

CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL
Discussion Highlights
March 1, 2017

I. Call to Order and Introductions

Justice Raye called the meeting to order and welcomed Council Members and visitors. He noted that Secretary Dooley was not able attend the meeting, but was being represented by Undersecretary Michael Wilkening. He acknowledged the Orange County Department of Social Services for their hospitality and willingness to host the Council for the meeting. Justice Raye then asked Council Members to introduce themselves.

II. Approval of the December 7, 2016 Discussion Highlights (Action Item)

Undersecretary Wilkening asked for comments or suggested revisions to the December 7, 2016 Child Welfare Council Discussion Highlights. There being none, they were approved on a consensus vote.

III. Education of Zero to Three Year Olds and Updated Education Toolkit (Information Item)

Council Member, Rochelle Trochtenberg, provided an overview of the information item and introduced Jill Rowland of the Alliance for Children’s Rights who presented on the Developmental Milestones Toolkit, which was developed to help parents monitor their child’s development. Ms. Rowland noted that children develop different skills at different ages, which are called developmental milestones and includes things such as holding up their head by 4 months. The Toolkit can be found on the Alliance for Children’s Rights website, [here](#). It was developed by the support of the Saltz Family Early Intervention Center and the Alliance for Children’s Rights, in partnership with the California Department of Social Services, the California Welfare Directors Association, and First 5 California. It has been endorsed by the California Interagency Coordinating Council.

Additionally, Ms. Rowland discussed the Foster Youth Education Toolkit Companion Project, which is intended to be a supplemental guide to the *Foster Youth Education Toolkit* designed for professionals outside of school districts working with foster/probation youth, such as judges, child welfare workers, probation officers, attorneys, and public defenders. The guide is intended to help such professionals ensure that students in foster care or probation receive the full benefits of education laws designed to protect them. The guide provides a simple explanation of the laws, sample best practices and policies, and tools to assist with implementation. Ms. Rowland also noted that the Alliance for Children’s Rights is creating the supplemental guide based on their knowledge of the law, experience offering direct education services to foster/probation youth, and interactions with interested parties. Most importantly, they are actively seeking guidance and feedback from key partners in each of the targeted audience groups. This includes seeking input from interested Council Members to provide expert consultation on topics of their interest and/or best practices for their profession.

Council Members expressed appreciation for the update and invitation to participate in providing input, and Justice Raye thanked Ms. Rowland for taking the time to keep the Council up-to-date.

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IV. Priority Employment for Foster Youth and Former Foster Youth (Action Item)

Justice Raye introduced the topic by acknowledging the leadership of Council Members, David Ambroz and Judge Leonard Edwards, who were not able to be present at the meeting. Justice Raye introduced Vince Bartle who presented on model policy for priority hiring at county and state levels. Mr. Bartle provided context by noting that youth who are aging out of foster care are underemployed and unemployed. In most states, when foster youth turn 18, they are no longer covered by the system. These adolescents typically do not fare well when compared with other teens living with their families. The result being these children are more likely forced to live by themselves without support, stop their education, be homeless, go on welfare or get arrested. He noted that the cost of doing things will have consequences on taxpayers and our foster youth outcomes. With employment, our aging foster youth will likely avoid the social ills and overcome adversity. Furthermore, youth aging out of care are vulnerable to poor economic outcomes. Data indicates that there is an absence of effort to address the career and employment issues that face youth in care. Proactive career development, employment opportunities and extending foster care services beyond 18 are fundamental in establishing a successful future for youth in care.

There have been a number of important milestones to move in this direction and several California counties have recognized the importance of continuing to support the foster youth formerly in their care by prioritizing employment opportunities for these young people.

- 2001: The Foster Youth Employment Training and Housing Task Force developed a framework for collaboration with local workforce development and foster care systems.
- 2004: The Walter S. Johnson Foundation funded several California counties to implement the Gateway Project College and Career Pathway Program.
- 2006: The County of Santa Clara was honored with a top award from the California State Association of Counties for its Emancipated Foster Youth Employment Program from among 260 entries throughout California.
- 2007: As part of the Governor's Career Technical education Initiative, the California Community Colleges utilized the experiences and lessons learned under the Walter S. Johnson Gateway Project to develop and launch Career Advancement Academies in three regions throughout the State.

