

**SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
of the
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE
Minutes**

A regular meeting of the Social Services Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on **Tuesday, July 30, 2002**.

Members Present:

Legislator Paul Tonna - Chairman
Legislator Vivian Fisher - Vice-Chair
Legislator Brian Foley
Legislator Lynne Nowick
Legislator Caracciolo

Members Not Present:

Legislator William Lindsay

Also In Attendance:

Paul Sabatino II - Counsel to the Legislature
Dr. Richard Koubek - Catholic Charities
Bich Ha Pham - Catholic Charities
Ed Hogan - Aide to Legislator Nowick
Ellen Martin - Aide to Legislator Tonna
Kim Brandeau - Budget Review Office
Todd Johnson - County Executive's Office
Sister Ann Kathleen
Tonito Valderrama
MaryJean Heske
MaryAnne Heske
Marie Pedato
Tim Rumph
Ken Drange
Mary Schneider
Carol Heoffner
All other interested parties

Minutes Taken By:

Donna Barrett - Court Stenographer

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Okay. We're going to begin our Social Services Meeting. And let's start with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Nowick.

SALUTATION

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Thank you. Everybody be seated. We have a number of cards filled out, but I'd like to start with -- I guess this is the Chairman's prerogative -- I know we have a presentation today by Mr. Koubek. Dick, you're going to make a presentation today, right?

MR. KOUBEK:

Yes.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Okay. Actually -- and just, you know, it's not any of your problem, but I have a doctor's appointment to make, so I want to bring you up first so that we can -- listen to this, my daughter fell last week and split her ear in half. Don't ask me how these things happen, but plastic surgeons are very particular about when they do their follow-ups. And she's two year old, I've got to be there. So we're going to start with Dick, with your presentation, and then we'll go from there, okay? Actually, you know what? While you're sitting preparing yourself, anybody else, I'm going to -- I'm going to vote on our one bill, it's prime, (1776) it's a local law to rename and reorganize the Handicap Advisory Board. (COUNTY EXEC)

I'll make a motion, seconded by Mr. Foley. All in favor? Opposed? Great. Record that, that's our one resolution.

LEG. FISHER:

You have to table that.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Oh, it has to be tabled. All right. I'm sorry. Let's start this again. I make a motion to table, seconded by Legislator Foley. All in favor? Opposed? TABLED (VOTE: 5-0-0-1) (NOT PRESENT; LEGISLATOR LINDSAY)

Thank you, Donna. Okay. That's the agenda done. Mr. Koubek. Please, name, rank, serial number for the for the record, and we'll go from there.

MR. KOUBEK:

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Richard Koubek. I Chair the Welfare to Work Committee with the Department of Social Services Commissions Advisory Council. And I've come up with a number of people this morning to make a presentation. Just as introduction, let me say who we are. We haven't been here in a while. This committee was created by the Social Services Committee of the Legislature in 1998. We're 13 not-for-profits, we meet every two to three weeks as a committee and four times a year with the Commissioner and staff, and our objective is very simple. It's to advocate for

Department of Social Services policies and procedures that would move people from welfare out of poverty to lives of self sufficiency. So that's -- that's our oversight. We know that 60% of the cases in Suffolk have been closed. Our goal is not just to close cases, but to make certain that when people leave welfare they're get the assistance to leave poverty as well.

Last week I had a young intern working with me, his name is James Nelson. He's actually the son of my boss, David Nelson. Spent a week with me, very bright kid. And I gave him the job of looking at some census projections. The actual census data has not been released yet for income in Suffolk County, but he had the most recent projections. And they set off alarm bells. Our focus today is going to be on education for welfare clients, just listen to these alarm bells. During the 1990s, poverty in Suffolk County increased by 35%. That's 21,439 more poor people in 2000 than they were 10 years ago. That's in one of the richest counties in the country during one of the longest economic booms in the history of the United States. My intern, James, also found that they were 37,601 households earning under \$15,000 a year, that's in Suffolk County. I want to repeat that. 37,601 households, that doesn't count the children, who are earning under \$15,000 a year.

Right now, about 5000 thousand of these folks are receiving public assistance. We're asking, what is happening to the other 32,000? We know what's happening to a lot of them. They're coming into the not-for-profits that serve on this subcommittee, they're coming into parish outreach centers. For example, we just spot checked at Catholic Charities in preparation for today's meeting, and we found that in three of our parishes, three; Brentwood, Wyandanch, Center Moriches there are currently 8000 open cases. That's people coming into for food, for clothing, for assistance because they can't make it. So our focus today is to ask you as Legislature, ask us as not-for-profits and the department what are we going to do as a community to get people out of poverty? And it seems to us the most basic path out of poverty is education. As we get into today's testimony, let me give you a tale of two teenagers. And you'll hear from some more as the proceedings unfold.

James Nelson, 18, James I had hoped would be with us today because he helped us to prepare the testimony to the Legislature. He's not here, he's at basketball camp where an 18 year old ought to be. It's his last week before he leaves for the University of Virginia, where he has a four year fully paid Thomas Jefferson Scholarship. He's the ideal for Long Island, he's a great kid, wonderful kid. Everyone should be a James Nelson or raise a James Nelson. That's one teenager. The other teenager is Linda -- that's not her real name -- Linda is also 18 years old. She's a mom, she's has a child, a baby, she just left Catholic Charities Regina Residence where spent a year and a half. She has no family. James Nelson has an intact family, a loving family. Linda's mom who's severely depressed abandoned her at the age of 15 to an abusive father. Linda's father abused her, she was removed from her father's custody and wound up in Regina Residence. There for a year and a half, she got her High School, and as soon as she got the diploma and got a job, Nassau DSS removed her from the rolls. She is now self sufficient. She is basically an

orphan, she's 18 years old. She had to move to Suffolk where she got an apartment with another 18 year old who has a child, and together these two women, 18 years old, are working four jobs. Linda has given up getting on DSS, because when she tried to get her Medicaid and get her food stamps, she had to give up four days of work and finally quit. And basically said, can't do this any more.

The folks at Regina wanted her to go to college, it's not in the cards for a Linda. So we have James, very successful, very lucky. We have Linda, the victim of chemical dependency, chemical imbalances, hard luck. James, who found the statistics I just cited and Linda, who is one of those statistics. The frustration of the woman at Catholic Charities who runs Regina House was simple. Why couldn't we get her in college? That's our question today.

So I'd like to now turn the microphone over to Bich Ha Pham. Bich Ha's a member of the committee, she's Executive Director of the Hunger Action Network of New York State, she has done a very -- or her agency has done a very extensive study, which you are going to receive a copy of, and she's going to talk about the obvious need for education for the poor.

MS. PHAM:

Thank you. I thank the committee for this time. As Mr. Koubek just stated, the Hunger Action Network in New York State just recently completed a report on the levels of access education training for welfare recipients in the state, entitled "Lack of Skills and Education in the New York -- in the Empire State," and a copy of the report was circulated to the committee. And while many welfare participants has significant educational and skills barriers to employment, there is little support for access to education training and job -- and job training. When we say basic education and education, we mean adult literacy programs, GED prep programs and GED programs, English classes, vocational training and an Associates Degree in college. And the report also showed a clear relationship between education, training skills, employability and wages, especially the family sustaining wages that many of the welfare recipients need to get -- not only get off of welfare, but stay off of welfare. The back characteristics of the outreach welfare recipient, TANIFF recipient, in New York State is almost half of the recipients lack a high school education or a GED. And when you've seen any of the job ads that usually circulated by welfare offices, one the first requirements is a high school or GED. So we're talking about an major barrier there in terms of educational level.

In comparison, about 80% of all Americans women ages 18 to 54 who are not on welfare have completed a high school degree or GED. So there's a huge gap between those who are on welfare and those who are not and the attainment of their degree. Even more challenging is that the State Department of Education estimates that about 40% of the welfare recipients read less than an 8th Grade level, and almost half scored in the lowest level of literacy in terms of the adult literacy test. And what that means at a practical level is that they can read a

little bit, but not well enough to fill out a job application, to read a food label or to read a simple story to a child. So another pocket in terms of very large barrier.

Despite the education and skills barriers confronting many welfare recipients, Suffolk County only had 181 recipients, individuals, who are currently engaged in either any of those education and training programs. It's -- the breakdown is about 73 who are in adult basic education, 104 who are in vocational training and four who are in Associates Degree for individuals. Our report also found that college was particularly successful in helping participants transition off of welfare. One study found that 75% of women receiving welfare who completed at least one year of college are no longer dependant on welfare after two years, and another study found that 87% of women who receive a two year degree never return to welfare. And, you know, the higher, it's almost 100% for those who earn a Bachelors Degree. So instead of the emphasis on education training and even -- and including college, Suffolk has adopt a Work First Policy, and that is to discourage education training for welfare recipients in favor of the quick placement in any job, even if the job is a low-wage job without benefits and -- that would actually bring the family, the household earnings below federal poverty level.

And the -- however, maximizing earning potential should be a priority for Suffolk, since in recent years, it has become more evident that many of the -- of welfare recipients who found employment are struggling. They're struggling in terms of getting food on their plates, they're struggling in terms of keeping rent paid and not having to go to Catholic Charities. And that's the goal that Suffolk should shoot for, which is being an education county, being a training county, being a work force development county and focusing on alleviating poverty.

The -- my last point I wanted to talk about how similar the findings of our recent survey mirrored those of the May 2000 survey conducted by this -- the Welfare to Work Subcommittee in the report entitled " How Well is Welfare in Suffolk County." As this committee may recall, about half of the respondents that we surveyed did not have a high school or GED, which is similar to the state trend. And of those who had not completed their high school, only nine had received a referral by Suffolk DSS for a GED program. And only three were referred to English classes who did not have English proficiency. And though half -- almost half of the respondents who had requested vocational education training as a work activity, only half the those were approved by DSS. And certainly because Suffolk County only permits college enrollment as a work placement in your second year of the program, it -- only five of the respondents at the time were enrolled in college.

And just to touch upon the comments that we've provided -- that were provided to us by the majority of women that we surveyed in Suffolk

County back in that -- for that report, just a few quotes. "I had a job lined up in floral design for \$8 an hour, and I had studied in BOCES in high school. The job wanted me to have three to four weeks of training, but DSS refused to fund or help me." The next surveyed person, "I was told that the training was only for certain people. I would not get the training because too many people have abused the system." The next person, "I wanted culinary training because I have experience as a cook, but would make a higher salary with certification. I was refused." And the last person, "While

participating in {SWAP} program, I applied for college at Briarcliffe with assistance in Pell and TAP, the Tuition Assistance Program. However, three days before I was to start class, DSS stepped in and told me I couldn't participate." These were the stories that we've surveyed, and we've -- it bears a very consistent policy, work first, no training, no education or very little of it for low income residents in Suffolk County.

