

Department of Human Services Board Meeting
February 28, 2024
1:00p.m. – 4:00p.m.

Board members present: Vice-Chairman Randall Smith, Secretary Monica Walters, Scott Johnson (virtual), Wesley Lewis, Lisa Hamilton (virtual), Jack Williams

Board members absent: Dave Barbee, Rochard White

Also present: Commissioner Candice Broce

Vice-Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 2:24 p.m.; Called for the attendance report

Attendance Report taken by Jackie Tate; quorum met

Vice Chairman Smith called for the approval of the November 29, 2023, Meeting Minutes; Motion to approve by Jack Williams, seconded by Wes Lewis; vote passed unanimously

Action Items:

- Election of Officers for upcoming term beginning July 2024, ending June 2026
 - Vice Chairman Smith advised the executive committee has selected Scott Johnson, Lisa Hamilton, Wesley Lewis and Monica Walters to serve as the nominating committee to bring forth a slate of candidates at the second Board meeting of the year, where the Board will vote for officers to serve in the new term, asking for their acceptance by a verbal acknowledgement – all selected to serve on the nominating committee acknowledged acceptance
- Residential Child Care Licensing Rule Change
 - Vice Chairman Smith called for the Board's consideration of RCCL's proposed rule change related to amendments to the rules pertaining to child placing agencies and called for a motion
 - Jack Williams moved that the proposed amendments to Rule Chapter 290-9-2 (Rules 290-9-2-.01 – 290-9-2-.15) of the Rules of the Georgia Department of Human Services entitled 'Rules and Regulations for Child-Placing Agencies,' as presented to the public by notice dated November 30, 2023, be approved and adopted, certified by the Commissioner, and filed with the Secretary of State as provided by law with an effective date of March 20, 2024." Monica Walters seconded.

- Vice Chairman Smith acknowledged the motion, then called for discussion; with there being none, he proceeded with calling for a vote; vote passed unanimously
- Division of Child Support Services proposed Rule Change
 - Vice Chairman Smith called for the Board's consideration of the proposed rule changes from the Division of Child Support Services related to Rule Chapter 290-7, Rule 290-7-1-.12, License Revocation or Suspensions and called for a motion
 - Monica Walters moved that the proposed amendments to Rule Chapter 290-7 (Rule 290-7-1-.12) of the Rules of the Georgia Department of Human Services entitled 'License Revocation or Suspensions,' be published for a 30-day public comment period; Wes Lewis seconded
 - Vice Chairman Smith acknowledged the motion, then called for discussion; with there being none, he proceeded with calling for a vote; vote passed unanimously

Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Broce began by thanking the Board for consideration of the rule proposals. She advised she didn't have much to add outside of what the presenters offered. She acknowledged the staff's work that has been going on in the session and gave a shout out to the Governmental Affairs Team and the Office of General Counsel stating so many staff members have been involved. She shared that DHS is in a good position with both the budget providing additional support and with our legislative initiatives. She advised we continue to see good numbers in terms of reducing attrition across the divisions and continue to look for changes we can make to technology and have rolled out several multi-million-dollar improvements and offered to take questions. Vice-Chairman Smith asked if the multi-million-dollar efforts for technology have been successful implementations. The commissioner responded yes, they have. She advised ARGO and Communicare were a direct product of feedback received from DFCS frontline workers and families with whom we work stating we need to have better communication. They have both gone incredibly well and we hope to rollout a technology improvement that will better enable casework in the field – due to it not going exactly as planned it is currently on hold. For the Child Support system, we have a big investment from the Governor's office and the legislature that if it remains in the budget, we will the additional benefit of an executive director at the Georgia Technology Authority who worked for DHS and has direct knowledge of how the system operates and will likely give it high priority so that it may not take 5 years. The bulk of the time will likely be the procurement process and implementation will go pretty smoothly. The DCSS \$TARS system is about 30 years old and the SHINES child welfare case management system is about 20 years and not very user friendly making it tough for frontline workers to document their work and communicate effectively. They a spending a huge chunk of their time manually typing in information - when it can be automated – resulting in less time for personal interactions with children and families. We are in the process of looking at what other states have done recently explored to replace those

kinds of systems. There is money in the budget to maintain current functionality, but we are already having conversations with the Governor's Office, OPB and the legislature about the need to fully replace that system in the next few years. Wes Lewis asked if there are any comparable states that have newly implemented platforms in the last 5 years that we can replicate? Commissioner Broce advised her counterpart in Mississippi is currently go through the process of replacement, she has already gone through procurement, so the commissioner is constantly looking to receive feedback from them. She believes Maryland has also replaced their child welfare case management system in tandem with their integrated eligibility system which is like Gateway. We are looking across the United States to see what people have explored and any specifications that are unique or innovative and best priced for quality.

Vice-Chairman Smith asked if we could provide bigger slides in the handouts – this will be done

Commissioner Broce directed their attention back to the CSFR performance measure that we are currently working with the federal government to provide statistics and reporting mentioned Georgia does not perform better than the majority of the states as it relates to permanency – adoption, reunification or similar outcomes for a child in foster care. Out of the work from the Senate Study Committee last year, one of the bills pertains to better data reporting from the Juvenile Courts on where they are in the process. Many people do not realize it is not solely a DFCS change that would make permanency occur more timely for children. It has to be a partnership with the courts, and that increased transparency through the legislation and ongoing collaboration means that everyone is going to have a clearer picture about what we may need to move the needle and get kids to permanency faster. Commissioner said that will be really exciting to see. Vice Chairman Smith posed it may not and stated obviously the choice would be permanency, but it does not need to be elongated for 2-3 years to make the determination. Commissioner Broce responded it may show us where the courts or other stakeholders may need more resources, not just DFCS. Commissioner Broce said all are pulling in the right direction. Vice Chairman Smith commented they are appreciative of everyone working hard and complimented Demetrius. Ms. Hamilton chimed in on the comments about permanency numbers and how it interfaces with the courts stating she understands that judges are reluctant to move things to TPR unless an adoptive placement has been identified when sometimes the adoptive placement is unwilling to or unable to manage what's going on in the case unless the child is free for adoption - DFCS is looking to place a child but they need to have gone through TPR first. How can this be addressed? Commissioner responded what's interesting is these cases may be handled differently from county to county and better data would be the first step. Ms. Hamilton chimed in to say the data needs to be shared with the judges so they understand we are looking at overall timeframes and what they are looking for may be nonexistent until they grant the TPR. Commissioner Broce followed up to say each county or each circuit may use different methods for tracking the cases, to include paper and different systems. And based on a recent Senate Committee hearing, when this topic was up for discussion, Chair Kirpatrick advised the data bill is the first step to be able to see the numbers, then they will continue to work with the courts, DFCS and other stakeholders that are involved in dependency matters to keep chipping away at

the issues – this is the first step which may reveal the gaps. Commissioner Broce then gave a shoutout to Jerry Bruce and the Child Advocate's Office who have been working really hard to dig into the issue for more quality legal representation for parents and that is something the legislature will continue to explore as it could make a big difference in these cases. Ms. Hamilton agreed.

Vice-Chair Smith then asked if there was any further business, with there being none, the meeting was adjourned.

Meeting adjourned at 2:44p.m.

Respectfully submitted.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Monica Walters", is written over a horizontal line.

Monica Walters, Secretary

APPROVED,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Randall Smith", is written over a horizontal line.

Randall Smith, Vice-Chairman