Mr. Bartle noted that California foster youth are ill prepared to become self-sufficient by the time they age out of care. According to research from the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration, findings from the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study 2014, less than 20 percent of transition-age foster youth feel prepared to be independent and succeed. With limited and sporadic employment during their time in foster care, it is not surprising that by age 24 over 50 percent will be unemployed and those employed will be earning on average only \$7,500 a year. The result is 50 percent will spend time homeless and 70 percent will be on some form of government assistance.

The Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee developed recommendations to further foster youth employment, which include:

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- Hire foster youth (current/recently-emancipated) into entry-level currently available county/state/city jobs for which they are eligible; necessitating no new jobs / budget.
- Develop and implement policies that explicitly give hiring preference to current and former foster youth. Create a process to facilitate hiring preference, if this does not already exist.
- Create multiple opportunities for foster youth to gain critical job skills to lead to permanent employment including, but not limited to, paid internships, Work Experience Program (WEX) positions, and part-time, semi-permanent positions across county departments. Align these opportunities with current Independent Living Program requirements.
- Hire former foster youth for entry-level, full-time, permanent, and benefitted positions throughout county and State departments.
- Require that foster youth be informed of their rights pursuant to sealing juvenile records and prohibitions on being asked about their juvenile records, during the transition plan development.
- Inform youth of their right to be given preference by state agencies for internships and student assistant positions.

Mr. Bartle provided an overview of a few success stories, including a Santa Clara County case study. The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors established a policy that former foster youth would be given an opportunity to secure employment with the county. The policy creates a special application process for benefitted, entry level positions with the county. Hiring managers are encouraged by the child welfare and human resources departments to request candidates from this pool for interviews, and applicants are given three days to respond to invitations to schedule an interview. Those hired enter as unclassified and receive full health benefits. After three months of successful employment the youth can become permanent. The policy has been well received. Many former foster youth are working from Santa Clara County in various positions. Over time, the program has been expanded to include twenty-two entry-level classifications, representing more than one thousand entry-level positions across the county. Currently, 27 youth have been hired since the program started. Of these, two resigned; three terminated; three continue to work in the same position; and nineteen transferred or promoted into higher level positions.

The Priority Employment Workgroup of the Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee developed the following recommendations:

1. Develop programs that offer internship, part or full-time employment for current and former foster youth, using current models as a guide

The results of a statewide survey to county child welfare directors indicate that at least eight counties have programs that offer internship, part or full-time employment for current or former foster youth that could serve as a model for new programs. The existing programs fall into three main categories:

A. Short Term Paid Internships (Los Angeles)

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These short-term (i.e. 120 hour, 300 hour) internships offer current and former foster youth the opportunity for paid work experience in county departments, non-profit, public and private companies. While positions are typically for summer employment, these work experience internships can exist throughout the year and are paid for by county child welfare, department of education, individual disability education act funding, workforce investment boards, or other youth serving programming. Interns are hired after an interview and may be provided a job coach or additional training during the program to develop the core competencies they need to succeed in the workplace. County departments participate voluntarily in the program, and there is not a dedicated path to permanent county employment at the end of the internship. Youth who wish to apply for permanent county positions must go through the normal competitive hiring process and meet those eligibility criteria. This type of internship would be open to youth ages 16 and up.

B. Longer Term Paid Internships (San Diego, San Mateo, Los Angeles)

These internships offer current and former foster youth the opportunity to work in an entry-level position in a county department for 6-18 months. Positions may be part or full-time. Interns are hired after an interview and may be provided a job coach or additional training during the program to learn professional and interpersonal skills. County departments participate voluntarily in the program, and there is not a dedicated path to permanent county employment at the end of the internship. Youth who wish to apply for permanent county positions must go through the normal competitive hiring process. This type of internship would be open to youth ages 18 and up who have already completed high school or equivalent.