MR. KOUBEK:

So it comes to this: Under the current guidelines for welfare that came out of Washington, any district, like Suffolk County, can place 30% of the work eligible clients into full-time education. So right now, there are roughly 2000 of the 5000 cases in Suffolk, about 2000 who are work eligible that are actually working, if you followed the guidelines of the federal government, 600 of them could be in full-time education getting their GED, being in college, getting vocational training. They're allowed 600. Right now, the records we have from DSS, there are 181 in full-time education. This is our frustration. And to articulate that struggle that we not-for-profits have -- I mean, I talked to some folks from other not-for-profits who couldn't make it today. Everyone with whom I spoke like Sister Mary Ryan of the Opening Word, it's a well known program, she's says it's a struggle, it's a fight to get placement, particularly into college. So I'd like now to give the microphone to Sister Ann Kathleen {Bolton}. She is the Director of the St. John the Evangelist Parish Outreach Center in Center Moriches, one of the parishes I just cited. She lives with the struggle everyday. She's going to tell you what she has found in terms of the problem of education. Sister Ann.

SISTER ANN:

Good morning, everyone. I'm happy to be here today to represent our clients who really need intervention. The Department of Social Services as we know has the obligation to move people from their rolls to living wages. We have stressed that. Now to me, the operative word here is service. Services implies a dedication and a commitment to sincerely trying to assist human beings make a better life for themselves. And when the programs -- when you see the numbers that are not attending these programs that are offered, well, you question why. Are they not encouraged? Are they not given the full information? And we ourselves did a survey two years ago, the Welfare to Work Survey, and we indicated at that time that so many were not

fulfilling, they were 87 applicants, to these vocational trainings. And we were told in response to that that the reason why the educating providers, such as BOCES, etcetera, were not doing it is that they claimed that it was so difficult to raise students from the 6th to the 8th Grade level that it was too time consuming and too difficult, and they couldn't do it. They'd have to get the GED on their own, and they were then assigned to these job training programs and so forth where they ended up nowhere.

And so that is our plea that these programs that are there for them be encouraged. Just to show you an indication of -- we have school listings for vocational training, and this came out the year after, you know, that we had raised the issue, and they were 19 courses offered here, and 16 have no classes scheduled at this time. This is rather remarkable. I have a copy if you are interested in seeing it.

The idea is again, it's paper. We find that paper to practice is a very divergent concept. It's all good on paper, but when it comes to putting in into actuality, it's not there. So I know that you'll be interested in that. Aside from that also, we are trying to get people on a level where they may be ready, the readiness awareness to get them on the GED level and to help them. Sometimes they need the child care, sometimes transportation, and this is very much lacking.

We all agree that the key out of poverty is to have an education. The numbers that are coming to us, and Dick cited some of the numbers, we have thousands that are on -- that are working, but are not able to sustain themselves. Where are they coming? They are coming to the outreaches. I have 2000 cases. I understand one parish has 5000. We are literally inundated with people who have basic needs of food and clothing, etcetera. So that we would like to see something that is really constructive being employed here. And the work first approach doesn't really service, it defeats and sabotages the purpose of the welfare, to remove these people, to make them self reliant in society, independent financially. And let us together have productive programs of wages and benefits so that these people may raise themselves to have a dignified life of self sufficiency. And we do agree. I understand this morning we have a comment from Dennis Nowack of the Department of Social Services, and he was questioned about "Does the school fare work." Dennis Nowack, the Suffolk Social Service spokesman said, and I quote, "Education for welfare recipients has been successful. "In fact," he said, "The more, the better." That's what we say. The more the better. "Our experience has been that it's better to let people enroll full time," he continues, he said, "Rather than limit the hours they can apply toward their work requirements, the Department screens those who would rather go to school then take a workfare job as a clerk or a garbage collector to make sure they are going to class and to make sure they don't languish there. "In general," said Nowack, "Schooling often -- offers better preparation than workfare jobs for people leaving the welfare role." And we certainly echo that comment, and we certainly support that view. And

we hope that you will. Thank you for your kind attention.

MR. KOUBEK:

Thank you, Sister.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

Thank you very much, Sister.

MR. KOUBEK:

So the issue is what is the practice versus what is the goal. We agree with Mr. Nowack. The goal ought to be education. We don't see that as the practice. We have with us today two young people, unlike the Linda I cited, they're from loving, intact families. And they had a terrible time getting education. They were on public assistance. I'd like you to hear their story. We're going to start with MaryJean Heske who is here with her mom, MaryAnne Heske. So let's hear MaryJean's story.

MS. HESKE:

How are you? I'm going to try to briefly sum it for you. I came from -- my mother was going to speak to you today, but she's a little

uncomfortable, it's a little painful to remember. I came from a family where my mother has been always supportive and loving. My father used to abuse drugs and alcohol. My father was abusive. It got to the point where my father was in and out of jail because we couldn't live with him any more. He, you know, committed crimes and ended up behind bars. It got to a point where he had stabbed my mother and almost killed her in front of me. He went to jail for almost three years for that. And my mother had to raise me on her own. Because of the circumstances that she was single parent and only with me and no child support from my father, she was on -- she got public assistance me. She has SSI for herself because she's now disabled because of that and unable to work. She got the SS -- the Social Services for me, and when I turned 18, I was then no longer a minor, and it came into my name. I was then responsible for the appointments and the paperwork, running back and forth to the Social Services Department and the Department of Labor. Social Services obviously works with the Labor Department. The Labor Department had given me several appointments to make.

And my senior year of high school, I had attended Brookhaven Tech Center at BOCES, and I took Television Production. I had -- I really didn't have good grades in high school, I had a reading comprehension problem that nobody caught onto until I was in 12th Grade. I had a reading teacher at BOCES that had caught it for me, because I would take hands-on training, and on the hands-on I would have straight A's. And when it came to a test, I had failing grades, and nobody could understand why. And, you know, someone actually cared enough to get to the bottom of it, gave me a test, and found out that I had a 5th Grade reading comprehension level in 12th Grade. It was pretty much too late to do anything about it in high school, because I had -- I

was going to graduate in another two months.

Despite it all, I maintained an A average in Brookhaven Tech, and I got a 50% scholarship to go to college. And DSS made it very hard for me to go to college. And being that I worked so hard for the scholarship, I was not willing to give it up. And I struggled my whole life. I've been working since I was 12 years old, you know, odds jobs here and there and putting money into the household and helping put food on the table and, you know, contributing, because I didn't have parents where I could ask for money, you know, to do things and for clothes and necessities. I didn't have it. I had to do it on my own. And it was hard, it was a struggle. And I said to myself that when I get older, I'm not going to struggle anymore. And DSS basically -- and DOL actually, made me feel like I wasn't worth an education, I wasn't worth it to go to college, and I disagreed.

They put up a fight. They wanted to get me to do their workfare program which was over 35 hours a week. That being in college, I couldn't do. And I went to a fair hearing and had told the judge my situation, and I told him that if I could get something on campus, maybe a little bit less hours, so that I can still continue my education full time that I could do that. And he said if I was to do that that would be okay. So I got a letter from my employer at the school, I got a job at the school working 12 hours a week. For my scholarship I had to maintain a 3.0 GPA, and I had to put in 12 hours a semester of community service along with the 12 hours a week I was

putting in for DSS, and I did that. Along with that, I had to show pay stubs to be stamped, and I had to have paperwork filled out by the payroll department showing everything that was coming in and everything I was doing to make sure that I was doing it, I did that. I -- they -- I went down to a DOL appointment, and they told me that I had to -- if I could not make the appointment, which I told them I couldn't do because I was enrolled full time, and I was working also, and they don't give night classes at the college I'm in. I'm in Five Towns College, its a private college. They don't offer night classes. So I would be busy all day and their appointments are during the day. And I said, well, is there another way and I get the paper to you, and they said, yes, you can fax it over. I did that. I faxed the paper over. Because I didn't call them to make sure they got the paper, even though they did get the paper, they sanctioned me. I'm no longer on Social Services. I did go to several fair hearings. I missed class during midterms, I almost jeopardized my scholarship and my GPA. Right now, I have a 3.5 overall GPA, and I made the Honer Society, which I got a medal for with no help from DSS. I made that choice.

And to have to fight for your education, I really don't think that's a reason to fight. I think everyone if they have the opportunity should be able to take it. Because I'm sure all you guys up there have gone to college and you know what I mean. What would you be without it, you know? And especially if you had such a hard life, and, you know,

when you struggle, especially with domestic violence in your life, you have low self esteem and no confidence. And college helps you build that, it helps you to see that you can have a better life some day. And that's basically -- I'm not here for me. I'm already off the system. And I just wanted to show you that it's possible. And to make it easier, you can have a lot more people like me. You know, to have productive citizens in society helps the economy. And trying to have uneducated people -- what would you rather, have more Legislators like yourselves and help better the society or more garbagemen? So thank you.

APPLAUSE

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

I could tell you one thing, most citizens, I think, would opt for the garbagemen, knowing the Legislators. Thank you very much, by the way. Thank you very much for your words.

LEG. FISHER:

Very inspiring.

MR. KOUBEK:

Okay. We have one other story for you. I'd like to now introduce Tony Valderrama, who also had a rough time with education. Tony.

MR. VALDERRAMA:

How are you today? My name is Tony. Good morning. Basically, my story comes along the same lines as hers. Basically, my mom was the only supportive person behind me throughout my whole life. After I graduated from high school in 2000, I decided with her support to go straight to college. I went to Suffolk for my first two years at 17. And when I went in there, instead of -- I went to go and take as many

credits as I could to go further my education. And they had decided to put me directly on the a work site, DOL had put me on a work site. And they decided to put me on 21 hours a week of work sight, and it had -- it had taken a toll on my because I was trying to take -- I was taking 15 to 18 credits a semester. And I was trying to get my education, and they were forcing me to go do this work that was somewhere else, where I had to do 21. And if I looked at the bulletin in my school, the bulletin piece, I had seen that it had said that there was is certain amount of required hours for students taking a certain amount of credits. And this was way above that amount of credits for a proper studying time.

