:

Just in general.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

The \$27,000, I think you were alluding to the fact that this is what a child care provider earns but -- but that's high.

P.O. GREGORY:

Okay.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

There's very few that earn close to \$30,000 in child care.

P.O. GREGORY:

Right.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

But -- so that we're not getting the people who would be, you know, the ones who have been skilled and know child development and know how to work with young children to the best advantage. We're not getting those skilled people. Why would anybody come into this career if they can't sustain themselves?

P.O. GREGORY:

Right.

MS. WALERSTEIN:

You know, when I graduated from College with my degree in early education, that was quite a longtime ago, very long ago, before most of you were born, but that was, you know, I knew that I -- somebody else was going to support me as well. And, you know, it wasn't right then and it isn't right now. You know, that the same -- the same thing is going on. The -- you walk into a day care center -- and I think Kathy can vouch for that -- that you have young people who are coming into the field who are still living at home and being supported by parents and what have you in order to stay in this field.

P.O. GREGORY:

I guess that's what my next question was going to be. What's the profile -- the average profile of a day care or child care worker look like; college degree, a high school education?

MS. LIGUORI:

This is where the costs come in. First of all, I really truly believe that it is the child care employees that are subsidizing the tuition and keeping it as low as it could possibly be. But there are State mandates. It is a high profile industry. Parents want the best for their children and the children deserve it. And they need the quality care. Heat, light, power, rent, the cost to live on Long Island is exorbitant but the cost to run a business on Long Island is even greater. There are so many different factors that come into play. And a child care center running -- running really well may see a 10% profit margin on a business. They're doing it out of love and passion and wanting to -- they're really not in it for the money.

There are corporate companies that run child care centers. They have deeper pockets. They can buy in bulk, etcetera. But the average employee, at least in my schools, and I would hope to be that it would be for everywhere, we have people there with their master's degree, certified teachers. We have people with their bachelor's degrees. We have people with the associate's degrees. We encourage mothers that may have a college -- I mean, I'm sorry, a high school diploma to get their CDA, which is a Child Development Accreditation Certificate so that they can work as a lead teacher. Salaries starting anywhere from 10.50 to \$17 an hour we pay. But it's the balance of the younger people without the experience that come in that you can work your numbers and make it work. But, you know, we have a certified teacher that ran our pre-K and just resigned because she has to go work in another industry so she can make her ends meet, even at \$15 an hour.

So we're really trying. And these employees deserve better. They absolutely do. So, you know, when we talk about the funding, and the families that we serve, the 165% that we're at now, the child care industry took a tremendous hit when we went down to a hundred percent. Those that were the strongest survived. Many closed. But I have to say that if you look at your homelessness, and all the things that this Legislature went through, I have served more homeless children in the last two years than I ever have before.

So let's talk about getting to 200% and raising the economy. It makes sense. Because if you don't, you're going to pay it there or somewhere else. And probably it would save you a lot of grief.

MS. FRIEDMAN:

I just want to add that, you know, a lot of folks are looking at New Jersey where there was a court-mandated investment in pre-K. And they are showing incredible results after a number of years of creating a system that actually works. And they're spending anywhere between 13 and \$15,000 per child.

In New York State we reimburse school districts \$2500 per child. So unfortunately as much as we'd like to see costs held down, we know there's a whole panoply of problems we need to solve. There's no way to reduce costs, what it truly costs. And I couldn't agree more, off the backs of worker where a lot are coming, you gotta have a whole other issue with the advent of pre-K where you have certified teachers in the public school system working six hours a day for ten months a year who are making 20, 25, \$30,000 more than a certified teacher in a child care program working ten-hour days, you know, 360 days a year. So we've got real misses going on. It's not a system yet -- part of the overwhelming nature and the complexity of that. But in terms of cost, unfortunately if we want the outcomes that these programs are capable of producing, we have to invest more per child, not less.

P.O. GREGORY:

Okay. Well, thank you. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Thank you. And thank you again for coming and presenting the Child Report for us.

DR. KOUBEK:

Our pleasure. And just a concluding comment related to what you said earlier, Legislator Martinez, when we did our poverty report in 2012, we had a public hearing of young people, teenagers in Brentwood, in your District. I never forgot this. One of the kids, they were talking about what it's like to be working poor, one of the kids said "I had to leave my regents exam in the 11th grade to go home and watch my younger kid brother." We don't want that.