C. Pathway to permanent, full-time employment (Santa Clara, Los Angeles)

This type of program offers current and former foster youth a pathway to permanent, full-time employment in a number of county departments. Youth are hired into the program after an interview for an entry-level position in a county department. Once hired through the program, youth are eligible to apply to a permanent county position by successfully passing an employment examination within a set period of time (3 months in Santa Clara and 24 months in Los Angeles). In Santa Clara, participating youth are hired as permanent employees as long as they pass their employment exam. In Los Angeles, participating youth must go through the competitive examination process (which includes a ranking of exam scores), but they compete only against other participating youth, not the general public.

Both programs offer supportive services to youth as they apply for the program, and Los Angeles's program provides job coaching and life skills training to youth during the program. In Los Angeles, each county department is required by the Board of Supervisors to host a youth from the program, but in Santa Clara, participation by county departments is voluntary.

In addition to the above opportunities, county HR departments may want to collaborate with the Independent Living Program (ILP) to provide job skills training to current/former foster youth who are hired for county jobs/internships. This allows HR to tap into an existing

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resource, instead of re-inventing the wheel. LA County has done this and could advise other counties on doing so.

D. A limited number of semi-permanent, full-time positions within the Child Welfare department (Los Angeles, Riverside, Merced, Mariposa, San Bernardino)

Five counties have programs that hire former foster youth as full-time employees in the Child Welfare department to serve as peer advocates for foster youth or assist social workers with case management. The number of positions tends to be limited (most counties have no more than 7 employees in this role), and the employees work only within Child Welfare. While the position is not time-limited, it is also not supposed to be permanent and employed youth are expected to transition to other employment in 3-4 years. Youth are typically hired through an interview and need not take an employment exam for this position. There is not a dedicated path to other county employment through this position.

2. Implement Strategies to Remove Barriers to Success in Employment Programs, such as:

A. Advise and facilitate current and former foster youth to have their juvenile records sealed and inform them that employers cannot ask them about juvenile court records, but most corporate employers will require a voluntary background check.

Judges, attorneys, social workers, counselors, and others who have contact with youth in the dependency system should advise youth of their rights regarding juvenile records under current law and any changes to law that occur over time. These professionals should be prepared to assist current and former foster youth seal their juvenile records where possible and expunge their non-sealable juvenile and adult records. These professionals should make available Judicial Council forms to complete the sealing possible. These professional should inform all current and former foster youth of the importance of sealing and/or expunging their records and the impact that an unsealed record may have on their ability to earn gainful employment. These professionals should also be available to answer questions a youth or young adult may have about record sealing.

Employers are not permitted to ask applicants for employment to disclose information concerning an arrest or detention that did not result in a conviction. This provision was recently expanded with the addition of Labor Code Section 432.7 (AB 1843) that prohibits an employer from asking an applicant for employment to disclose, or from utilizing as a factor in determining any condition of employment, information concerning or related to an arrest, detention, processing, diversion, supervision, adjudication, or court disposition that occurred while the person was subject to the process and jurisdiction of juvenile court law with specified exceptions for employment at health facilities.

However, since most corporate and government employers conduct background checks and requests as a condition of employment a candidate to voluntarily submit to such a check, a juvenile and/or adult record can be uncovered. It is paramount that counties have processes

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in place to ensure that current and former foster youth understand the impact having a record may have on their ability to earn gainful employment and provide them with guidance on how to ensure their records are sealed and/or expunged. If neither can be accomplished, counties should advise their youth of alternative employment opportunities including, but not limited to, employers who do not conduct background checks and employers who work with recidivism candidates.

B. Inform current and former foster youth that they must be given preference by state agencies hiring interns and student assistants

Effective January 1, 2017, Government Code Section 18220 requires: “(a) State agencies, when hiring for internships and student assistant positions, shall give preference to qualified applicants who are, or have been, dependent children in foster care. The preference shall be granted to applicants up to 26 years of age. (b) For purposes of this section, ‘preference’ means priority over similarly qualified applicants for placement in the position.” All counties should advise youth in foster care regarding this provision of the law. The California Human Resources Department (CalHR) is developing guidance for state agencies to implement this statute.