Basically, I had -- I had no choice but to go to this work site and to work it along with going to school. In my second year, I went and secured a work study job at the school. So I was doing work study, work site, plus full-time schooling in Suffolk Community College. It wasn't easy at all. Like she had said, I felt like giving up at certain times. I had wished that these people would have supported the education, instead of turning around and knocking it down,

basically saying that the education was my problem. They weren't willing to help uplift the education. Basically, I believe that the only way to lift people out of a hole is to help them, is to encourage them to get an education, because like she said also, being a garbagemen is not going to help uplift any situation. Also, that -- basically that anybody can find a way to get an education, if they have the support to do it.

LEG. FISHER:
Thank you.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:
Thank you very much.

MR. KOUBEK:
Okay. These are two stories. They come from strong, supportive families. Tony's mom's in the audience. Imagine the Lindas who have all kinds of problems above and beyond what you heard today are capable of going to college and just get beaten down. And imagine Linda's baby, now about 1 year old. So -- so we're looking for some long term changes, and we've given to you -- I hope you have some recommendations from the committee for policy changes, and then we'll conclude.

Every two years, the department of Social Services here in Suffolk, like every Department of Social Services is required to file what's called their employment plan. It's their blueprint for moving people from welfare to work. And our committee has studied that and commented on it and met with them. And we have a number of areas where we've made some progress and some areas where we haven't. Education is one of the areas we've just hit a stone wall. So we're going to make a couple of recommendations that have this goal: To get the Department to allow at least 30% or 600 of the clients that they're allowed to place the education to be in education. And so here are the changes, and I believe -- do you have them in front of you?

10

CHAIRMAN TONNA:
Just a quick question.

MR. KOUBEK:
Sure.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:
Is there a financial -- just strictly financial benefit to DSS of not having all 600? In other words, is there -- by placing them into workfare rather than, you know, having the 130 whatever it was that you said --

MR. KOUBEK:
180.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

180. Is there a financial benefit to the County? For example, is there a way -- are they saving money somewhere by not having all 600 people going into education? I'm just trying to understand why not 600.

MR. KOUBEK:

We can't get an answer to that, Mr. Chairman. I don't know. I know that when we asked that question of the Department, we were told, "We can't put them in education because we won't meet our participation rate." They're required to have 50% of the eligible -- work eligible people in some kind of work activity. We responded, "But you can put 30% of those in education." So that, I didn't get a straight answer. We thought perhaps this was some funding issues, maybe they're not properly funded with the vendors, like BOCES. But as you heard from Sister Ann, a lot of those courses aren't even being offered. So I can't answer that. I'd like to know the answer myself. I don't know.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

It should be a question that -- you know, we'll set up our next Social Services meeting for DSS to come in, and hopefully to have some time to prepare some comments with regard to this presentation.

MR. KOUBEK:

Good.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

I know some might want to come today, but I don't think so it's appropriate for them to address issues when half our questions will be, we'll have to get back to you.

MR. KOUBEK:

Good.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

So, you know, we want to give them that opportunity.

LEG. FOLEY:

On this very point, perhaps you would also as Chairman want to invite BOCES as well as the Community College officials to also be present at the next meeting so there can be more of a roundtable discussion of

colloquy, if you will, so all the stake holders, all of those who are involved in this process would be at the table here to talk about it.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

I'd ask Ellen, just also the DOL. Ask the Department of Labor, we'll give each of an opportunity -- I hope somebody from the Department of Labor is here. If not, they'll be minutes of this meeting that we can make, you know, available to them. But the next meeting that DSS be invited to come and present, as Legislator Foley said, maybe

representatives from BOCES and the Community College, and then also, representatives from the Department of Labor.

LEG. FISHER:

Mr. Chairman, there's another segment of Suffolk County job market that I think might be represented. When I was speaking with Dick prior to this meeting, we discussed what we should be training people for. What are the jobs that are out there that people would be most likely to be successful in? And I suggested that maybe we can ask someone from the LIA or one of the other large associations to have input in this dialog. I think it would be very important. We don't want to train people if we're training them for a job that is not really feasible in our market. So that might be another invitation that we might want to put out.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

We -- actually, I think, Chris, if I'm not mistaken, that's something we've been working on with the business community to build some indicia about availability and that type of stuff and seeing if there is some type of public-private partnership that could be developed in training.

LEG. FISHER:

I think Dick mentioned to me that in the past there had been some public-private partnerships. Dick?

MR. KOUBEK:

Actually, it was Chris.

LEG. FISHER:

Oh, it was Chris who had done it?

MR. KOUBEK:

Yeah. It's Chris and her colleague and my colleague, Brian {Paradine} who's in the audience. And they had done some work at Catholic Charities to try to make the very connection you're talking about. And for a number of reasons that we need not go into today, it didn't go where it should have gone. But it's a great idea, and I'm happy to be here that you're --

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

We're working on it.

LEG. FISHER:

Good, then we're all on the same page with this, because it makes sense.

CHAIRMAN TONNA:

But I think it's a good idea. Maybe we'll ask somebody from the LIA to come as a representative to listen, especially, and then maybe get their work going. But, please, your recommendations.

MR. KOUBEK:

Okay. So here are the recommendations, keeping in mind, you know, there is a difference between paper and practice. But we're making three specific recommendation for changes in the biennial. Biennial plan is a kind of boiler plate that comes from the state. And so referring to Section 3.2, the orientation, right now there's a list of information that provided in orientation, and education is not listed in there. So what we're suggesting is that when a client comes in, they receive a written statement of the client's right to educational placement and a written summary of educational opportunities that could count as a work activity. So it would be nice and simple and clean and up front. Right now, they're kind of told, depending upon who the caseworker is. We would like it to be part of policy that would be the change in Section 3.2. And we're scheduled to meet with the Commissioner in September for our quarterly meeting, and we'd be happy to work with them on drafting that as we've helped them in the past on other documents, informational documents. So that's the first change.

The second change is in Section 3,4, where work activities are listed. There's a whole host of activities. College education is not listed there. So we're suggesting that college education be listed there with this language, "An Associate Degree Program, this activity is allowable for two years of full-time enrollment for participants who qualify for admission to a career path Associate Degree Program." The operative word is career path. Ten years ago, there were roughly 500 public assistance clients in the Suffolk County Community College. There were problems with that program. They were not in career path programs. There were disconnects between the Department and the college. And -- and some of the them were in English Literature and programs that were not leading them to careers, and the Department actually has a study showing they didn't do well when they left those programs. So we're being very precise. Career path, but at least list it as an option when you have all the other work activities listed. And then lastly --

LEG. FISHER:

Mr. Chair, before you go on, Dick, so if this where the option, would the person then not have to do any work other than being a full-time student?

MR. KOUBEK:

That's correct

LEG. FISHER:

They wouldn't be required to have any job?

MR. KOUBEK:

That's correct.

LEG. FISHER:

Now, if the person were to work while they were a full-time student, would their benefits be impacted?

MR. KOUBEK:

No. No. Again, the federal government allows 30% of the 2000 to go full time. So 30% of them could go theoretically if they qualified full time to Suffolk Community College and still collect their benefits, theoretically.

LEG. FISHER:

Okay. So, Dick, when Ms. Heske referred to being a full-time student as did Mr. Valderrama, they were required to work although they were matriculated full-time students. Why?

MS. HESKE:

They said it was part of their Welfare to Work Program, so they wanted me to work on one of their work sites. They basically -- I had a woman on the phone who was the head of DOL who told me that college was not an option, her exact words. I'm not making that up at all. So, you know, basically, college was not even a part of that. They just wanted me to fulfil their workfare hours, which was 35 hours.

LEG. FISHER:

Okay. And Ms. Heske is that the point at which you went to the fair hearing?

MS. HESKE:

Yes.

LEG. FISHER:

Okay.

MS. HESKE:

And that's when the judge said that 12 hours would be sufficient. That was the judge's, you know, decision at that point. But before that, college had nothing to do with it. She said college was not an option at that point.

LEG. FISHER:

Okay. But Dick, then my question comes back to the fact that now here was the judge's ruling stating that Ms. Heske had to work 12 hours, and yet you're saying that the federal guidelines allow someone to receive benefits and not have to work any hours.

MR. KOUBEK:

Yeah, in -- each county is allowed to have their own college policy. So for example, Nassau County has opted for no college, none. Suffolk County allows for college in the second year. That's our policy right now, which means you have to on your own accumulate half of what you need to graduate. And then if you -- whatever those credits are, let's say it's 60 credits, if you do that on your own, then Suffolk County will allow you to go full time for the other 60. So the judge was probably conforming to Suffolk County policy. Our recommendation is simply if you qualify, that's the statement, if you qualify, then allow the person to go full time for the two years. So the judge was

conforming to Suffolk policy, which I must say is better than Nassau.

LEG. FISHER:

Okay. So it is Suffolk County policy that you do have to work that first year.

MR. KOUBEK:

Yes.

LEG. FISHER:

Okay. That was my question basically. And so your change would be that it would be work -- I mean, education would not have to be supplemented with any hours of work.

MR. KOUBEK:

That would be a full -- that would be a work -- that's called a work activity. That would be your work activity.

LEG. FISHER:

Although I have to just say that many of us who are sitting at the horseshoe did work when we were college students and our kids worked when they were full time college students.

MR. KOUBEK:

I did too.

LEG. FISHER:

And so a 12 hour work requirement doesn't seem to be particularly onerous to most of us who are behind the horseshoe. So my question was why are we looking at no requirement?

MR. KOUBEK:

Okay. That's a fair question. And I think everybody -- if I asked folks to raise their hands who worked while they were in college either for Bachelors or Masters, most hands would go up. I opened with the story of Linda because she represents, I think, a significant number of the welfare clients who currently are on public assistance. That is to say, she is a single mom, she is a single mom. She has a child. She may not have transportation. So you're dealing with a very fragile vulnerable group of people. We had, frankly, two strong examples today, strong families, they don't have babies to care for, and they kind of did it the hard way, but they did it.

LEG. FISHER:

Is there any latitude for judgement on particular cases, you know, someone who does have --

MR. KOUBEK:

Yes.

LEG. FISHER:

-- a child would be different than someone who is 17 and lives in a household and attending college?

MR. KOUBEK:

Most of the what you see in the biennial plan, you will see references

to case by case determination. Our frustration is that we come with cases, and the case by case determination can sometimes take two months with an advocate fighting for a particular case to get that person placed in college. It's a struggle. This is what you heard today. And in answer to your question, Legislator Fisher, we're really speaking today also for the Lindas. That's a much tougher case than what you heard today. Linda's got to get a bus to take her baby to child care, then get another bus to take her to work, then get another bus to take her to college. And you get the picture.