Thank you for your attention. And we look forward to working with you on the recommendations.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Thank you.

MS. LIGUORI:

Thank you.

MS. FRIEDMAN:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Next we have Suffolk County Youth Bureau, Mr. Roderick Pearson, Phillip Beltz, Nancy Lynott and Beth Maccagli. And they will present the East End Assessment Report for the Youth. Good afternoon.

MR. PEARSON:

Good afternoon, Legislators. We are grateful and thankful for this time to come before you. But before we get into this presentation, Legislator Martinez, there was a request for Youth Board candidates for appointment to come. And some of them are in the back and have been waiting. Would you like to address them first?

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

If you're okay with that, we'll definitely move forward. All right so we'll go straight into the Introductory Resolutions before the presentation from the Youth Board.

INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS

IR 1610, To appoint member of Suffolk County Youth Board Coordinating Council Representing Legislative District No. 1 Gwynn Schroeder. (Co. Exec.) I just want to make sure that she's here. Can I get a motion to approve?

LEG. D'AMARO:

Motion.

LEG. BROWNING:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 5-0-0-1. P.O. GREGORY INCLUDED IN VOTE. LEG. McCAFFREY NOT PRESENT)**

Introductory Resolution 1611, To appoint member of Suffolk County Youth Board Coordinating Council Representing Legislative District No. 2 Jason Hann. (Co. Exec.)

You're here? How are you, Jason? Motion to approve.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Motion.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 5-0-0-1. P.O. GREGORY INCLUDED IN VOTE. LEG. McCAFFREY NOT PRESENT)**

1612, To appoint member of Suffolk County Youth Board Coordinating Council Representing Legislative District No. 4 Phyllis Hill. (Co. Exec.) Are you here?

AUDIENCE:

She left.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Do they need to be present?

LEG. BROWNING:

I guess she was in the room. So I'll make a motion to approve.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 5-0-0-1. P.O. GREGORY INCLUDED IN VOTE. LEG. McCAFFREY NOT PRESENT)**

1613, To appoint member of Suffolk County Youth Board Coordinating Council Representing Legislative District No. 8 Byran K. Gill. (Co. Exec.) I know that Legislator Lindsay has asked for this to be tabled because he will not be present until the September meeting. So motion to table.

LEG. TROTТА:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 5-0-0-1. P.O. GREGORY INCLUDED IN VOTE. LEG. McCAFFREY NOT PRESENT)**

1614, To appoint member of Suffolk County Youth Board Coordinating Council Representing Legislative District No. 9 Stephany Contreras (Co. Exec.) Motion to approve. Yes, that is mine. I just got so overwhelmed in looking at her (laughter)?

LEG. BROWNING:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **(VOTE: 5-0-0-1. P.O. GREGORY INCLUDED IN VOTE. LEG. McCAFFREY NOT PRESENT)**

1615, To appoint member of Suffolk County Youth Board Coordinating Council Representing Legislative District No. 11 Annmarie Larosa (Co. Exec.)

MR. NOLAN:

She's here.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Motion to approve.

LEG. BROWNING:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 5-0-0-1. P.O. GREGORY INCLUDED IN VOTE. LEG. McCAFFREY NOT PRESENT)**

1616, To appoint member of Suffolk County Youth Board Coordinating Council Representing Legislative District No. 5 Alyssa Turano (Co. Exec.)

LEG. BROWNING:

Motion.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Second. All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 5-0-0-1. P.O. GREGORY INCLUDED IN VOTE. LEG. McCAFFREY NOT PRESENT)**

1617, To appoint member of Suffolk County Youth Board Coordinating Council Representing Legislative District No. 12 Brittany Bienemann. (Co. Exec.) Motion.

LEG. TROTTA:

Motion.

LEG. BROWNING:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 5-0-0-1. P.O. GREGORY INCLUDED IN VOTE. LEG. McCAFFREY NOT PRESENT)**

1618, To appoint member of Suffolk County Youth Board Coordinating Council Representing Legislative District No. 13 Deborah Delaney. (Co. Exec.) Oh, sorry.

LEG. TROTTA:

Motion.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Motion. All in favor? Do I have a second?

