



COMMITTEE WEEK UPDATE FOR THE UPCOMING 2012 SESSION
Friday, October 21, 2011
Conclusion of Committee Week 3

We have just concluded the third of the scheduled interim committee weeks before the January start of the 2012 Session. Like last committee week, this week's agenda was primarily focused around state agency LBR and budget reduction presentations and re-districting.

On Tuesday, Oct. 18th:

The **House Criminal Justice Committee** met and heard HB1277 relating to inmate reentry by Porth. With a promise to strike the bill and rewrite it with tougher guidelines, the committee passed it. HB183 relating to pretrial substance abuse programs by Moratis passed unanimously along with its Senate counter part, SB186 by Ring in the **Senate Judiciary** committee meeting.

Senate Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee met from 10:45-12:30. The committee heard presentations from Claude Hendon, Staff Director for Senator Negron's committee, Health and Human Services Appropriations, regarding Interim Project 2012-19, Crisis Stabilization Units and Interim Project 2012-108, Forensic Mental Health System (both presentations are attached in this email). In the CSU presentation Hendon suggested reducing the number of Baker Act funded CSU beds for children, conduct a detailed analysis of utilization rates, develop alternative payment methods for CSU and amend managing entities. Karen Koch testified before the committee. Her testimony focused on educating the committee as to the difficulty of closing beds by looking at average utilization rates and the value gained by DCF by purchasing beds based on availability. Senator Storms asked Koch specifically if she believed CSUs were selling state beds to other payers which Koch answered absolutely not.

Chair Storms asked why the presentation was brought to her committee since the study and potential legislation will come from the Senate Health and Human Services Appropriations. She then asked Senator Rich, who serves on both this committee and is also Vice Chair of HHS Approp. to take the lead. Senator Rich agreed. Council staff caught up with Senator Rich at the end of the meeting and she looks forward to the Council's input on all matters. Council staff will meet with both her and Senator Storms next committee week.

Tuesday afternoon both Bob Sharpe and Karen Koch met with the Governor's staff to share our legislative priorities and to "feel out" the Governor's thoughts this year on MH and SA funding. They along with Allison Hunt met with Jane Johnson, the Governor's Health Care Policy Coordinator and Jen Ungru, Deputy Chief of Staff. Governor's staff did not promise any cuts to the mental health and substance abuse and echoed Senator Negron's push for more data. Deputy Chief of Staff Jen Ungru strongly supported Secretary Wilkins's position regarding the reissuing the ME ITN's however there was

strong support for trying to find funding for one of the Council's priorities regarding Smoking Cessation funding for persons with severe mental illness.

On Wednesday, Oct. 19th

The **House Justice Appropriations Committee** heard LBR presentations from the Department of Juvenile Justice and the Department of Corrections.

The **House Health and Human Services Access Committee** chaired by Representative Baxley heard a presentation by Florida Coalition for Children on community based care. The presentation was an "ask" by the Coalition. It was a brief overview on all of their improvements over the past 4 years with no details. They went into no detail on behavioral health.

The **House Health Care Appropriations Committee** heard the latest 10% budget cut exercise from the Department of Children and Families. Nevin Smith, the Department's CFO, presented (a copy of his power point presentation is in the attached committee packet). DCF chose to reduce mental health funding by 32.5%, substance abuse funding by 27.4%, and cut children's community mental health CSU's in the exercise. Mr. Smith stated by holding DCF's "core" services (child welfare and child and adult protection) harmless there was nowhere else to cut.

Bob Sharpe, the only person called by Chairman Hudson to testify immediately after the DCF presentation, provided a straight to the point rebuttal. Sharpe testified that mental health and substance abuse services were already underfunded, that DCF's first "priority" protecting children, would backfire by not first taking care of the family, that mental health and substance abuse services should be just as much a core function as DCF's other missions and suggested that maybe DCF should first talk to other community leaders such as judges, DOC, officers and primal justice officials before making these recommendations. Sharpe also suggested DCF look more closely at state hospital forensic cost and savings there. Sharpe explained that Florida should look to other states that spend less in institutional settings by putting some of the services back into community based care.

Chairman Hudson challenged Sharpe to provide reliable cost savings and proven facts on ROI to him. Sharpe gladly accepted the challenge and assured Hudson that the Council and its members were "pulling out all of the stops and would be glad to provide finite, detailed information to the committee."

On Thursday, Oct 20th

Thursday was a much quieter day in Tallahassee. Surprisingly Senator Negron's **Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee** did not meet.

Full Appropriations in the Senate, Chaired by Senator Alexander met Thursday. It was announced there that the state's budget shortfall will near \$2 billion. Amy Baker, an economist with the Legislature's Office for Economic and Demographic Research, said that although revenue may increase in the upcoming fiscal year, the economy will not grow quickly enough to maintain current policies under the latest projections, which see the economy growing slowly and avoiding a second recession. "Our forecast is predicated on people starting to feel a little bit better, and spending a little bit more," she said to the Senate Budget Committee. Budget Committee chairman JD Alexander, R-Lake Wales, said he is "nervous" about that uncertainty, and will be looking to amass enough reserves to withstand changing conditions, especially because lawmakers may be approving their final budget two months

earlier than in normal years. "If we have to pass a budget out March 1, it might have to be more than \$1 billion to make sure we can function well, given the distance between the estimate and the actual time frame," he said.

The next committee week is scheduled for the week of October 31st.

Attached in this email:

- Senate Children and Families presentations on CSUs and Forensic Mental Health
- House Health Care Appropriations packet including DCF's 10% cut presentation
- Council's bill track

If you would like information on a specific committee meeting, a specific bill, or would like additional information on any happenings at the Capitol, please always feel free to ask. shane@fccmh.org , office (850) 224-6048, cell (850) 322-6693

Article of interest:

<http://www.postonpolitics.com/2011/10/its-official-florida-faces-2-billion-budget-hole/>