LEG. FISHER:

Clearly that's a very different case.

MR. KOUBEK:

So we need to have them at the table even though they're not physically present.

LEG. FISHER:

Okay. I think there was another question, Dick.

LEG. NOWICK:

Just to make it clear. Are you saying then your concern is you don't want mandatory -- you don't want the work to be mandatory because of the Lindas? But if there was such a young lady -- and just let me congratulate you, that's wonderful, we're very proud of you. That's great, you did your job. Is that what you're saying, that you don't want to have mandatory work because of the Lindas?

MR. KOUBEK:

No, we're not opposed to work. What we're saying is there should be maximum flexibility so that a work activity where possible is defined as education. The old system was no good. The old welfare system was -- had lots of problems. So this new emphasis on getting them to do something productive --

LEG. NOWICK:

I'm just trying to figure out --

MR. KOUBEK:

We're not saying no work. We're saying that you -- up to 30% of the clients could have full-time education count as a work activity. And where possible, we think there should be greater effort to place them in education and count that as their work activity. Does that make sense?

LEG. NOWICK:

So they would be going to school and that would be counted as their work activity.

MR. KOUBEK:

That's correct. That's correct.

LEG. NOWICK:

But do you not feel that if they're going to school and taking 15 credits they should also be working if they can?

16

MR. KOUBEK:

I would say that that doesn't -- that shouldn't be mandated case by case, particularly if it's a single mom without a car, with a baby or two children.

LEG. NOWICK:

Well, yes, that -- I understand that, but I think this young lady seems to be quite an accomplished young lady, and I think she worked, she learned, and I think it's going to change her whole life. Having had two daughters, probably your age, and just so you know, it doesn't matter who you are, the system is very difficult to get through for colleges. It's very hard and it's very hard to understand it, but my daughters also put 10, 12, 13, one of them, 20 hours a week. It's good for them.

MR. KOUBEK:

We're not saying it isn't good for them.

LEG. NOWICK:

Another thing I want to ask you is anywhere in your plan, would you have a department, and I think this is really important for these young people, someone who can guide these young people as to the ins and outs of getting the finances to go to college. Someone who can sit with them and guide them and say this is available to you, this is how you can do it, this is the financial aid. And by the way, most colleges will tell you when they send out financial packages. They say you can get a Stafford Loan, you can get a Federal Plus Loan, and by the way, the Work Study Program will be valued at 1500 this year, the semester. You can opt for that also. But these young people don't know about it unless you go to somebody specialized and you pay them \$500. And I think that might be something you might want to put into your package.

LEG. FISHER:

Ms. Heske wants to answer that. Did you want to?

MS. HESKE:

Yeah. I just wanted to say one thing. Any employer that I've had and anyone -- anyone who, you know, you speak to education is so important that they're willing to work around you. Yet, the state system won't. And they're kind of against you in a way, which is kind of weird, because it shouldn't be.

LEG. NOWICK:

It's important that you work and be able to go to school and be guided in that regard. I think both of them are important. And as we know, the 15 credits, as difficult as that sounds, I know I listen to my own

girls say, we have a lot of time on our hands, which we all know is not the best.

MR. KOUBEK:

I think your recommendation is excellent. I assume, Legislate Nowick, you were referring to someone at DSS.

LEG. NOWICK:

Yeah. I think these young people -- as a parent, I think it's helpful

17

to me, because four years ago, I didn't know it was out there. And I think for this young lady so bright, and both of you are, I think that would have been wonderful.

MR. KOUBEK:

We -- one of our frustrations, and we really didn't plan to go into it in detail today, is we're not sure how the clients are assessed and what specific assistance they're given. And I think when you have your roundtable at the next meeting that should be one of the questions. When a person comes through the system -- we have some assessment documents that are very vague. They're kind of asked do you have a GED, do you have a high school diploma. But we think you need trained employees at DSS who can work the educational system and provide encouragement. Saying to someone college is not an option is not helpful.

LEG. NOWICK:

No. Absolutely not.

LEG. FISHER:

I think there should be a stronger link between DSS and the high school, the public school that these people are coming out of, because certainly the Guidance Departments have the information on the financial aid that's available. They know the packages that are available. You shouldn't have to spend money on and outside entity to advise you on financial aid. You know, the kids obviously don't have the wherewithal to do that.

LEG. NOWICK:

But these young people should -- it would have made your life easier if you could go to somebody and they can say, this is how you fill out your FAS. You both did it, you're strong, you did it. But they are people that get so confused. I was so confused at one point, I was ready to tear up the forms. There should be a guidance there for these young people.

MS. HESKE:

I had some guidance along the way through the school. I got my 50% scholarship, and that's how I chose to go to college, I figured I'd give it a shot anyway. I did that, and I'm in the HEOP Program. Are you familiar with that, the Higher Education Opportunity Program that's out there? It's for academic and financially underprepared

kids. So I have the financial --

LEG. NOWICK:

If kids know about that, they'll never -- this is what I mean. Somebody has to say do them, hey, there's -- there's a program like this, there's a program like this.

MS. HESKE:

But even with that, it was still -- you know, even though they weren't giving you the money to go to college, it was still an issue. Yet my college was still being paid for, you know, from all of this stuff that I had acquired myself, and yet it was still a problem.

18

LEG. NOWICK:

That might be a good business for you to go into. You have first-hand knowledge. Can you imagine helping other people, both of you, your age?

MS. HESKE:

I work in that office right now at the college. I work for the HEOP Office. And I go up and lobby every year in Albany. And Senator Trunzo I had to turn to actually during my struggle, because I had no where else to go. Senator Trunzo's very familiar with my case, and he's helped out a lot too.

LEG. NOWICK:

You're going to write a book one day.

MS. HESKE:

Someday I hope to.

LEG. FISHER:

Mr. Valderrama, did you find that there was any flexibility in the work hours in order to accommodate your course work? I think you mentioned earlier that you had been reading something in the college bulletin and something about the hours, can you expand on that a little bit?

MR. VALDERRAMA:

Basically they had said they had an outline of the amount of work hours you should be doing compared to the amount of credits you're taking. The 21 a week was way above the full time amount of credits. And it did play a big role of pulling me away from my schoolwork. I did have a lot of trouble trying to juggle all the classes, plus the study time. I believe they say it's supposedly double the hours per class you're supposed to be studying. The 21, I had to travel to the work site to be doing a maintenance job --

LEG. FISHER:

Do you have a car?

MR. VALDERRAMA:

My mom was helping me. And basically, to do a maintenance job, which had nothing to do with my major, but it did provide some good work study -- I mean, good, experience but it did take me away from schooling. It did, you know, give me something to -- it put me out of the way as far as my education was concerned.

LEG. FISHER:

Did the hours conflict, though? Were they flexible in the hours that you worked so that it wasn't when you had to be in class? Or did you have to change your class schedule to go to that?

MR. VALDERRAMA:

They were flexible with the hours.

LEG. FISHER:

Okay. Well, that's good.

MR. VALDERRAMA:

Which did help a lot.

LEG. FISHER:

I believe Legislator Foley has a question.

LEG. FOLEY:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank you, Dick, and to the panel for your comments today. It's very timely, the last several days we've been reading articles in the paper about what they're doing on the national level. There's a whole debate going on from the President on down as far as the relationship between welfare to work and education. So what we're discussing here today is being played out throughout the country. But to bring it back to this room, and I thank you for doing this, because it's time we both from the standpoint of what they're doing nationally, but also with the employment plan that will be coming up in September that your comments this months and the next meeting I'm really looking forward to, because between now and then we can review all the documentation that you've submitted and have other people at the dias here so we can have a real full in-depth discussion and debate about how we should make -- what are -- what I think you're saying are some of the systemic changes that you'd like to see. The systemic changes, I see them, through the Chair, not only in the language, but the word you used earlier was the one that I was going to use, there has to be a systemic change in the whole attitude of having encouragement as well as guidance. And perhaps the language that could be changed between now and September or into October with the plan that will be submitted by DSS will be one that will reflect these -- these -- I would call watch words of encouragement and guidance along with the other qualifications that are embedded within -- within the program. But I do look forward to seeing you again next -- at our next meeting so we can debate -- discuss this a little bit further.

The only thing that I would add is, and we haven't discussed it today, but we will, I think one of the important components to fulfilling this -- this goal, and it's a very worth goal, of having additional men and women undertake their educational goals is the need for childcare on campus. That's something that we've discussed in the past, something that we'll have to visit and revisit at the next meeting about that relationship as well as if we're going to have -- whether it's fathers or whether it's mother or whether it's single folks, but if there's a need for child care on campus, that has to be part and parcel of the whole -- of this whole plan, because otherwise it's not going to work.

Getting back to the point of having a work requirement. If, in fact, there can be this flexibility of applicants where some are single parents and others are not, I think the young man would agree that if there's a need -- if there's a need to have some work requirement, that those of us who are a member of colleges, there's more than enough work to go around at any given college, whether it's called work study or something related to that, so you can still be on campus to take care of your academic requirements. But if there is going to be some level of work requirement in addition to the academic requirements, which many campuses have had over the decades as a

condition of some scholarships on campus, you'd also do some work requirements -- work study on campus as well. So that could -- should be, I think, could not only be discussed, but also incorporated into the plans so that if you do have to do work, you don't have to go 5 or 10 miles away, you do it on campus. So you have the twin benefit of the discipline of studying as well as the discipline of work habits, but doing so in the same setting, in the same campus as opposed having to go to some far flung area with a job that is wholly unrelated to what you're pursuing within your undergraduate degree.

MR. KOUBEK:

In fairness, Legislator Foley, DSS does have a number of placements of that nature, where's there's work study at Suffolk Community. Not too many, but they are some case by case.

LEG. FOLEY:

We need to enlarge that.

MR. KOUBEK:

Which brings us to the last we recommendation, which is the heart of the enrollment policy for education, Section 3.5 B, activity enrollment policy. And here you have in bold what the employment plan actually says, in italics, what we would like to add and underline what we would like to delete. And I'll let Bich Ha just quickly go through that with us.