LEG. D'AMARO:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 5-0-0-1. P.O. GREGORY INCLUDED IN VOTE. LEG. McCAFFREY NOT PRESENT)**

1619, To appoint member of Suffolk County Youth Board Coordinating Council Representing Legislative District No. 18 Rev. Dr. Larry Washington (Co. Exec.) Motion to approve.

LEG. D'AMARO;

Second.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 5-0-0-1. P.O. GREGORY INCLUDED IN VOTE. LEG. McCAFFREY NOT PRESENT)**

And **1622, To appoint member of Suffolk County Youth Board Coordinating Council Representing Legislative District No. 6 (Janene Gentile). (Co. Exec.)** Same motion, same second. All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 5-0-0-1. P.O. GREGORY INCLUDED IN VOTE. LEG. McCAFFREY NOT PRESENT)**

LEG. BROWNING:

Madam Chairwoman?

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

And just to make a note on the record, a Certificate of Necessity coming on Tuesday for Legislator Stern's district to appoint Eileen Cooper.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay, I know we went through some, and I believe Miss Hill did show up. Isn't that the one from --

MS. HILL:

I was here. I was in the ladies room.

LEG. BROWNING:

She did. But, however, I believe Brian Gil was one that we tabled. And, you know, he is the appointment of, you know, the Legislator from that District. And I would be willing to reconsider -- request that we reconsider and just vote for him.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Yeah, that's fine. Just because -- Legislator Lindsay asked for it to be tabled.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Because he wasn't --

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

But if you're all in agreement, we can --

LEG. BROWNING:

Yeah, yeah. But I'm not opposed. It's his opponent -- or his appointment. (Laughter)

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

His appointee.

LEG. D'AMARO:

I'll second Legislator Browning's motion to reconsider resolution 1613.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries and he is appointed. No?

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay, motion to approve.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Sorry. Motion to approve?

LEG. BROWNING:

Motion to approve.

LEG. D'AMARO:

I'll second Legislator Browning's motion to approve 1613.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Thank you. All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries. All right. Congratulations.

(VOTE: 5-0-0-1. P.O. GREGORY INCLUDED IN VOTE. LEG. McCAFFREY NOT PRESENT)

And one of the reasons -- yeah. One of the reasons why I also wanted you to listen to the Child Care Report is because since you will be representing our youth, I think it's very important that you know also what's going on. So if you're able to stay for the second presentation, you're more than welcome to.

MS. GELLERSTEIN:

What about 1504?

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

We're going to do that one after.

PRESENTATION

MR. PEARSON:

Once again, thank you for giving us this opportunity. Just to give a little brief -- very brief background as to why we are coming before you today, the Youth Board Coordinating Council has different subcommittees that are working on various youth issues in Suffolk County and how to address those issues being gangs and violence, employment, behavioral, mental health, teenage pregnancy and then this subcommittee of the Eastern Committee.

So the committee today being represented by Phillip Beltz, Beth Maccagli and Nancy Lynott, our Youth Directors and Agency Directors from the East End who are going to give you a presentation of the East End of Long Island Regional Report for Youth. When we look at the resources that are made available from our County, about 5% of our resources are attributed to the East End. And when we look at the State Aid formula for youth services, again, about 5% of the resources are attributed to the East End. And so the reason for this presentation today is to give the Human Services Committee and our Legislator sort of a synopsis evaluation and some recommendations for how we can better serve our young people on the East End. And so with that I'm going to turn it into the hands of the Committee.

MR. BELTZ:

Thank you, Reverend Pearson, and thank you to the Human Services Committee. My name is Phillip Beltz and I'm Special Projects Coordinator for the Town of Southold, which includes serving as the Youth Bureau Director. There are eight youth bureaus in Suffolk County. The Towns of Shelter Island and East Hampton do not have a representation or a formation of a youth bureau. And the youth bureaus work with the Suffolk County Youth Board Coordinating Council, which were the members you just approved their representation.

And we as the East End Region, we have met with Reverend Pearson. There are other major factors that impede the development of youth. And we asked if we could work together to produce a regional report. All communities are unique, but we think that the East End is extremely unique and I hope we make our case here with this report.