3. Prepare foster youth for employment and success in the workplace with comprehensive job skills development that focuses on critical soft skill development in addition to the hard skills of interviewing, resume writing and job search.

Within current Independent Living programming, counties should implement comprehensive job skills training leveraging evidence-based and evidence-informed curriculums tailored to foster youth that are both trauma-informed and focus on soft skill development (e.g., work ethic, effective communication, dealing with critical feedback, integrity, team work, critical thinking).

Justice Raye and Council Members engaged in a discussion regarding the presentation. Justice Raye recommended that the item be considered informational for the purposes of this meeting and an action item be placed on a future meeting agenda so Council Members have the opportunity to review the recommendation and action. Mr. Bartle noted that a recommendations document has been drafted and will be shared with the Council.

V. Framework for Child Welfare Prevention Practice (Action Item)

Undersecretary Wilkening introduce the topic and asked Dr. Kathy Icenhower to discuss the item and present the document developed by the Prevention and Early Intervention Committee. Dr. Icenhower also announced that David Swanson Hollinger of Ventura County will be joining the Committee as a Co-Chair.

The Prevention and Early Intervention Committee identified and reviewed six models and philosophies of prevention practice that are in current use across the country and generally recognized to have significant positive impact on the prevention of child abuse and neglect, as well as family preservation and reunification. These include:

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- Differential Response Framework
- Strengthening Families
- Standards of Quality for Family Strengthening
- Essentials for Childhood
- Core Practice Model and
- New Jersey Standards for Prevention

Analysis of each model was conducted and a matrix developed to identify key elements that were shared in common across these models, as well as those essential elements unique to each model of practice. From there, the PEI/CRP identified key elements that would ideally be considered in all child welfare prevention practice, as well as gaps. The result of this analysis is presented on page four. In addition to the key elements, the Committee identified beliefs critical to the effective implementation of prevention programming in all communities, informed, in part, by the work of Deborah Daro, Senior Research Fellow, Chapin Hall:

- The ultimate goal for any community is to have safe, stable and nurturing families.
- All children must be kept safe from abuse and neglect, and thriving.
- Strategies are most effective when they target children, families, and communities and all are valued, respected and have a voice.
- All entities that participate in prevention must work closely together, understand each other's roles, share information and training, and view the system as starting with prevention and early intervention, continuing through permanency and after-care.
- From a systems perspective, robust prevention practice in child welfare produces significant savings in terms of both the human and financial costs averted.

The Committee recommended that these key elements of child welfare prevention practice guide program design, service delivery, and evaluation of effectiveness, at both the State and County levels for Child Welfare and partner agencies and providers, and guide related funding and resource allocation priorities. Ultimately, to reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect, and prevent out of home or out of family placements, we recommend that a long-term, collaborative investment in effective prevention practice be implemented across systems throughout the State of California. This will help the State to take to scale the well-researched, proven practices and programs informed by these key elements.

Dr. Icenhower noted that document is a call to action that across all counties in California, programs, policies and systems work together to not only facilitate prevention of child abuse and neglect, but also the ongoing promotion of health and well-being for all children and families. Preventing child abuse and neglect, and promoting the well-being of children, families, and communities, are shared responsibilities and it is hoped that the Framework for Child Welfare Prevention Practice will serve as an effective working tool to inspire each other to deeper and more meaningful action in keeping with the values of the Child Welfare Council, statewide standards and initiatives, and the federal standards under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act. A multifaceted and multi-level approach is

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needed to achieve the over-arching outcomes described herein. To this end, the Committee will also provide a resource guide to help to support and inform the practices we are recommending.

Justice Raye and Council Members engaged in a discussion regarding the presentation. Justice Raye thanked the Committee for its work and asked for approval from the full Council. The Council unanimously approved the framework.