MS. PHAM:

Under this section, this committee would like to stress the need to

expand, not only on the plan, but in practice, the increased access. Currently when we reviewed the language of the plan, it's very -- it's too restrictive. For example, the, you know, over half the welfare participants we're talking about would probably be eligible for job training and vocational training. And the plan says that only those who lack a marketable skill can actually get education and training. Now, what we've seen in practice is if you do not have a high school education, you can even read at a 9th Grade level, and you don't have any work experience, you can actually still be deemed to a marketable skill, because the question then is, can you read a menu, can you ask somebody, you know, what they'd like to order for food. We'll that's a marketable skill. You can then go to be a waitress. And again, we talk about, you know, 87% of welfare recipients are single mothers with two children. Where a waitressing -- unfortunately, a waitressing income is not enough to get her and her family out of poverty. So there's I think many of the welfare recipients we work with say, I would love to work at that job if I could pay my bills and, you know, that's all -- that's goes down the heart of people can people lift themselves out and their families out of poverty.

We think that it should be more towards that section, not the -- only those who lack marketable skills, but those who are deemed to be in need of skills and education that could actually lift them towards a living wage and -- and for their household size.

The seconds section has to be -- has to do with a requirement basically that if you have every been in noncompliance with work rules, you'll be denied education training. Now, one of the first

speakers mentioned that she was actually sanctioned simply because she faxed the document, but didn't call them up and say, hey, I faxed it to you. You know, they admitted they got the fax. So she actually under this restrictive definition would not be eligible for any further approval of education and training site by DOL or DSS. And in one -- previously, when we asked for sanctioned numbers in Suffolk, about an average of 500 households are under sanction at a given time. So that's about a quarter of the caseload who would not be eligible for education training under this restrictive definition.

LEG. FISHER:

You know, Ms. Ha Pham, right? If I could just interrupt you for a moment, because I'm certain that the other Legislators who are sitting behind the horseshoe will have had similar experiences to mine, which is that so many of our constituents call our offices and say, why can't information be given to me over the phone, why do I have to loose time from work, if someone has work or school and tried to negotiate the transportation system that we have, which is inadequate, to get to a DSS office, to wait there all day, to be given information as to what they need to bring to their meeting. And so this is something that I believe we need to address at our meeting, which is why can't clients be told over the phone what they need to bring. Why

sanction somebody who has dealt in good faith and faxed the necessary material. There's seems to be some so much punitive behavior. And I believe it's really important to follow. Do you receive calls like this? I'm sure at your office.

LEG. NOWICK:
(Shaking head yes).

LEG. FISHER:
Where you're told you have to be here, you have to travel three hours, and you have to -- when you go there, they say, well, you were supposed to have X with you. And very often these are elderly people too who have to go through this. I'm sorry to have interrupted you, but it's critical that that's a really important change.

MS. PHAM:
And this subcommittee definitely strongly agrees with that. And we're talking -- you know, when we talk about sanction, we talking about losing your benefits that you would have paid your food, your housing with. Next month you're going to get evicted because you didn't calling the DSS up and say, I faxed it. So, you know, there are lot of important things at risk here. And our last recommendation would just be to -- the client should receive child care transportation supportive services as the pursue their educational activities. And because if -- once you get into the school, you get a scholarship, you have your job -- you know, your job set up, and if -- where DSS and DOL can assist with transportation and child care, they really should, and it's such a barrier. Thank you.

LEG. FISHER:
Thank you all very much. Is that the end?

MR. KOUBEK:
Thank you. I just would conclude with this: The current issue of

America Magazine has an article by a Professor {Angela O'Gorman} on -- it's really an assessment of welfare reform in the context of those kinds ever scary conversations now taking place in the Senate and the House. Because if what you had heard is depressing, it could get a lot worse if the version of welfare reform is reauthorized on October 1st. And so we're keeping our eye on that. But in her article, Professor {O'Gorman} says, and I'm quoting, "One would not be completely out in left field if one wondered whether the real agenda of welfare reform was to create and sustain a pool of low wage labor." That's a chilling question. And I would like to just conclude by saying this is enlightened County, this is certainly an enlightened Legislature. A year ago, almost today, you adopted the Living Wage. That can't be our goal. And by the way, garbagemen make pretty good money, and they're unionized, and they're okay. We're talking about the hamburger flippers who make \$6 an hour and those 37,000 households right now living below poverty here in Suffolk County, households. So we look forward to the next meeting and really tank you for your

attention and the engagement.

LEG. FISHER:

We thank you for being here. I particularly would like to thank Mr. Valderrama and Ms. Heske for coming and certainly providing an example of people who are pursuing an education in order to look for a better life, because that's what the American dream is all about. So we thank you very much for being here.

MR. KOUBEK:

Many of the folks in the audience today, Legislator Fisher, are from various not-for-profits and parish outreach who came to hear this conversation. I know they would like to hear the follow up. If you could tell us the dates of that meeting, I think many of them would like to come back.

LEG. FISHER:

Chris, could you give us the date of the next Social Services meeting, please. It's in late August, because I know our next full Legislative --

MS. REIMANN:

I'll get it for you.

LEG. FISHER:

I don't have my calender open here. I'm going to have the next speakers come up, and before we end the meeting, we will give you the date of the next one. Thank you. By the way, Sister, I had just read the quote in Paul Vitello's article in Newsday today, which has the quote regarding the need for education and the importance of education. And it is a national discussion right now. Thank you. Okay. We do still have speakers who would like to speak with us. And there are -- the first card was filled by Marie Pedato. The date of the next Social Services Committee meeting, Dr. Koubek, will be August 20th.

MR. KOUBEK:

Okay.

MS. PEDATO:

Okay. My name is Marie Pedato.

LEG. FISHER:

How do you do?

MS. PEDATO:

I came to support Dick on everything for education and everything too, cause I have education. I have -- I can't read, so I have a tutor coming to my house and helps me. But their issue too is Social Service. I mean, I'm on SSI, only SSI, and I'm disabled, but my birthdays that I want to bring up that I heard -- I go to Catholic

Charities for my medicine, but then I go -- I have a case manager in Sunrise Clinic, and I hear they want to close it, and I'm very upset about that. And I was down there yesterday to see Doctor {Golm} because to me I think he should be out of it because he's the one that can't keep notes and nothing right.

LEG. FISHER:

Chris, do you know anything about the closing of the center?

MS. REIMANN:

Just what you've read in the paper.

LEG. FISHER:

Yeah.

MS. PEDATO:

And I heard and then I went there yesterday, I was very upset because my case manager picked me up and has to take me to SSI or something and they were saying that they were going to stop the case managers transporting people and we have no other way. Now, I came here on a paratransit bus where I pay \$6 a day. And so when I heard that, they said no, it's in 60 days, a new place had been picked to take over, but to me I'm going to be gone because he can't get nobody there and I feel that that's the way I feel. Because one time I was in stress and I called them up, he says I'm shooting the fire out he's going to call me back and that's not an appropriate thing to say to these poor people. I feel sorry for a lot of people, at least I get around, I get around all over by myself.

LEG. FISHER:

Good for you.

MS. PEDATO:

And I'm 71. And I do volunteer at parish and that parish and helps every one of us.

LEG. FISHER:

Which parish is that, Ms. Pedato?

MS. PEDATO:

Miraculous Medal Church and Ann Druckenmiller is -- needs a big raise.

LEG. FISHER:

Okay. All right.

MS. PEDATO:

That's how I feel, and I mean it. I mean it. To help people I try to help people but I live at Holiday Square and I do things for myself and I have a tutor, he didn't come -- he's not coming today, but I'm going to be getting a computer and everything else. But I wish they look into Sunrise Clinic because them people need that clinic.

LEG. FISHER:

Okay. So there are two thing that we'll be discussing with Social Services, two issues that you're bringing --

MS. PEDATO:

Oh yeah. And by the way --

LEG. FISHER:

-- the closing of the center --

MS. PEDATO:

Yeah, well, that's what I heard but -- rumors.

LEG. FISHER:

Okay.

MS. PEDATO:

And another thing is they closed my case in Medicare for assistance of aides. Now, I went through a lot. My doctor recommended me an aide, you know, for my -- to help me out with my shower and help me do things. They took the aides away from me because this one aide really was with me after hours, then they decided they were going to open my case again only if I went to my psychiatrist, had the paper filled out, I'm not dangerous to myself or others, and then when we had the meeting they rerefused to open the case. And now I get a call from the emergency box, they're trying to take that emergency box out of my home. I went to David Bishop's secretary and I need it and I do need somebody maybe once in a while to help me with my cleaning.

LEG. FISHER:

So Legislator Bishop's Office is following up on this.

MS. PEDATO:

Well, they did it and I haven't heard from them. But Medicare did close my case and my case manager was very upset because I need the person and they said because I threatened somebody, but that's --

LEG. FISHER:

Well, you look very frightening.

MS. PEDATO:

Since '72 -- I've been on my own since '72, I'm a go-getter and -- but I do need assistance and they closed the case, Medicare closed my case and they did not want to reopen it. We went through this meeting and it was like they tore me apart and my case manager, so that's where it's -- that new Medicare nurse came from Premiere said I can do for myself; I can but some things I'm not able to do, but that's all right. But I will support Dick's education for anything they need. I will be anytime you need me.

LEG. FISHER:

Well, thank you very much for taking the time to come here, taking the

bus --

MS. PEDATO:
That's right.

LEG. FISHER:
-- and getting yourself down here.

MS. PEDATO:
And they all need applause, Dick and Ann Druckenmiller.

LEG. FISHER:
Absolutely, they do good work. Thank you very much, Ms. Pedato. Okay. Now I have four cards here, and you're all speaking on the -- you're the Shinnecock Coalition. Tim Rumph, if you could all come up at the same time, Mary Schneider, Carol Hoeffner, and Ken -- is it Drange?

MR. DRANGE:
Yes.

LEG. FISHER:
Thank you very much for being here. How's it going out there?

MR. RUMPH:
Well, we'll tell you.

LEG. FISHER:
Okay.

MR. RUMPH:
Thank you very much for listening to us.

LEG. FISHER:
Would you mind introducing yourself before you speak.

MR. RUMPH:
My name is Tim Rumph, I am a members of the Steering Committee of the Shinnecock Hills Coalition. I live adjacent to the two motels that we're going to talk about; the Southampton Bays Motel as well as the Olympian Motel. And we're hear to speak about the motels within our community, also within your town, the Town the Southampton. Presently we are -- the Town of Southampton is housing 40% of the County's emergency housing people, which is now, I believe -- Ken will talk about -- upwards of 700 families at this point. And what I will do is speak to one portion of it, I'm going to speak about the children and how I got involved.