To go over just general, the East End government consists of ten towns -- five towns, ten incorporated villages and the Shinnecock and Indian Reservation. There are approximately 30,000 youth that are full-time residents that live in the five East End Towns. The trends and population

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projections that we noted are that the East End continues to be unrecognized and many of the needs are unmet; decrease of funding, stagnation of household income, decrease of child care subsidies, increase of Latino population; increase of senior citizens; increase of second homeowners, many of whom become retirees; decrease of school-age children; increase of applications for food stamps; and increase in incidents of domestic violence.

There are many factors that impact the development of youth. They're priced out of the housing market; the brain drain; working class families struggle to remain in the area; their lack of services that are accessible and affordable. Public transportation is basically non-existent. And lack of social outlets for young people.

As the Reverend had mentioned, there have been significant funding decreases on youth services with State Aid, the County funding and the prevention -- early intervention services mwhile cost effective, they have also been defunded. And research shows that for every dollar invested, \$11 to \$20 are saved in long term savings.

There's a very grave perception that the East End is very affluent. And the East End, in fact, has many impoverished communities. And according to the Suffolk County Planning Department, of the ten most economically distressed Communities in Suffolk County, six are on the East End of Long Island. Riverside is -- whereby close to 25% of its inhabitants are below poverty. And just under 20% are unemployed. Greenport Village, just under 30% of its inhabitants are below poverty and 7% unemployed. And also Riverhead has a significant population.

When you look at the data of free and reduced meals at schools, Greenport has the highest with 90% of its student body receiving free or reduced meals followed by Phillips Avenue in Riverhead with 80%; and Bridgehampton 50%. But there are nine communities that are at least 25% or more receive free and reduced student lunches.

MS. MACCAGLI:

Hi. My name is Beth Maccagli. And I work with Riverhead Town. I'm continuing where Phillip left off. Employment: 76% of the teens age 16 to 19 who reside on the East End are unemployed. There is opportunities for seasonal work but that is limited as well as there being minimal career track employment opportunities for high school graduates.

Regarding health insurance, residents living on the East End lack health insurance. And of the top 15 Long Island communities without health insurance coverage, seven of them are on the East End, some of them being Flanders 38.7%; Greenport 35.1%; Shinnecock 31%; Noyack 22%; Riverhead almost 22%; and Aquebogue 20%.

Regarding teen and substance abuse, this information came from assessments done in several towns. And some of the survey reports alcohol use in a lifetime in Riverhead, the number is 50%; Southampton 52% and Southold 48%. Regarding binge drinking in the past month 14% Riverhead; 18% Southampton; 19% Southold. And marijuana use in a lifetime, 30% Riverhead and 29% Southampton and 25% Southold.

As well we got some of our mental health indicators. Some of our data came from, again, the same assessments from the -- several towns. An example would be from tenth graders, 37% reported symptoms of depression; 16% considered attempted suicide; and 12% self-injury. Along with that, the closest emergency mental health service is Stony Brook University for Youth. And so if you're coming from Montauk Point or Orient Point, that is a very, very long ride. There are counseling services; however, the waiting lists are very long. And as well many of the providers don't accept insurance and few offer the bilingual services that are so necessary right now.

MS. LYNOTT:

Hi, I'm Nancy Lynott. I'm the Director of the Southampton Youth Bureau. Just to finish up on

some of the data that we pulled together -- and these are existing data that we got from the census, the American Community Survey, from the Suffolk County Planning Department, the Department of Education and some other sources in Suffolk County. We did find that there were 628 cases of child abuse reported on the East End in 2012. That's excluding Riverhead. Those data were unavailable for some reason.

According to the State Department of Education in their recording of school suspension rates, there were two districts on the East End that have above-average suspension rates. Juvenile justice and gang involvement, this comes from some surveys actually that were done of school-age children. Riverhead reported 3%; Southampton 4% and Southold 5%. But one of the things that we want to point out, we also have a little bit of Criminal Court and Family Court data, but these data are very, very hard to get. We do have a lot of different jurisdictions on the East End. We have -- in the Town of Southampton alone we have seven different police jurisdictions. Data is kept differently by different Police Departments. So one of the things that we do recommend is that -- that there be a system developed to better capture this data, particularly the juvenile justice Family Court, Criminal Court data.