VI. Updates from the California Youth Transitions to Adulthood Study (Information Item)

Justice Raye introduce the topic and Dr. Mark Courtney, Professor at the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration. Dr. Courtney began his presentation by thanking the various funders and partners that make it possible to CalYOUTH study, which is designed to evaluate the impact of California Fostering Connections to Success Act (AB 12) on outcomes for foster youth, the study includes:

- Longitudinal study of young people in CA foster care making the transition to adulthood (n = 727; 95% interviewed at 17; 84% followed-up at 19);
- Periodic surveys of caseworkers serving young people in CA foster care; and
- Analysis of government program administrative data

The key evaluation questions that the study attempts to answer include:

- What influence, if any, does the extension of foster care past age 18 have on youths' well-being during their transition to adulthood from foster care (e.g., legal and relational permanency, education, employment, housing stability, family formation, economic well-being, social support, physical and mental health, psychological well-being, and crime)?
- In the context of California's policy of extended foster care, what factors influence the kinds of transition supports foster youths receive during the transition to adulthood?
- How do the distinct types of living arrangements and other services youth have access to as a result of extended care mediate the relationship between extending care and youth outcomes?

Dr. Courtney noted that when looking at the correlates of the length of youths' stays in out-of-home care after their 18th birthday, the youth characteristics can be indicative of the inclination of youth to remain in care and the system's capacity to provide appropriate care. This includes demographic characteristics, maltreatment history and experiences in care, and psychosocial functioning. Moreover, change in policy and between-county differences in context and policy implementation could influence the likelihood that youth will remain in care.

Youth characteristics are associated with length of stay after the 18th birthday, but some more strongly than others:

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- Larger effects (months): Primary placement type; number of placements; disability; probation history; satisfaction with care.
- Smaller effects (less than a month): gender; race; age at entry to care; maltreatment history
- There is no clear pattern of “positive” or “negative” selection into extended care (e.g., group care history decreases length of stay, but placement mobility and disability increase length of stay)
- System-level factors play a large role in length of stay. Implementation of extended care policy has increased average length of stay for youth approaching the age of majority in care by over one year. There is considerable between-county variation in length of stay.

The implications of this research is that states can implement extended care policies that significantly increase the likelihood that youth will choose to remain in care well after age 18. Given prior research on the potential benefits of remaining in care past 18, child welfare administrators and practitioners should consider whether the current service delivery array and/or practices may discourage harder-to-serve youth (e.g., those exiting group care and those with a probation history) from remaining in care. Similarly, administrators and practitioners should seek to better understand the contributors to between-county variation in transition-age foster youths’ length of stay in care.

Dr. Courtney noted that youth who remained in care were much more likely than those who left to obtain a secondary credential and to continue on to college. Nor does their continuing pursuit of education does not appear to negatively influence their participation in the labor market. Furthermore, remaining in care significantly decreased the likelihood of economic hardship, homelessness, and reliance on need-based public aid while it increased youths’ access to financial assets. His research finds that remaining in care was associated with an impressive reduction in the likelihood that youth would be convicted of a crime. There is no evidence that remaining in care increases the risk of poor outcomes for youth transitioning to adulthood from the foster care system. However, remaining in care was not associated with several important outcomes, and future research should examine longer-term outcomes and the mechanisms through which extended care influences outcomes.

At the conclusion of Dr. Courtney’s presentation, Justice Raye allowed Council Members to engage in a conversation. He noted that this was extremely insightful information and looked forward to continue following Dr. Courtney’s work. He thanked Dr. Courtney for his time and noted that he would be joining the Data Linkages and Information Sharing Committee for a more detailed discussion on his research.

VII. Committee and Task Force Updates

Justice Raye reminded Council members that, at the suggestion of the Steering Committee, Committees and Task Forces have the option of submitting a written status report summarizing activities and noted that three Committees had used this option. He then called on the Co-Chairs.