In March of 2001, my son was assaulted within our house about a quarter mile away from the Southampton Bays Motel in the time that he got home from school and my wife left school, she's a music teacher in the local intermediate school, and got home about five minutes after my son did. And the perpetrator came in through a back door. In our community we had never really had to lock your houses, but now we are having to do that. I was home at lunch time during that day, and

going back to work I saw two young men who I would say didn't belong in our neighborhood based on their dress, based on where they were. And I had thought about going back to lock my home, and I wish I had done that at that point. My son had -- when I got home and we talked, we had a police report done. I visited the Bays Motel with the police officer looking for one of the two young men that I saw. Because in the discussion with my son, he identified one of those young men as the -- one of the people that assaulted him within our house.

Nothing has really transpired since then, and that's when I started to get involved with that. About two weeks after this incident there was a Town Board Work Session with -- in front of the Town Board in Southampton talking about the issues of -- that the emergency housing situation impacting in your town. Since then and being involved with our school, I want to talk about the school district a little bit. Tuckahoe School District is within the Shinnecock Hills area. There are about 300 students in that school that go from Pre-K to 8th Grade. We also along with tuition supply the high school in Southampton with about 150 kids. During the last school year, they were approximately 30 children from the very -- the two -- the three actual emergency housing facilities within our school district attending Tuckahoe, and that's a 10% impact to our little school district.

As you are aware, many of these students have a need for special services. And actually one student cost our district \$70,000 that one year to educate. And -- which was obviously not budgeted, and it has been promised to the school district that we're going to be reimbursed for those services, but it's been my -- my look at the process appears that it might take two to three years for us to retain -- regain that money. This past spring the students in the school district as well as the residents of those two motels got to a point where they were members of your community who were afraid to come our their home. And during that time the Steering Committee started to meet. The principal of Tuckahoe School asked me as a chaperone to my 5th Grade -- my son's 5th Grade trip to Mystic Seaport to pick up one of the children who had been living in the Motel the entire year and bring her to the school and escort her on the trip. We had to be -- I had to pick that young child up at 5:00 a.m. in the morning. The mother wouldn't let me leave until she met me. And I had an occasion to be in the motel room with her and her four other kids. And it was when atrocious of what I saw.

So it just starts to look at part of the living conditions with no on-site supervision, no on-site programs for any of these children that are living there. These children basically take to the streets. They harass the neighbors, they've killed wildlife, which Mary and Carol will speak about, they vandalize property. I got a call from a woman over the weekend who is on a heart monitor in her early 60s, lives at the end of the street, is renting, and is -- wouldn't even tell me where she lived because she's afraid of being retaliated against, of the kids coming down to the end of the road, throwing rocks, trying to kill the wildlife. She would come out and try to get them to stop, and they realizing her frailty have actually trespassed on her property, urinated on her deck, and she's afraid. And I was hoping she was going to come with us today, but she didn't call me back, I don't know where she lives.

So part of -- part of this also is, and we've as a committee and as a coalition have talked about possible solutions, and the things that we'd like to see and your committee to possibly look at is the modification of existing facilities. We've heard that there may be some nursing home facilities that are vacant within the County or maybe other facilities that could be modified, renovated, to -- to act as shelters. We had a Town Board meeting probably in the middle -- the end of June, and the DSS representatives came out. And we learned that the motels -- the housing in the motels are for the -- what was called the worst of the worst. These were the people that could not live in shelters. So what the County has done and DSS has done is put these people in motels where there is no supervision and left to fend for themselves.

So part of what we're asking you to do as the committee is to look at the building of new shelters to house the additional influx of the homeless where they can be properly cared for; health care, transportation, maybe there's some job training or some things that you were talking about earlier with the -- with the people here before. I mean, maybe there's a combination or some symbiotic relationship that can be created with this.

Secondly, there might be coordination and modification of existing guidelines to allow for the County to look at individual homes, possibly. We've -- we've heard that the rent of a single family home might be \$1500. In this case now, the County is paying \$4000 a month for a motel unit to house these people. Part of problem with the town is -- is the motels that are being used are transient motels. And in the zoning categories of the town, people are not allowed to stay in those motels for more than a week based on the zoning. And what the County is doing is circumventing the zoning of the town. There are no kitchen facilities. These motels are away from any sort of supermarkets, any kind of facilities that are needed. So it -- we'd ask that the County look at the enforcement of existing state, county and town zoning criteria, which would stop the use of these motels because of the lack of space, cooking facilities, insupportive services, health care, food, transportation, etcetera. And perhaps -- what we talked about a little before is perhaps there's a way to increase or establish a job training program, an educational program for these children and also the parents of the child, these children. And I'll let Ken and Mary and everybody go. Thank you very much.

LEG. FISHER:

Thank you Mr. Rumph.

MS. SCHNEIDER:

Hi. Good morning.

LEG. FISHER:

Good morning. Oh, it's afternoon now.

MS. SCHNEIDER:

I was just thinking that. On June 18th I made you aware of the safety

concerns in the neighborhood as a direct result of the residents of the motels. And within 48 hours, Social Services had taken action and a patrol person was put on, security was there. Until 5th, Social

Services was supplying security. And I believe they were two gentlemen at a time, they were driving around in the car through our streets. And things did seem to improve somewhat. However, as of July 5th, the motel owner had to begin supplying security. Every once in a while I will see somebody sitting on a bench at the motel. That is all I see.

Since then a nine year old boy and his father have knocked on our doors looking for milk, money or work. A nine year old boy should not be knocking on a door at 7:30 in the morning looking for a job. Granted, he has the right idea, however, that's not the way to go about it. Mail is being stolen from mail boxes, the neighbors have gone to the Post Office as well as the police. Just this Saturday night a group of children probably around ten, eleven years of old -- ten to eleven years of age were playing on the street at 11:30 at night unsupervised. Last weekend the police were at my house, I came home, the police were there. Three of neighbors had called because there were children as young as five playing on the docks, which we don't even walk on the docks, because it's not that secure, unsupervised. The police, they went down to talk to the kids, they kids came back with bigger kids mouthing off to the neighbors, so they called the police. There's a police report on that. And along with the security that's an issue that you can immediately take care of next week, I'm also concerned -- the long term effects of these children. On June 21st, two representatives from DSS at our Town Hall meeting stated that 80 children alone were living just in one motel by my house, the Southampton Bays Resort, 80 children. Of the those 80 children, how many are at risk educationally? I'm an educator, I can pretty much guarantee that 75% of those children are at least one school year behind in reading. As that girl said before, she was in 12th Grade before they found out she was on a 5th Grade reading level. That's -- I guarantee these children are in the same situation.

LEG. FISHER:

And you had stated at a previous meeting -- I'm sorry to interrupt -- that you had been there during the day during school days sometimes with your baby, and you saw a six year old child.

MS. SCHNEIDER:

They were playing in the yard. They're school aged children playing in the road, playing in the parking lot, and that's my concern. Now it's summer, and every school I've worked in has had a summer reading program for the children at risk. These children are still playing in the parking lot. If they're playing in the parking lot during the school year and they're at risk to begin with, in the summer they should also be in a school setting for reading. Studies show that children who are at risk fall further behind during the summer break

if they're not stimulated during that time.

LEG. FISHER:

You wanted to just pass her the phone so she can turn it off. Otherwise it will continue to distract you.

MS. SCHNEIDER:

Sorry. My question is in 15 years of these 80 children, are they still going to be going from motel to motel? Hearing the young woman

29

and the young man speak today about college, I went through college, worked full time, put myself through. I'm thinking of not the college age, that's an important issue, but the five year olds, the six year olds, the seven year olds, if they see their parents being moved from motel to motel, what is goes to motivate them? If they can't read now, how will they read in 8th Grade? How will they read when it's time for them to become -- whatever happens next week with the Work Study Education Program?

LEG. FISHER:

And they're not even being providing access to education at this age.

MS. SCHNEIDER:

No, they are not. I mean, security right now is an issue that you can take care, and I ask you to take care of it, not only for the motel residents, but for the neighborhood residents as well. But maybe next summer a program can be enacted, I don't how quickly things move, but where the children in the motels are given a summer reading program. They can't keep falling behind. If there's 80 right now in one motel on one given day, in 15 years, how many will be there? It's scary. And that's I know important -- education is important to everyone up here, and that's what I have to say.

LEG. FISHER:

Well, thank you very much. When we spoke of supervision, if you recall in the previous meetings, I had asked Deputy Commissioner Diaz about supervision, you know, social work, people making sure that kids are going to school. Your concern at that time was that if these kids are out here now, we dread the summer and what it's going to be.

MS. SCHNEIDER:

Right.

LEG. FISHER:

Those were your words at that time, I believe.

MS. SCHNEIDER:

Now there are children -- just yesterday they were rollerblading up and down the street. I mean, they're not hurting anything, but they're -- again, they're not supervised, they're ten years old, they're rollerblading up and down the street alone, playing on the docks alone. I mean, we don't want to -- the docks are not stable,

anyone could fall, bump their head, be in the water, and we can't see them. You know --

LEG. FISHER:

Now, have there been any more attacks, I know that you had seen the swan that had been killed, and there was the man walking his ten month old baby who was hit by a rock, has there been anything like that since the summer has begun?

MS. SCHNEIDER:

Just what the Tim just stated about the woman on her property is all I've heard. And the rest I've heard is just -- I know -- the man coming to the door, my neighbor, she was here with me in May, I believe. Her baby's due in two weeks, she was home alone with her two

year old and her four year old and he tried to get in her house, he had his foot wedged in the door. She was shaking so hard, she was terrified when she called the police, they said, well, stay home. She's not staying home to wait for the police, she was terrified. Her husband wasn't home. So they wouldn't even fill out a report. I mean, now it's going door to door asking for things. I don't know personally of anything other than what Tim told me. But I do know of the mail and I do know of door to door instances.

LEG. FISHER:

Well, thank you very much. Are you speaking next, Ms. Hoeffner?

MS. HOEFFNER:

Good afternoon, Carol Hoeffner. Again, I don't have as much as they had to say. I've been a resident in the area, summer resident, for 47 years. And again, as Tim said, we've never had to lock our doors or be afraid that our homes were going to be broken into, our bodies hurt, our things taken. Now we lock your doors. There's a lot of older people in this area that have retired now and live there full time. They don't come out. They stay in, and they're afraid to even come to the -- to the meetings or to call and talk about things because they're afraid of repercussions from these people.