So that's -- that's a very, very brief summary of some of the data that we were able to uncover. And then we were asked to put together some recommendations for you all. And we -- this is obviously a huge task because the needs are great; the available resources are small. And, you know, coming up with recommendations that are both affordable and realistic is very difficult. But -- and we started on this last week.

So these are our first thoughts: Number one, we are kind of agreeing with the group before us, we need to focus on prevention and early intervention services because that's where we're going to get the biggest bang for our buck. Youth development services have been heavily researched over the last 20 years and are proven to be effective in addressing the kinds of issues that we need to take a look at. And so we recommend that we focus there.

There are a range of services accessible on the East End -- in the East End communities. But there's no consistency across communities. The service is very spotty; waiting lists are very long; transportation is very difficult. All of these things add up to -- very few of the kids who need the services getting into them. So we want to focus on making sure that there are accessible services available that address substance abuse, violence, mental health, teen pregnancy and delinquency.

The next recommendation actually focusses on mental health. Beth talked a little bit earlier about some of the findings we have through the teen assessment project and the youth development survey that look at mental health needs on the East End. And the rates that we're finding are about 7 to 8 percentage points higher than the national average is in terms of -- particularly reported episodes of depression. So we also have had a cluster of teen suicides in the East Hampton community in -- just in the last couple of years. So these are issues that we really take seriously and put on the front burner.

So what we recommend actually is -- is a centrally-located behavioral health clinic that has mobile capabilities. You'll see the mobile capability a couple times in our recommendations. We feel that transportation and accessibility is such a big issue on the East End that these services actually need to be available on a mobile basis so that they can actually get to the kids and families that need them.

Emergency psychiatric services for youth on the East End need to be made available. And counseling capacity should be at least doubled in order to begin to address the need. There is actually an initiative that's been started by Assemblyman Thiel and Senator LaValle to raise some State funding to provide emergency -- to begin to develop a system to provide emergency psychiatric services on the South Fork. But -- and I believe that the last State budget allocated \$150,000 toward that. But it is just the beginning. And it doesn't address North Fork youth at all.

So that's a big gap still that needs to be looked at.

We also talked a little bit about the unemployment issue in addition to having a large percentage of our youth unemployed. We see -- anecdotally we see a lot of kids graduating from high school on the East End with no plan and no real job skills. And they just end up not engaged productively in anything. So we would -- and the Department of Labor is really not -- the Department of Labor sites that exist are not accessible to them and they do not take advantage of them. So we would like to see some of those services available again on the East End in some kind of central location and with a mobile capacity so that it moves around from community to community.

Again, just anecdotally we were working with a program you may have heard of Youth Build to try to get some East End young people, recent graduates or kids who had not finished high school into that program. And although we had -- we did have a small group of kids interested and Youth Build was very willing to work with us, we were unable to get them into the program because even through public transportation, there was no train or bus that would get the kids to the facility at Youth Build in Deer Park that they needed to get to at the time that they needed to be there. We could get them there two hours earlier or an hour-and-a-half later, but not at the time they needed to be there. So although there are some resources that exist, we're finding it very difficult to help our kids take advantage of them.

And that brings us to the next recommendation, which is public transportation opportunities. I mean we see time and time again that we cannot get a kid or a family into a service that might be available to them because they have no way to get there. And that's just a fact of life on the East End.

The next recommendation is improving the bilingual service capacity. We have a terrific need for Spanish speaking, particularly mental health and substance abuse counselors. And we do not have enough of them providing those services on the East End. I already referred a little bit to our desire to improve and streamline data reporting and collection so that we can present better and more accurate pictures to you so to help you in your decision-making. We would like to see particularly the East End juvenile justice and criminal justice agencies develop some kind of a data collection system that's a little more universal so that we can get a picture of what's happening in each of our communities on the juvenile justice front. There are other areas where data is either hard to get or doesn't -- or we're lacking it and we would like to develop those data systems, too. And that's something that we are willing to work on.

And then lastly, one of the things that we did in starting to look at these data and develop a report around them was we held a forum for East End folks interested in kids. We had youth-serving agencies; we had parents; we had kids; we had elected officials. We got everybody in a room together to talk about this. And one of the things that came out of that was everybody really enjoyed the opportunity to network with each other and learn what was going on in different communities. You know, the East End is a large area geographically and -- so, you know, the opportunity to get everybody together where we could actually share some information and resources was really valuable. So we hope to continue that by holding these quarterly forums so that we can get these folks together and continue to enhance that kind of information sharing and networking.

