Advocacy Committee Minutes

September 9, 2020

Welcome

Jan Elliott, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM. She recognized those on the phone and welcomed Heather Burkhardt, with North Carolina Coalition on Aging, for joining us.

Minutes

August 12, 2020 minutes were approved through consensus.

Status Report on the General Assembly

Jan began by informing us the General Assembly whizzed into town and whizzed right back out. HB1105 was the big discussion on the spending of the last COVID money. Brenda sent all of us a summary of what the County Commissioner Association put together that hopefully everyone got a chance to see. Jan asked Sharnese and John Metcalf if they had any information that happened during the session we needed to know about.

Sharnese stated she wanted to talk about HB1105’s impact on County Department of Social Services and would send it out to all of us. Sharnese listed the following: 72 million in food bank dollars; additional funds to support Adult Care Homes that accept SA recipients, $250 for each resident, from August-December 2020 for a total of 20 million; additional 5 million dollars for Community Health Association for individuals without insurance who utilize those facilities; additional funding set aside for PPE for assisted living facilities, nursing homes and senior living facilities as the governor made a commitment to protect the residents due to having a high rate of COVID cases and deaths; a reinvestment partnership with Food Lion from David Locklear’s section (an additional 1 million dollars), where individuals get $40 a month for fruits and vegetables (funds have to be expended by December 30, 2020); stipend for children in foster care got an additional $800,000 dollars so this runs until funds are exhausted; for the Children Advocacy Centers, at least 75% will be contributed to those centers that are in good standing; in the triangle area, 19.8 million dollars for the YMCA to design and develop an administer grant program to facilitate remote learning with all the various plans that we have for student who return to school or not, or return as hybrid level (priority will be given to advocates serving children in plan B and C); the Department was given $600,000 to continue increase access for Food & Nutrition benefits for individuals who are dually eligible for Medicaid/Medicare; 35 million dollars for DCDEE for grants for child care licensed providers; under that provision, they can use the fund for operational cost, including non-recurring staff pay increases, vacation costs and any cost incurred for providing child care in response of COVID and 8 million dollars for assistance payments to parents using remote learning opportunities for their children. Sharnese will be reaching out to DCDEE to see how much of the money was going to childcare. Sharnese continued with the following: 20 million dollars for Medicaid to reimburse providers for cost of COVID related treatment of the uninsured residents of the state; $300,000 dollars to Children Home Society to provide virtual foster care and adoption services for families and children experiencing hardship as a result of COVID; $100,000 dollars for backpack ministry for families; $300,000 to states to establish student health collaborative pilot program; 6 million dollars for PPE and sanitizing supplies for all childcare centers regulated by the state; 8 million dollars to mental health. These are the pieces Sharnese picked-up related to our areas. Sharnese suggested that we view section 3.7. Brenda stated that there was money for disasters, such as hurricanes, tornadoes and earthquakes. Sharnese stated there was 24 million dollars for disaster relief. There are grants in there with language for partnerships and collaborative with DSS. There is some funding for Board of Elections for poll workers and funding for schools; and, also for virtual learning centers. Brenda stated we anticipate an increase in child protective services reports and how we will handle investigations in one of these virtual learning centers and asked Sharnese to add this to her questions to DCDEE. Brenda stated we were watching this closely. Sharnese will be sending HB1105 out as a document. Brenda sent out a link of HB1105 to everybody.

Jan talked about the Governor’s Pandemic Relief Fund. Everyone received a link from Sharnese about the announcement. There was 175 million dollars in pandemic relief for rent, utility assistance, homelessness, testing, food distribution, internet access, employment and training for healthcare workers. We would be interested in the 28 million for local government support through the Community Development Block Grant. You can apply beginning September 1, 2020 for counties with 50,000 residents to less than 200,000 on a first come/first serve. Brenda sent the link to WRAL.