The other night -- over -- there is an town boat ramp across from us. There was a whole big group over there, that was an episode where there were two little children on a weekday. There's a partial dock that extends out into the water, little kids in the middle of the afternoon were out on this dock, nobody there. If they fell out off of this, what's left of the dock, bye-bye, because there's a deep channel there. This -- this Social Services really gets me crazy. In the way these people talk with the education here before, and education is very necessary, that we're paying \$4000 a month for a room, that could go an awful long way towards getting these people out of this slump that they are in. That's -- that's absolutely ludicrous. And these people are going to -- there's a -- in the Catholic Church in Southampton there's a pantry where people can go for groceries and food, these people, there's an additional 45

families that are now going to this pantry, and they're out of goods. They're going there and getting soap. This motel doesn't even provide them with soap for \$4000 a room, and it's -- it's absolutely ridiculous. It's -- it drives me crazy. To sit and listen to the numbers that Social Services -- you know, when we were here last time, when the man who had gotten arrested because he forced his wife out of the car, do you remember that? He was arrested, she was drunk, driving with the kids. And he sat here and he said he would help Social Services because he really thought that they really needed to be revamped, and I go along with him now. I think I'd help too, because the monies that they spend could be spent so much more wisely. And when you call on the phone and say to them, well, why can't you rent a house for a lot less money per month and get them started, oh, well, then the government -- that's not the way the rules are, we wouldn't get reimbursed from the federal government. So instead of spending, I would think you could get a decent house for a thousand dollars in certain areas of Suffolk County without any problem, instead of spending \$4000. That additional monies could be to get these people to maybe to the {VESID} or to a BOCES training program or

these children being taken care of and not having to knock on doors. I think it's a whole revamp, and I don't want to have to lock my door.

LEG. FISHER:

Thank you very much, Ms. Hoeffner. Mr. Drange.

MR. DRANGE:

My name is Ken Drange, 11 years ago I was an Executive Director under contract to La Union Hispanica to help straighten out their financial situation and to improve the quality of their services. I was the first Caucasian to ever head an Hispanic organization. And I remember you, Mr. Caracciolo, you were there, almost everyone else has changed since then, but it seems that many of the arguments and concerns that are presented now a days keep reoccurring. I was listening to the committee or subcommittee earlier on college education. I also happen to be an adjunct professor for 28 years.

Now, one of my introductory statements to each one of my students, I ask how many are here on scholarships, how many are aware that there are scholarships, or how many of you are aware that the college offers them, but you have to apply while you are still in high school. 99.9%, none of them are aware of it. I then point out to scholarships that are available to those who already enrolled. Now my family and I have supported scholarships each and every semester for the past 25 years. There are books that are put together by the college, and I wish that Brian Foley were here, because his father and I and others worked to develop many of the scholarship programs that ultimately are brought about because of the need -- the increased need of not intervention as a very early age, as Mary has addressed, that's part of it.

Our other concern is going to be safety and cost, which is what I'm

going to primarily address, but let me to suffice say that in college as well as at the Community College level, the four year college level, it is almost entirely possible for a motivated student with a work study program both on and off campus working 17 hours a week to complete a regular curriculum in two to two and a half years. And if their grade point average is at least a B, they are at least qualified for an 50% scholarship, if it's a 3.5, almost a full scholarship, and if it's 3.7 or better, they're guaranteed a full scholarship. So the cost for a motivated student who is willing to put in the effort, it's there, but that's later intervention, which I wholeheartedly endorse as a college professor.

However, as a resident, as a financial planner, I'm here to address another issue and that is cost. Tim began this presentation by mentioning 70,00 for a special student. This past year, we had seven of them in our community. That represents half a million dollars out of our budget. We had several other students who were dysfunctional. Now, I'm not making this up, this is a presentation of our school Superintendent, Dr. Mensch, who came and presented along with us to our Southampton Town Council. So the school is not only being stretched in terms of its walls, but we've had instructors who have said they can no longer teach effectively because of the disruption of many of these dysfunctional students, and even more, dysfunctional families where they can't be picked up, they can't feed them, they

32

couldn't do a variety of other things. These are the students who stay in our district.

For those who must be bussed, they have to get up at 5:00 or 5:15 each and every mornings to be bussed for an hour and a half to two and a half hours so that they'll be able to get to school on time, without breakfast. The same things happens each and every afternoon, where it's going to take an hour and a half to two and a half hours. So if education concern for the very young -- let me tell you, this is dropping the ball big time. And it has to do with placement of where these students are, not to mention the crime which I'll get into in a moment. But equally important is up to 4000 a month for a family unit. Now you heard from Tim where he picked up one student and dropped them off for a program, which also feeds them, I might add. Four thousand a month does not include the storage of their furnishings, does not include the cost of taxis and transportation, does not include the cost of education.

If you were to add up the cost and then decide by the number of families in our motels, we're talking close to \$7000 a month for these type of families in emergency shelters. Now, I will agree with Social Services and say, well, the average tenure is only going to be a certain number of months, but you also have to look at the ongoing balance. It's not just it stops with this family, because there are others that replace them on an ongoing basis. \$37.7 million is budgeted. I spent some time with the earlier committee just

listening, for example, to many of the questions and responses. \$37.7 million, that's 14% increase in the past year, and it still doesn't meet the need. And what they're essentially doing is throwing money at a problem and the problem's not going away. It's a built in entrapment of people in the system.

When you think in terms of people being disallowed for not obtaining appropriate education, what you're doing is guaranteed future welfare recipients. What we need is an early intervention in both education and how people are treated. Now, when I talked with Dennis Nowack, who is very communicative and explains whenever I asked him a question, he's indicated there are three types of support versus a level two where you have the group homes where all sorts of services are provided. And typically it costs for a family in that type of environment about 1200 a month exclusive of educational cost. But they have security, they have infrastructure, they provide bussing and services at that site. They're supervised. And as Tim did mention, when they can't survive in that type of environment, by that I mean they don't conform to the rules of that type of facility, they're dumped on us in the community unsupervised. Wow. They can't live in a supervised community so they're -- we're now the victims, we're the prey. When we complain about security and safety, we are met with, well, we'll put security in. And they put someone who 19, 20, 21 in who's there in the motel, but is merely is physical presence, he or she cannot actually act as a police officer or a peace officer. They have to call the police themselves. So really nothing is being done, and it's only in that motel. We in the community are still the victims as well as the youngsters who are put in this type of circumstance.

So what is the quality of their life? What is the quality of our life? Not only are we spending a tremendous amount of additional funds, wasted funds, but we are creating the future for a new welfare recipients. We're not advancing them, we're not advancing the community, and we're not advancing the county. Now, when I've talked to people at the federal, at the state and at the local levels, including the County and our local government each one points to their left in a circle, well, we can't do it because the County restricts us. Their definition of what is an emergency homeless person is redefined. When I talked with folks at the County level, and we have, collectively and individually, they say, well, the state has redefined what we're allowed to give for a house. A two or three bedroom house is restricted in Suffolk County to 1200 and small changes per month.

Now, I don't know about you, but in our community when a local house -- I mean, a basic house goes for 25 or 30,000 for summer months and maybe 2000 for the balance of a year, rental, I don't know of too many houses that are going to get -- be willing to rent out for 1200 a month. Now, in some of your communities perhaps there may be. But it is completely discretionary other than a type two type of house; group

or modified group home. What this means as far as the community is concerned is that we now fall victim to emergency shelters because there are no voluntary groups who are stepping up to buy these facilities and to manage them for the benefit of these future potential welfare recipients and abusers of the system. I'm not saying willingly, they're trapped. But we are the victims too. And we are suggesting to you that at the local level, meaning in our individual townships, at the County level, which everyone here represents our own local communities, but what we're finding is you need the will to do something collectively and individually. And I'm not seeing and hearing that. What I am hearing and seeing is, yes, it's very nice that you want intellectual insight and understanding of the problem, but I haven't seen any collective action. This is not a problem that's new. Yet here I am, both Tim and the others have presented that there are viable financial solutions if enacted could help solve the problem for the communities, for these individuals. I've asked Mr. Pollert if I could meet with him to discuss specifically the budgets in terms of these particular groups. I'm well aware that there are state requirements and federal mandates that you cannot use their block grants for capital expenditures, building homes. They'd rather fritter it away by saying, we're going to perpetuate the system and give you 1200 or 4000 a month plus, we'd rather have you spend it that way.

Now I know Allan Binder and the Financial Committee talked about the accelerator clause, when you have a budget slow down and your taxes collected are less, you have to cut back the 17 million or you have to increase your taxes to make up the budget shortfall. Well, here's a way to do it. Set \$37.7 million is the current projected budget for this coming year. You can save several of millions of dollars by addressing it by thinking in terms of Type II homes, by working at the state, at your level and at the community level. But equally important is we've done an analysis in terms of what is taking place and where these people are placed. Of the eight communities that take in the homeless and emergency shelters, only six has regular full-time individual placements in motels. Of those ten facilities, four of

them are in our community. Now, we represent less than 5% of the population of Suffolk County. Wow. What about the other ten districts, and I have a list of them, and I'll enter it into the record. But the point is there's got to be equitable distribution. What are we doing to increase the amount that the state and the County is willing to pay for appropriate rental units? Eleven hundred dollars for Utica for example wouldn't fly here. So there is some discretion as to cost of living, but it's rather limited as Dennis and the rest of DSS will tell you. Twelve hundred and change, you can't get beans here in Suffolk County for 1200 and change. Wouldn't it make sense to increase the limit to 15, 1600 per month, rather than 4000? Wouldn't it be safer to distribute many of these recipients into communities where they'd have some pride and dignity in having their own home?

LEG. FISHER:

Paul, before go away I have a question for you regarding what this gentleman is saying. I'm sorry, may I interrupt you for just one second to ask Counsel, what would be the process that would have to be followed to have the state raise that limit of what the County could pay for a single home to house -- to shelter homeless people?

MR. SABATINO:

I'd have to get state legislation, which means that the County would to precipitate that have to adopt a memorializing resolution requesting the state to take some particular act, then somebody in the state would have to be --

LEG. FISHER:

But we could request from our Assembly people and Senators to introduce legislation on the state level.

MR. SABATINO:

That's the key. The key is somebody up there would then have to --

MR. DRANGE:

Both Assemblyman Thiele as well as Senator LaValle have sponsored various resolution that has to deal primarily with enforcing existing laws, such as having a kitchen, having appropriate food saving facilities and cooking facilities.

LEG. FISHER:

But to your knowledge have they put in any legislation asking for that ceiling to be raised?

MR. DRANGE:

Yes-- ceiling, no. You're talking budgetary, no.