But the other thing, I think, that we think -- that strikes us mostly is that we need to be -- on the East End we need -- it makes sense to look at this regionally. We are a bunch of really small little communities. But if we all work together as one region, we can maybe do more for our kids and families. And that's really the bottom line, is we want to be as effective as possible. So hopefully through these forums, through our work with the County, we can start to take a more regional look.

One area lot where it would make a lot of sense, for instance, is that we have no resources for runaway and homeless youth on the East End at all. We just, in fact, came from a meeting this

morning at the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office and with Judge Camacho, and that was one of the things that came up, is they need -- they need to know where they can call for respite beds for kids who are coming before Judge Camacho. And they're asking where they can call, you know, and and there is nothing on the East End. There is no place. Everybody -- you know, the best we can offer them is Sea Berry Barn, which is nowhere near their families or anything else. So -- but for the five East End towns to work together on developing something makes a whole lot more sense than for, say, Southampton to do it on our own.

So -- so that is -- that wraps up our formal presentation. As I said, the recommendations are something that we're just starting on and we're hoping through networking and working with you all, we can sort of home them down into things that become very easy to implement. But at this point we'd love to answer any questions that you have.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Thank you. I just want to say just looking at this report, it's tough to take in, you know, because we want our youth to be successful in life and we want them to stay here on Long Island and we -- but yet we don't have these resources that are -- our young need. And -- but I look forward to working with you.

My concern is -- or not a concern, but I also would like you know, I know you focus on the East End, but what about the rest of Suffolk County? Do we have reports on the other five towns? Townships?

MR. PEARSON:

So while no one will say that we are adequate and able to 100% serve the rest of the County, the bare truth is that we are doing a much greater job on servicing the rest of the County. And the part of the County that really can use some additional focus is on the East End. One of the -- one of the problems that the East End encounters is that they cannot compete or has not been -- they have not been successful competing for competitive grant opportunities. Because the per capita rate of income out there usually makes them uncompetitive. And so the whole reason for this subcommittee was to focus on how do we meet the needs of all of our young people throughout the entire County; and so there being a great -- greater need in the East End.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

All right. Thank you. And it makes sense, you know, but maybe we can talk, you know, at a later date just to focus on, you know, things that might be happening just within my own district if that's okay.

MR. BELTZ:

With the absence of funding, we formed an East End Partnership for Youth with a group of service providers and the three youth bureau boards. And, you know, we provide training for the entire community. And it's a very large geographic communities, as well as we provide leadership training for students in all of these school districts where we will do our own fundraising through banks and community organizations to bring in speakers. And we meet year round to do this -- we host annual events for parents, for human service providers and for students. And, you know, it's -- you know, we're so isolated so to speak, but we're also trying to work together so we're trying to fill that void. And that's -- you know, as I said, we don't go before anyone for funding. We do this all ourselves to try to provide the resources for everyone.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

I thank you for everything that you're doing for them. I appreciate that. Do we have any questions? Legislator Browning.

LEG. BROWNING:

You know, I may not be quite the East End, but I'm close. And, you know, I know that Moriches

Youth Organization, they've started to come together. And maybe some questions or comments from me, but, you know, having spoken to people, too often you hear from the East End that the school districts are in denial of the some of the problems that they have. And are you seeing that maybe they're coming around a little bit better? That, yes, they do have the problem? And when it comes to, you know, having places to put the kids, the homeless kids or the ones that are at risk, you know, alternatives to incarceration -- I know we have Timothy Hill Ranch. I'm sure it's probably not big enough. Do you know how many -- so I guess two parts to the question. But first the issue with the school districts; and the other part is the Timothy Hill Ranch, do they have beds open? I mean, have you met with them or talked to them at all?

MS. LYNOTT:

Well, to address the first part of your question, I think that is an issue with some of the school districts, is that they would prefer to present their student body in a more positive way than sometimes the kids we work with help them to do. But the other thing that we have -- like, for instance, in the Town of Southampton, which is where my youth bureau is, we have 12 different school districts. And so there's 12 different approaches to that same answer. So it's really an issue -- you know, some school districts are great about it. Riverhead, in my experience, is one of the school districts that really embraces the services that community groups have to offer. And there are others that really don't want us walking in the door. So it is very different, depending on where you are.