Prevention/Early Intervention Committee-Statewide Citizen Review Panel (PEI/CRP)

Dr. Kathryn Icenhower submitted a written report highlighting the following items:

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- It is the responsibility of the Prevention and Early Intervention Citizen Review Panel (PEI-CRP) to review the child welfare system and make recommendations for improvement at the state level. This past year we have focused on a review of policies and systems that are needed to facilitate *prevention* of child abuse and neglect, as well as, *promotion* of health and well-being for all children and families.
- The PEI-CRP's progress and considerations were presented to the Council in December 2016, and last Friday the annual report (refer to packet) was delivered to CDSS Director Will Lightbourne and to Angela Ponivas of the Office of Child Abuse Prevention. Within six months Director Lightbourne will provide us with a written response describing whether and how the PEI-CRP's recommendations will be incorporated.
- To advance the recommendations made this year, the PEI-CRP developed the **California Child Welfare Prevention Toolkit**, comprised of the Child Welfare Prevention Framework and Child Welfare Prevention Resource Guide. The **Framework** consolidates core elements of child welfare prevention practice that can be consistently and uniformly utilized by State and County Child Welfare and their partner agencies and providers to guide the design, delivery and evaluation of programming and services, as well as funding decisions. The **Resource Guide** is a compendium of resources that reinforces the Prevention Framework, including specific best practice examples for each of the core elements. The Resource Guide will also contain cross-walk resources, as well as web links and publications from which users of the framework can access and benefit.
- The Child Welfare Prevention Framework, and accompanying resource guide can be used for the following intended audiences:
 - **State and Local Child Welfare Agencies and other Public Agencies** as recommendations to support the mission of ensuring child and family well-being.
 - **Policymakers and State Budget Committees** as a lens through which to set priorities, evaluate, invest in and implement child and family strengthening approaches that enhances child safety, permanence and well-being.
 - **Providers** as a guide to effective, high quality and evidence based practices and approaches.
 - **Families/Community Members** as confirmation of California's commitment and reminder of mutual commitment to see all children raised in healthy, safe families and communities.

Permanency Committee

Carroll Schroeder and Bob Friend provided updates on the following activities underway:

- Monitoring implementation of the newly enacted Continuum of Care Reform to ensure focus on and support for permanency for children and youth of all ages.
- Continuing to support growth and expansion of Dependency Drug Treatment Courts as determined by an assessment of updated information from the courts and identification of sites that are interested in expansion or developing a Dependency Drug Treatment Court.

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- Promoting Child and Family Teams by providing guidance to the Core Practice Model that is under development by CDSS as part of the Katie A Settlement.

Child Development and Successful Youth Transitions Committee

Rochelle Trochtenberg provided updates on the following activities underway:

- The Committee is looking at model policies on runaway and homeless youth as well as priority employment. Committee intends to further explore potential recommendations on policies for runaway and homeless youth and looks forward to bringing back to the Committee.
- Psychotropic medications has been another topic of discussion and focus on “big picture” and need for more information on effective ways to improve access to quality of services. Continue to engage in the work of the Quality Improvement Project, which is a collaborative effort led by the California Department of Health Care Services in collaboration with providers, advocates and stakeholders, to ensure appropriate, timely, safe use of psychotropic medications by foster children.

Data Linkages and Information Sharing Committee

Daniel Webster provided updates on the following activities underway:

- Acknowledged that the *Statement on Information Sharing, Data Standardization and Interoperability* has been posted on the Child Welfare Council [website](#). The document affirms the Council’s strong support for enhanced data sharing across service systems to improve decision making as well as the provision, integration, and quality of services for children, families and caregivers. The Council recognizes the importance of legal safeguards for protecting the confidentiality of children, families, and caregivers served by state and local agencies, the courts, and other public and private entities. These entities deal with extremely personal and sensitive information in attempting to provide an array of services and resources to meet the complex needs clients. Notwithstanding this complexity and the vast number of programs and services involved, the Council declares that children, families, and caregivers are best served in a system that allows for fully informed decisions and timely access to information to meet the needs of this population.
- A three-way Memorandum of Understanding between CDSS, DHCS and counties allows for easy exchange of health and medication information for children with child welfare cases. At present, twelve counties have opted into the Global Data Sharing Agreement and other counties continue to show interest as they opt in on a flow basis.
- In addition the Committee is identifying and scheduling presentations on (1) exemplary data tools and (2) important topics germane to linkages and sharing of data. At the afternoon meeting, there will be presentations on the CalYOUTH study, the integration of child welfare and education data, and mental health service utilization.

VIII. Public Comment and Adjournment to Committee Meetings

Justice Raye and Undersecretary Wilkening thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting.