

Joint Citizen Review Panels for Child Protective Services

Meeting Summary
June 11, 2024 • 10:00 a.m.

Attendees:

Eastern Panel Members

Kathy Halas
Mary McCarthy
Carrie Smith
Kellyann Kostyal-Larrier
JoAnn Merriman

NYC Panel Members

David Lansner
Jocelyn Brown
Marion White
Mathea Rubin
Wayne Ho

Western Panel Members

John Treahy
Ellen Kennedy

WRI Solutions

Kerri Barglof
Rumi Sarkar
Darlene Ward

Guests

Brad Hansen (*Public Policy Director, Families Together in New York State, Inc.*)

Welcome

The meeting commenced at 10:03 a.m.

Addressing Child Poverty & Target Legislation Outcomes

Brad Hansen, the Public Policy Director at Families Together in New York State, Inc. discussed the challenges faced by families and young people affected by social service systems, emphasizing the need for prevention services to address issues like poverty and housing insecurity. He expressed frustration over the slow pace of progress in Albany. Still, he highlighted the efforts of the New York Child Poverty Coalition, led by the Schuyler Center, in promoting child poverty reduction and influencing the state's Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council. Brad reviewed the progress made in New York State's poverty alleviation over the past two years, noting achievements like universal school meals and the growing momentum around direct cash transfer projects, including the 'Bridge Project' and 'Youth and Power'. He proposed the 'Milk Allowance for Mothers and Infants for Lasting Change' project and acknowledged political challenges and funding restrictions.

A discussion surrounded the workforce crisis, the need to support childcare, and housing affordability issues. They reviewed the governor's plan to extend Medicaid and Child Health Plus coverage for children up to age six, the expansion of the housing access voucher program, and the 'Good Cause' bill to prevent evictions. Brad proposed creating a Social Housing Development Authority to fund affordable housing projects but noted the current program's reliance on landlords' cooperation. Brad also highlighted the housing difficulties faced by families due to child welfare system requirements, leading to instability and homelessness. He introduced the Child and Family Wellbeing Fund and a strategy involving participatory budgeting to address child poverty and welfare issues. Kathy and Brad discussed the influence of donors and the real estate

lobby on housing decisions, shared a report linking economic supports to reduced child welfare involvement, and reviewed legislative amendments related to foster care and adoption.

Debrief

David highlighted challenges in passing bills due to Senate majority leader intervention, prompting the team to discuss opposition reasons and the need for Senate engagement. Disappointment was expressed over unresolved 2024 session issues, with a suggestion to investigate the opposition. The Governor's task force on poverty aims to reduce poverty by 50% in ten years, and Kathy shared insights from the Governor's childcare task force. The effectiveness of task forces was debated, with skepticism from Panel members. Mary proposed a roundtable discussion, while Ellen suggested publicizing task force work to pressure the government. The team agreed to further consider this, focusing on key task forces.

Concerns were raised about New York State's population decline due to families moving for lower taxes, cheaper housing, and childcare. A suggestion was made for discussions with key leaders, with some Panel members agreeing to participate. A proposition to address child neglect and abuse by focusing on state mistreatment was made, but some argued the issue lies in systemic actions.

The group discussed strategies to effect change and overcome political frustration, agreeing on highlighting positive actions, engaging key decision-makers, and using positive messaging. They identified political obstacles as the main roadblock to improving housing, childcare, child welfare, and poverty. Proposals included a citizen review panel forum and enhancements to the annual report to provoke legislative action. A follow-up meeting was planned to finalize the roundtable and report theme, with Kerri organizing the date.

October Roundtable

The Panels proposed a possible roundtable aiming to engage with Senator Brisport and task forces focused on childcare, social housing, and poverty. The team plans to collaborate with SCAANY on the agenda, with WRI facilitating the meeting.

Annual Report

Due to time constraints, the Panels opted to table 2024 annual report discussions to their next meeting.

Meeting Adjourned: 12:00 p.m.