In terms of Timothy Hill, we were actually talking about that at the meeting this morning, the issue there is not so much that they don't have beds available, they probably do have beds available, but they -- they're strictly at this point funding -- only accepting funding from OCFS so they're only taking kids that are placed by the State; at least that was the discussion that we were part of this morning at the Sheriff's Office. So the challenge gets to be finding other funding sources that will pay for these services.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay. And, again, when you can talk about the East End, you have two forks.

MS. LYNOTT:

Yes.

LEG. BROWNING:

So you kind of have to cater to the North Fork and to the South Fork.

MS. LYNOTT:

Yes, very much.

LEG. BROWNING:

When you talked about the -- oh, God, I'm drawing a blank -- the work build, is that what you call it?

MS. LYNOTT:

Youth build.

LEG. BROWNING:

Youth Build, Youth Build. Just out of curiosity, and I know Gwen's here, you know, we have a lot of farms out there. And is there -- has there been any communication with the Farm Bureau to say let's -- you know, you're on the East End, could we not have a partnership with the farms?

MS. LYNOTT:

That was actually one of the suggestions that came up at the community forum that we had so, which is -- Agriculture's definitely a career option for kids on the East End. And so finding -- and

some of the schools actually do embrace that with a little bit of curriculum, and, of course, BOCES does as well. So the issue, I guess for us, is to figure out how to help those kids actually get into those programs.

LEG. BROWNING:

Yeah, but I think the farming teaches them a lot more. My husband's side of the family, they're farmers. And, you know, the kids didn't get into farming, but I think there's a different type of maturity with kids who live that farming life. And, you know, we have Cornell Cooperative, we have the Suffolk County Farm, we have programs there for kids that -- at risk. And, you know, there's so much that they learn. And it seems to change their attitude about life in general just because they've learned something on a farm. So I think it's definitely something that should be looked into for them.

MS. LYNOTT:

Absolutely. I have a daughter who teaches riding who will tell you that forming a relationship with a horse is one of the best self confidence builders that you could ever find.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Thank you. Legislator Gregory.

P.O. GREGORY:

Thank you. Thank you for your -- your efforts in bringing this to our attention. Obviously you guys face, you know, a difficult challenge or a unique challenge as -- you know, being on the West End, it's, you know, everyone feels like they're being underserved. And if services are 30 minutes from you, it's not convenient enough. Where you guys are easily could be an hour away. And obviously that's not convenient. And I was just visiting someone on the East End. They were talking about the difficult challenges with -- particularly with transportation. I know Legislator Schneiderman and Al Krupski, that's a big focus of theirs. You know, we have to do something with that. Is there -- is there a model -- is there some similar, I guess, program throughout the country that face similar challenges as far as geographically to try to interconnect those services that works? Or are we kind of just creating something that's new and trying to see what happens? Because it is difficult.

MS. LYNOTT:

Yes. And I don't think any of us are transportation experts. Jason might have a suggestion, I don't know, from Legislator Schneiderman's office, but I think that's one of the reasons we were recommending mobile capacity for each of the services that we see that need to be increased or enhanced. Because I think it's probably far easier to bring the services to them than -- to a community where they can have better access to a group of individuals than to bring each of those individuals to the service.

P.O. GREGORY:

Yeah, right that was my question. Have you seen that model work somewhere else? Because even, you know, having the same service provider or service providers provide a same service, it's going to be different to each community. Each community, even though they may have the same needs, but the delivery of the services may have to be different. You know, at least that's -- in my experience I've seen that. And those are some of the challenges that you have to face.

MS. LYNOTT:

I know that there are -- there are communities across the country that do have mobile capacity. And actually even here in Suffolk County there are a couple of services that have mobile capacity. And -- so I think there are places that we can look to -- to help, you know, help us develop a system that is effective and helps us, you know, learn from their mistakes as opposed to starting from scratch. I do think there are resources that we can look at.

P.O. GREGORY:

Okay. And I know you kind of just scratched the surface, but obviously the substance abuse or alcohol abuse is an issue. Are there any indications of why that is? Is it just kids being kids, availability?

