



Children & Youth Committee Newsletter



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Greetings,

I am honored to serve as the Majority Chair of the House Children & Youth Committee during the 2023-2024 Legislative Session. I have not previously served as a member of the House Children & Youth Committee. I am learning some new issue areas, while getting reacclimated to others. The House Children & Youth Committee provides oversight over a wide range of issues impacting our youngest constituents, our children and youth. Policy issues include the child welfare system, child abuse and neglect, child health and safety, background checks and clearances, foster care, kinship care, childcare, children's homes, and adoptions. The committee will address new policy issues during the current Legislative Session, including childhood nutrition, juvenile justice, and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) modernization.

The mission of the House Children & Youth Committee is to advocate, educate, and legislate the health and safety of children and youth within our Commonwealth to ensure they become productive citizens in the future.

I am pleased to revive this committee publication. The primary goals of the publication are to inform members and staff of the varied issues facing county children and youth agencies, and to serve as a resource for members, their constituents, staff, and stakeholders who are interested in improving the quality of life for our children and youth across the Commonwealth.

Donna J. Bullock
Majority Chair
Children & Youth Committee

Happenings in Harrisburg

The House Children & Youth Committee has hosted informational meetings on childcare and childhood nutrition and hosted a public hearing to discuss the overcrowding of juvenile detention centers.

Challenges with Childcare in Pennsylvania.

The first informational meeting was held on Wednesday, March 29, 2023, to discuss the challenges with childcare in Pennsylvania. During the meeting, members heard firsthand of the experiences of childcare providers, the importance of childcare, and the impact of childcare on businesses and the workforce throughout the Commonwealth. The speakers included: Leslie Spina, Executive Director, Kinder Academy, Inc., Philadelphia; Diane Barber, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Child Care Association (PACCA); Jennifer Byrne, Owner of Spring Rose Childcare, Berks County; Shante Brown, Deputy Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL); Kimberly Early, Senior Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children (PennAEYC); Angela Ferritto, President, The Pennsylvania AFL-CIO; Alex Harper, Vice President of Government Affairs, PA Chamber of Business and Industry; and Laura Manion, President and CEO, Chester County Chamber of Business and Industry (CCCBI). Ms. Manion shared that the lack of available childcare has overwhelmingly impacted the number of women returning to the workforce. All the panelists underscored how the childcare industry is critical to our economy and getting Pennsylvanians back to work.





Childhood Nutrition and School Meals.

The second informational meeting was a joint meeting between the House Children & Youth Committee and the House Education Committee, held on Thursday, March 30, 2023, to discuss the Importance of Childhood Nutrition and School Meals. Members heard from their colleague, Rep. Emily Kinkead, who represents the 20th Legislative District, Allegheny County; Sally Zubairu Cofield, Director, Department of Health, Bureau of Women, Infants and Children (WIC); Dr. Amaka Nnanmani, MD, FAAP, and former General Counsel, Community Legal Services, Philadelphia, and Children First PA; Nicole Melia, Public Policy and Legislative Chair, School Nutrition Association of Pennsylvania (SNAPA); and Shea Saman, Chief Financial Officer, Feeding Pennsylvania. Rep. Kinkead discussed legislation she introduced, House Bill 180, which would require that breakfast and lunch is served every school day to every student attending a Pennsylvania elementary, middle, or high school, who wants one, regardless of income, by establishing a permanent universal school meals program. This joint informational meeting was helpful in ensuring that members understood the critical need to address childhood nutrition to improve behavioral and health outcomes for children.

Juvenile Detention Centers. A public hearing was held on Thursday, April 20, 2023, to discuss the Overcrowding of Pennsylvania's Juvenile Detention Facilities. During the hearing, committee members received an overview of the juvenile justice system and learned of relevant data, including recidivism rates, high risk juveniles, and capacity limitations related to juvenile detention centers. The speakers included: Laval Miller-Wilson, Deputy Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Office of Children, Youth and Families; Chadwick Libby, Dauphin County Director of Probation Services, and the Current President of the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers; Kimberly Ali, Commissioner, Department of Human Services, City of Philadelphia; Malik Pickett, Esq., Staff Attorney, Juvenile Law Center; and Bryanna Hood, Advocate, Juvenile Law Center. The information shared during the hearing was helpful in educating members on the issue of juvenile detention facilities in Pennsylvania. Pickett provided an overview of detention and residential placement facilities, the issue of overcrowding, and the removal of youth from detention facilities.



Voting Meeting

The House Children & Youth Committee hosted its first voting meeting of the current legislative session on Tuesday, May 2, 2023. The Committee members met to consider two bills and one resolution.

House Bill 664, sponsored by Chair Bullock, establishes a Women's Infant, and Child (WIC) Advisory Board within the PA Department of Health.

There were two amendments offered to the bill.

Minority Chair Barry Jozwiak sponsored Amendment A00366, which established security measures to protect WIC participants' personal information and prevent fraudulent activity in the use of WIC benefits.