LEG. FISHER:

Budgetary, yeah, the \$1200 so that we -- because as you said, paying \$1200 for a home in Syracuse or a home in, you know, UpState, New York is not the same as paying \$1200 in -- what are we, the highest real estate market in the country, as far as rental costs are concerned, so we should have some kind of equitable balance there. But as far as you know though there has been no legislation --

MR. DRANGE:

None.

LEG. FISHER:

-- introduced on the state level.

MR. RUMPH:

Ms. Fisher, if I might. Mary and I and {Lara Brown} met with Fred Thiele about ten days ago, and he intimated to us that there was more discretion that the County had on this issue than what we were being

told. And I'm just wondering whether there may be -- may be some discussion with -- with Senator LaValle's Office, with Assemblyman Thiele's Office that the committee could have. And perhaps, you know, again, we seem to be as Ken says, everybody sort of passing -- you know, pointing to the left and it keeps going around in a circle. But, you know, Fred Thiele did say that he thought the County had more discretion than what we are being told at this point.

LEG. FISHER:

And we weren't trying to pass the buck with that question. I'm just trying to see how we could reach a solution --

LEG. CARACCIOLO:

Madam Chair.

LEG. FISHER:

-- so that we can address the question. Legislator Caracciolo.

LEG. CARACCIOLO:

Yes. Thank you. You know -- and I appreciate your reference to me being on this horseshoe a long time, and it seems some problems like this one never seem to go away. And they don't go away because, as you pointed out very correctly, you have elected official after elected official pointing at somebody else and blaming somebody else for not fixing the problem. And it will continue to be that way ten years from now unless we begin today, instead of talking about the problem, doing something about the problem. Now I've sat here for the last hour 45 minutes very patiently listening to all this discussion about problems and how to solve problems, and these meetings come and go and sometimes we're successful with initiatives to change things, sometime we're not. In this instance, we cannot unilaterally be successful unless the other stakeholders; the federal, state, town governments interact with our DSS Department and other who like yourselves, community members and activists who want this problem addressed.

So what I'm going to suggest, and I'll you be happy to organize it, a meeting with those state and federal officials all together in one room so we can begin a dialog that finally, if it requires federal legislation, if this requires state legislation or regulation change or something we can do unilaterally, then let's do it. Let's stop talking about it.

MR. DRANGE:

Sir, exactly in that note, Fred Thiele and Senator LaValle attempted to have DSS State Commissioner Wing come down here and meet with us

collectively as you have suggested. He did defer. As a result, we were left with meeting with Mr. Thiele, and he is as frustrated as you on this committee are. But one of the reasons that I am not just presenting an overview, but it is hitting every taxpayer in this room and outside this room in Suffolk County, and I mean really hitting it.

That's one reason I did request some time with Mr. Pollert so that we can do some real numbers for you on a County-wide. I don't think we can do it effectively at our juncture for the state, but we're talking hundreds of millions of dollars negative impact at a time when our economy and your tax collection to run the County is being severely pinched. It makes common sense to look at this and say by giving them the appropriate services to improve their education at a lower cost per family unit. It just makes common sense, but more importantly, what you're doing is drying up that future need in terms of welfare recipients who are not educated, who have dropped out of the system, who are now victims, and we are joining them in being victimized, not only in our pocket, but with the additional increases in crime and reduced quality of life. We are all victims here.

So what is it solution? It's no longer can we just sit by and just observe this and say, oh, my land value is going up or down or they're not in my community, it's not my problem. That's not a viable choice because in ten years, as you've suggested, we'll be going through -- or my replacement will be going through the same thing, you'll be nodding your heads and empathizing, but when do you break this cycle? I mean, there are a number of activists not only me and others in this room, but outside this room. When we try to make the point, in many cases people who are very budget conscious will say, oh, you are breaking my heart, but we can't change anything. However, what I am trying today to do to counterbalance the real victimization in terms of crime of both children and the community members is I'm trying to point out not only to you, but to everyone else who read or listen to this is that it has a very real cost in dollars and cents, not just the human sense. And unless we really take action, it's going to continue, it's going to get worse. And we talk about the quality of life, the lack of respect for rule of law, what do you thing we're talking about with this?

LEG. CARACCILO:

Mr. Drange, you point out again that the victimization that takes place here begins with those who are in these facilities. It extends to the members of the communities like yourselves, it extends to every taxpayer who has to foot the bill for this inept system that refuses to address this problem collectively. You know, for decades in this nation, we had welfare. It started the out as a good thing. It started out during the Depression for those who really had a need. And then because of bureaucracies and policies in Washington and elsewhere, it grew into this bureaucracy that was totally out of control. Ten years ago, we began in this country in a bipartisan way to change that. I'm hopeful that in a bipartisan way to the extent we in County government can change that, break that cycle here, we may not be able to control what they do elsewhere in the state or in the other 49 states, but if we can make a difference to the people we represent, then we will have done part of our job. I'm committed to doing that with you and the members of your committee, and I will be in touch with you after today's meeting to begin that process.

MR. RUMPH:

Part of why we're here is to offer our help to do this. I mean, many of us here are, you know, we have families, we work and we're taxpayers in the County, and we want to assist you in helping get this done. We thank you for your time.

LEG. FISHER:

Well, we thank you for being here. Again, at the last meeting, I had requested that there be security. It's unfortunate that there was only security until July 5th. And I'm perplexed by that, but I will be following up with that, with Social Services.

MS. SCHNEIDER:

Social Service -- right, DSS supplied the security up until July 5th, at which point the motel owner had to supply it himself. And I do -- what I meant to add before is I believe it was July 7th, July 5th was their start date. And it was like I said, just a warm body on a bench. Not too long after that, I was upstairs in my house which is three backyards away, pretty far away, and I heard fighting. It was so severe, the language, and we all know three year olds repeat everything. I called the police because I honestly was waiting for a gun shot. I called the police to go to the motel. I did not want to know what was going on. He came to my house, and I said, don't they have security, and he goes, yeah, but the security guy said it was no big deal. I'm three houses away feeling like it's in my backyard. And also, last night, I ran upstairs thinking my baby fell from the screams, it was from the motel. That's how loud it is with my air conditioner on that I thought it was my own child. It was three yards away. So the motel security -- there's body, there's no action, there's nothing, he's not doing anything. And like I said, when DSS supplied the security, he was patrolling in the car, and we did feel better. But now we're back to where we were in June.

LEG. FISHER:

Right. Okay. And you shouldn't be back to that point. And, of course, we have spoken about many other issues that have to be addressed. And we will continue to work on it. We're not just the going to let it drop. And you'll be hearing from us. Thank you.

MR. RUMPH:

Thank you.

LEG. FISHER:

If there is -- yes, I see a hand. Mr. Quinn.

MR. QUINN:

Thank you, Vivian. My name is Peter Quinn, Long Island Coalition for Democracy. I too came here after reading Paul Vittelo's article. As a former educator, I'm also encouraged by any effort to improve education in any way, shape or form. And so I applaud the comments of Dennis Nowack to say that education has a valuable place in our democracy. But after listening to some of the comments that have been made today, particularly yours, Legislator Fisher, about the punitive nature of some of the comments that emanate from Department of Labor and the Department of Social Services, I just wanted to add a suggestion that perhaps there's needs to be some sensitivity training for employees in those

departments who work with these individuals who seek to use -- to become educated and are turned away. That doesn't seem to me the way that either of those two departments ought to be functioning.

LEG. FISHER:

That's certainly critical in the training of any person who is dealing with the public, especially someone who is at -- often when they're coming to these agencies, they're people who are at a very difficult junction in their lives, and they certainly do need to be treated with sensitivity and caring.

MR. QUINN:

In addition, I'm concerned about this year's budget. We're talking about \$70 million shortfall in revenues, but I'm more vitally concerned about what Paul Vittelo's article said about the personal responsibility act and the fact that the federal government expires its contribution this year to counties and states. So that we have a federal mandate that eliminates their own responsibility and shifts it to state and local governments. And the impact of that according to Vitello's article is that there will be federal funding lost in other 1000 cases. Well, if I understand the math, it seems to me there were 2000 who were eligible for the -- who are on the Welfare Work College Program. There were only 180 currently receiving it, they were eligible for 600. What will be the impact of that federal financial loss on the potential for getting those 600 people into education? And that bothers me terribly.

LEG. FISHER:

And it's part of the national debate going on right now, the Senate bill is quite different from the Congress.

MR. QUINN:

In addition, Bush seeks to expand the hours of work from 30 to 40. Obviously another negative impact on the potential for public education, but I will --

LEG. FISHER:

Sees education as a loop hole.

MR. QUINN:

Yes. But I wanted to encourage you to invite some other people to the table when you hold this next meeting. There is a Guidance Council group for Suffolk County. One person -- I don't know who it is -- is in charge, representing all the Guidance Counselors at the public schools in Suffolk County. It would seem to me prudent to extend an invitation to that person or a representative so that as one the earlier speakers here said, all of this information about financing is not being conveyed to students at the high school level as they prepare for college. And if there were a packet provided to the each of the guidance counselors at the high school level about the financial arrangements that they can get under the personal responsibility act, then perhaps they would have ready access, the guidance counselor can guide them through the steps at the school, rather than having them discover it in their second year of college.

LEG. FISHER:

I think that's exactly what we were suggesting here, that while the

39

students are still in high school that they know what's available to them, and I think the suggestion that we have somebody representing guidance counselors be a part of the dialog.

MR. QUINN:

The superintendents also have a group, and perhaps one repetitive from the Suffolk County Superintendents Association could be extended an invitation. And there is an Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association and conceivably somebody from that group could be represented as well, because I think you have to bring an awful lot of people to the table to make them all fully aware so that they're working together. We talk about partnerships, but if you leave some of the people out, then there's always someone who's missed -- because they information, then these young people who are trying to get an education are denied it. I thank you very much.

LEG. FISHER:

Thank you for being here, Peter. Thank you for your input, always welcome. Are there any other comments, questions? If not, I'll make a motion to adjourn the meeting.

LEG. CARACCIOLO:

There's one resolution.

LEG. FISHER:

I thought we voted on that at the beginning. We voted at the beginning of the meeting. It was tabled. It was tabled. Would you like to --

LEG. CARACCIOLO:

Cast my vote with the majority.

LEG. FISHER:

So noted. There's a motion to adjourn, seconded by Legislator Caracciolo. We stand adjourned.

(*THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 1:45 P.M.*)

{ } DENOTES BEING SPELLED PHONETICALLY

40