Future Advocacy Strategies

Brenda set the tone on promoting local relationship building and reiterated with the directors on the importance of this as we roll into the November election. She stressed how important it is after the election to connect with your elected officials and newly elected legislators both at the General Assembly level and the Congressional level. We are looking at updating the legislative tool kit. Brenda stated the other thing we talked about and excited to have Heather Burkhardt with us this morning as we looked at our legislative agenda this past year, one of the struggles we have is building legislative supports and locating legislative champions for aging and adult services. Brenda stated the adult services committee has done a great job in publishing the white paper on adult services and aging, and asked how do we now promote that and also build relations with our community stakeholders as it relates to aging and adult services? Brenda invited Heather Burkhardt, with North Carolina Coalition on Aging to come and talk with us on what they see as their legislative agenda and goals, and are they experiencing some of the same challenges we are experiencing on building that legislative champion in the General Assembly to push legislative issues to promote advocacy efforts for aging and adult services?

Heather Burkhardt thanked everyone. She stated previously she was with the state division of Aging and Adult Services as assistant director. She had an opportunity to read the White Paper and roadmap. She stated they were very excited to hear from us on how we can better bridge. The coalition has 100 members with a couple of those members from the county department of social services. Heather stated the Coalition’s legislative agenda has not been finalized. This is done by the legislative committee in advance of January every year. For the short session, she stated they focused on Adult Protective Services and getting more state support for APS, Home Community Care Block Grant for essential community-based services such as home delivered meals, in-home aide, adult day services and transportation. She mentioned there were over 18 services in this grant. She stated they had a very busy session last spring with not a lot of success as far as outcomes. She stated the legislative priorities were on Home Community Care Block Grant and Adult Protective Services and was in HB966 which was vetoed and wasn’t in the mini budgets. She stated if they had gotten this, it would have been the largest appropriation in over 10 years. She pointed out that with a growing population and growing waiting list there is such a need for services. She stated some of the federal Cares dollars and family first dollars were given out for community-based services. APS did receive some additional funding through social services block grant on the federal side. She stated they continue to be a very active advocate member to close the gap on insurance coverage. Heather spoke about the support received from Representative Donna White from Johnston County who advocates for caregiver support legislation. Rep. White has a background as a nurse and was with the division as an aging specialist. She is very closely involved in home care and has a broad understanding of a lot of those aging services as well as licensure. Rep. White introduced health bill 915 which is a caregiver support legislation that would have established a task force on aging to come up with ways to support family caregivers. This established committee became part of the responsibility of DHHS. The Coalition on Aging has been very involved with the Institute of Medicine task force on serious illness care. There were a variety of needs around supporting caregivers that came out of that task force. Now, there has been a coalition developed to help make sure these recommendations are implemented. Heather recognized that families are carrying a heavy load especially now with taking care of their love ones and juggling a variety of different things. She stated without strong family support many people aren’t able to live in the community which increases burden on the system. In terms of legislative champion and support, Heather stated that Representative Donna White has been the Coalition’s primary. Heather stated she was looking forward to ways to partner with us, whether it is involving some of us on the Coalition on Aging, or doing things jointly together with their diverse membership. This involves not only Home Community-Based Services, like the area agencies on aging and local aging providers; but large associations, like Adult Day Services, Adult Care Homes and Nursing Home providers. Heather stated they really have a great membership and they come together as one. Brenda stated our association has found Representative Donna White to be great to work with and is certainly an advocate for Aging and Adult Services. Heather also mentioned that their Annual meeting will be September 25, 2020 and she invites anyone to attend. They will be having a great speaker, information on public policy, talking about COVID 19 and the impact on older adults and giving away their pioneer award that goes to a long-time advocate on aging issues. Brenda will get this out to everyone on the list serve.

John Metcalf updated the group to consider the idea of starting to look for other advocates in the Democratic Senate; just to be ready. Brenda asked Metcalf to identify those key legislators to reach out to. Sharnese stated she and Metcalf have a plan to do that after the November election. Representative Gale Adcock has reached out and agreed to have a conversation with us.

Federal Legislation

Jan mentioned the COVID bill was there for Congress. Brenda added that Congress goes back into session on September 14th. They are having some discussion on a continuing resolution for October to avoid a government shutdown. Brenda speculated that she didn’t think we would have a government shutdown in the mist of COVID and election. Brenda stated that there were a lot of resources out there and Tom Joseph’s emails.

Future Agenda Items

Jan asked if anyone had any agenda items to include for future meetings to send to her, Brenda, Yvette or Christine.

Other Discussion

There were no further questions or comments and the committee adjourned at 9:30 AM.

Minutes submitted by:

Yvette Smith