Chair Bullock sponsored Amendment A00412, which amended the bill by adding additional WIC topics the board can offer advisement on including increasing awareness and support of WIC breastfeeding services for WIC breastfeeding experts and noting that one of the two medical professionals is a pediatric physician. House Bill 664 as amended passed nearly unanimously with a vote of 20-1.

Finally, the Committee considered one resolution, House Resolution 91, sponsored by Rep. Mike Schlossberg. House Resolution 91 designates May 7-May 13, 2023, as, "Jewish Day Schools Week," in Pennsylvania. House Resolution 91 was reported from Committee unanimously.



Children & Youth Facts:

Childcare staffing shortages across the Commonwealth have resulted in a lapse of services, while economically burdening families. As a result of the staffing shortages, more than 35,500 children remain on a waitlist for childcare. The lack of childcare staff has detrimentally impacted families, employers, and taxpayers resulting in \$6.65 billion lost annually in wages and revenue.

Source: KIDS COUNT® Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children.

Member Spotlight

Majority Chair Donna Bullock represents the 195th Legislative District, Philadelphia County. Chair Bullock also serves as the Majority Chair of the House Ethics Committee and was elected by her peers to serve as the Chair of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus.

Chair Bullock started her legal career as the lead attorney for the Child Care Law Project at Community Legal Services in Philadelphia, where she represented and advised home-based and community childcare providers to increase affordable, accessible, and quality childcare seats. She also chaired the board of West Philadelphia Childcare Network and served on the boards of other children and youth related organizations.

A mother of two, Chair Bullock often says that her boys are her North Star when reviewing legislation. She hopes to move legislation that safeguards and promotes the health, safety, and welfare of her children and all of Pennsylvania's children. Chair Bullock looks forward to working with the Committee and stakeholders to advance the Committee's ongoing priorities and new policy issues, such as childhood nutrition and services for unhoused children and youth and children who are involved in the criminal justice system.



House Children & Youth Committee

Bills & Resolutions for the 2023-2024 Legislative Session

House Bill 664 (Chair Bullock)

- Establishes a WIC Advisory Board within the PA Department of Health.
 - House Bill 664 was reported as amended from the House Children & Youth Committee on Tuesday, May 2, 2023 (20-1).
 - House Bill 664 was voted out of the House of Representatives on Wednesday, June 12, 2023 (155-48).

House Resolution 91 (Rep. Schlossberg)

- Designates May 7-May 13, 2023, as “Jewish Day Schools Week” in Pennsylvania.
 - House Resolution 91 was reported as committed from the House Children & Youth Committee on Tuesday, May 2, 2023 (21-0).
 - House Resolution 91 was adopted by the House of Representatives on Monday, May 22, 2023 (201-0).



House Children & Youth Committee

Bills & Resolutions for the 2023-2024 Legislative Session

House Bill 665 (Chair Bullock)

- Amends Act 121 of 1986, the Women's, Infants', and Children's Nutrition Act by clarifying the eligibility of WIC participants, allowing a person to submit eligibility documentation online to a WIC agency before meeting to confirm their enrollment.
 - House Bill 665 was reported as amended from the House Children & Youth Committee on Wednesday, June 7, 2023 (20-1).
 - House Bill 665 was voted out of the House of Representatives on Thursday, June 22, 2023 (176-27).

House Bill 1058 (Rep. Krajewski)

- Amends Title 42 (Judiciary and Judicial Procedure) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes by adding language requiring the court to solicit and consider the opinions of those who engaged with the family finding and kinship care programs before and during child custody proceedings.
 - House Bill 1058 was reported as amended from the House Children & Youth Committee on Wednesday, June 7, 2023 (21-0).
 - House Bill 1058 was voted out of the House of Representatives on Thursday, June 22, 2023 (203-0).

House Bill 1020 (Mehaffie)

- Amends Article IX Department Powers and Duties as to Supervision and Article X Department Powers and Duties as to Licensing of the Human Services Code by adding language to codify the Keystone STARS Program, while allowing for varied work experiences, professional development, effective leadership, and program management as staff qualifications for all certified childcare providers to move up a STAR level in the Keystone STARS Program, and allowing each certified childcare provider in the Keystone STARS Program to display its designated STAR-level rating on its public website, the Department of Human Services' website and on a DHS-issued placard in a public-facing location.
 - House Bill 1020 was reported from the House Children & Youth Committee on Wednesday, June 7, 2023 (19-1).
 - House Bill 1020 was voted out of the House of Representatives on Monday, June 26, 2023(151-52).

House Resolution 126 (Kinsey)

- Designates the month of May 2023, as "Foster Care Month" in Pennsylvania.
 - House Resolution 126 was reported as committed from the House Children & Youth Committee on Wednesday, June 7, 2023 (21-0).





Upcoming Awareness Months

August

- Child Support Awareness Month
- Children's Eye Health and Safety Month
- National Back to School Month
- National Breastfeeding Month

September

- National Baby Safety Month
- National Kinship Care Month
- Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

October

- Celebrating the Bilingual Child Month
- National Children's Health Month
- National Bullying Prevention Awareness Month
- National Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Awareness Month

November

- National Child Safety and Protection Month
- National Adoption Month