MS. LYNOTT:

Well, we do find, especially alcohol use rates are a little bit higher on the East End than they are nationwide or in the rest of the County. And the thinking on that is, is, you know, some people say well, there's not enough to do on the East End, but I think even more important is the East End is a resort community that is focused on offering a good time and a nice party for people who come out there to spend time. People go there to relax. People go there -- so you find, like, more bars per square mile in East End communities than you do in most other communities. So I think there's just that whole party atmosphere really does seep down into -- into our young people's consciousness. I mean they see the adults acting like that. And so they, you know, they sort of embrace that same way of thinking.

So -- and we do find through the research that -- that kids' decisions about using alcohol or any other illicit substance are heavily influenced by the adults in their communities and in their lives. And -- so when you have a community that really makes a lot of money off of the party scene, I think that that does influence our kids' use of substances.

MR. BELTZ:

Social isolation -- there are very few students that live maybe -- I'm thinking there's one shopping center, maybe two shopping centers in Southold that, you know, you're looking out your window and you have farm fields and vineyards. And, you know, while kids can connect, in many different ways, I think there's something that's very isolating unlike western Suffolk where you can go two blocks and go somewhere. Here you have one bus that connects all of us together. And, you know, most people don't live remotely near the bus. So people take to destructive behavior or, you know, do things that may be they shouldn't be doing, poor choices.

MS. LYNOTT:

We had three bowling alleys on the East End and two of them closed. That was a major deal for the kids in our communities. There was -- a new one reopened, though, so we're back to two.

P.O. GREGORY:

So it is partly finding constructive outlets for them to socialize and, you know, to have those types of things that are conveniently available.

MS. LYNOTT:

It is partly, yes.

P.O. GREGORY:

Okay. All right.

MS. LYNOTT:

I know in our community in Southampton, that's one of the things that our community wanted our youth bureau to look at, was providing some supervised and alternatives that kids could get involved in because there are fewer.

P.O. GREGORY:

I guess the question for Mr. Pearson, we don't have any youth services out of the Riverhead County Complex. Would that be -- that's not even the most convenient location. I mean not that you provide services, but you don't have staff there. Would that be -- would that be helpful in some -- to some extent or not?

MR. PEARSON:

So having considered that particular question, and that's something that we would certainly consider, what we -- the County Executive has a community-base intervention model. And so one of the things in that intervention model that we have been discussing lately is an East End site. So the model calls for a youth center and a resource center in these targeted neighborhoods. And so we're now looking for a site or a location out on the East End that we can start to try to develop that kind of model.

But certainly your questions about the Legislative building is something to be considered. But remember that the Suffolk County Youth Bureau does not do direct services per se. So all of our services are through -- for the multiple -- mostly through contracted agencies, although lately we have been doing some direct things, mainly in the area of projects; that the services are really provided by contracted agencies.

The other thing I wanted to add is that last year I met with a group from East Hampton. And there seems to be a growing amount of workforce -- or children of workers. And there's certainly a need to serve those children of that workforce out on the East End.

P.O. GREGORY:

Right. So you're exploring the possibility having a site or a resource center or a building to provide services, I guess, with multiple entities providing those services?

MR. PEARSON:

Yes, that's what we're looking to do at the East End.

P.O. GREGORY:

Something that's convenient for both Forks? Because that is the challenge.

MR. PEARSON:

That's the challenge.

P.O. GREGORY:

Yeah.

MR. PEARSON:

The challenge is -- I think in our -- in our analysis and the preparation for this report, I think, we have one youth center in Flanders. And that's the only youth center out on the two Forks serving --

MS. LYNOTT:

We have a small one in North Sea, too, in the Town Rec Center but that is it.

P.O. GREGORY:

Okay. All right. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Thank you. And again thank you for coming to us today and reporting on your findings.

MR. PEARSON:

Thank you.

MS. LYNOTT:

Thank you.

TABLED RESOLUTIONS

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

All right, just to finish up the agenda, back to Tabled Resolutions, and that's **1504, Declaring December 19th as "Richard Rees" Specht Day of Kindness in Suffolk County (Muratore)**. I will like to make a motion to table.

LEG. TROTTA:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 5-0-0-1. P.O. GREGORY INCLUDED IN VOTE. LEG. McCAFFREY NOT PRESENT)**

That concludes today's meeting. Thank you.

**THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 4:22 PM
{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY**