



**CHILDREN'S CABINET BOARD MEETING**  
**APPROVED MINUTES**  
**July 17, 2018**  
**Claiborne Building, Iowa Room**

**Cabinet Members/Representatives Attendees:**

Deputy Secretary OJJ Dr. James Bueche, Jr.  
Judge Desiree Cook Calvin  
Secretary DCFS Marketa Walters  
Commissioner John L. Dardenne Jr. (Represented by Marsha Shuler)  
Secretary LDH Dr. Rebekah Gee (Represented by Mark Thomas)  
Superintendent John C. White (Represented by Erin Bendily)  
CCAB Chair Sherry Guarisco  
Secretary LED Donald Pierson, Jr. (Represented by Anne G. Villa)  
BESE Board Member Kathy Edmonston

**Cabinet Members Absent:**

Representative Barbara W. Carpenter  
Representative Yvonne Colomb  
Secretary LWC Ava Dejoie

**Call to Order:**

Dr. Dana Hunter, Executive Director, called the meeting to order and welcomed members and guests to the July 17, 2018 Children's Cabinet Board Meeting.

**Roll Call:**

Roll call following the call to order was conducted by Michele M. Rabalais.

**Opening Remarks:** First Lady Donna Edwards provided the opening remarks. The First Lady welcomed Cabinet Members and thanked cabinet members for their hard work and participation.

Dr. Adren Wilson was introduced and also provided brief opening remarks to the Children's Cabinet.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Marsha Shuler made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Deputy Secretary OJJ, Dr. James Bueche, Jr. seconded the motion. All approved. Motion carried.

**Budget and Special Session Outcomes:** Nick Albares, Governor's Office Policy Advisor, spoke regarding the budget and special session outcomes. Mr. Albares stated that when the current administration began the state was facing a \$2 billion dollar deficit. He noted that a portion of the sales tax was reinstated during the last special session that would cover the shortfall. \$50 million would come from the BP settlement for the next 19 years, the limitation on tax credits for taxes paid in other states was delayed for one year, a compromise was made and the sales tax renewal of 4.45% was agreed upon and passed. He also mentioned that the administration is looking at increasing funding for K-12 education and early childhood education. Discussion followed.

Dr. Dana Hunter raised the question that since the full penny tax was not renewed and that there is a small gap where would the cuts be made? Mr. Albares stated that the cuts would come from the following: Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) would have no cuts to services, some of the funds for correction officers pay raises was not appropriated at this time, in addition funds for the Sheriff's to house state offenders was cut.

**Additional Legislative Outcomes:** Marketa Garner-Walters, DCFS Secretary, reported that DCFS had 13 bills that passed with unanimous votes. One of these bills by Senator Gatti raised the age of foster care to 21. As of July 1, 2018 any foster child still in high school can stay in foster care until they graduate or until they turn 21. Discussion followed. In addition DCFS will work on the following: modify state plan, continue to work on the study resolution regarding raising the age of foster care, contact children in foster care that have no family and make sure they have a place to go and work with them to prepare them for the future. Secretary White also stated that there will be a kick off program on August 3, 2018 in the 4<sup>th</sup> floor press room for raise the age. Discussion followed.

Another important bill was passed by Senator Regina Barrow that establishes "Empowering Families to Live Well Louisiana" task force that will work towards ending poverty in Louisiana using new evidence of what works including the earned income tax credit.

Secretary Walters also stated that she will be holding community town hall meetings across the state starting in August. A list of the dates and locations will be distributed to Children's Cabinet Members.

Dr. Adren Wilson informed the Children's Cabinet that with the leadership of Ted James the Louisiana Council on the Success of Black Men and Boys was established.

Sherry Guarisco, Chair of the Children's Cabinet Advisory Board (CCAB), stated that CCAB has been charged with sending budget recommendations for the Children's Cabinet to Dr. Hunter at the August 2018 meeting. Ms. Guarisco stated that one of the charges of the CCAB is to recommend ways in which the issue of poverty can be addressed.

Anne G. Villa, Undersecretary for Louisiana Economic Development, stated that the Office of Economic Development continues to support Head Start and students K-12 and early childhood development as the children are our future.

Erin Bendily, Department of Education, stated that the Department of Education had an exciting session and that they were left with a continuation budget that protects funding for Pre-K and early childhood education. The MFP funding formula that supports public schools across the state was approved with no cuts in funding but no increase to cover the rising cost of education.

Ms. Bendily also stated that the Department of Education did receive \$40 million dollars that would help eliminate some of the families on the waitlist for childcare. This would fund approximately 4,000 more children but is one time money. Discussion followed.

In addition Ms. Bendily stated that the Department has been working closely with the Governor's Office as well as Representative Stephanie Hilferty regarding the Early Childhood Care and Education Commission.

School safety was also a top concern during the Legislative Session. Representative Bacala's bill 716 was a comprehensive bill that dealt with mandatory reporting, how to handle threats, and once children are identified as having challenges how will these children be supported.

In addition, the Department of Education is working closely with the Governor's Office, State Police, GOHSEP, on a Blue Ribbon Commission on School Safety. Finally, a two study groups will be formed that are tasked with the issue of student fees and ensuring that students experiencing financial hardship have access to funds for critical academic activities. In addition, the problem of students inability to pay for school meals was discussed. Discussion followed.

Dr. James Bueche, Jr., Deputy Secretary OJJ, reported that Raise the Age (RTA) has been delayed until March 2019. Dr. Bueche stated that \$4 million was budgeted to open Acadiana but additional funding is needed. Discussion followed.

Mark Thomas, Deputy Secretary, LDH, stated that it was very important that LDH be fully funded for the first time in many years in order to avoid cuts to critical services to the elderly and disabled. LDH is working on eliminating the waiting list for those with intellectual disabilities to ensure that no client will be actively waiting for services and that there is sustainability for several years to come. Discussion followed.

Marsha Shuler, DOA, reported that the two main areas where money is needed are DCFS and Juvenile Justice. Discussion followed.

Dr. Dana Hunter took a moment to discuss the amazing progress that has taken place over the past two during Governor Edwards' administration.

**Next Steps and Priorities:** Sherry Guarisco suggested having more Boards open to citizen participation. Ms. Guarisco feels it would be most helpful to have more people involved who prioritize children's issues. Discussion followed.

**Public Comments:** Cindy Bishop reported that as of March 1, 2018 a child care registry has been set up that requires a federal background check as well as a state background check. A new company has been contracted to do these checks and the results are now coming back in 2-4 hours instead of 3-4 weeks.

Susan Nelson, Executive Director of the Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families, informed the Cabinet that the Partnership will be holding their Annual Meeting on Monday July 30<sup>th</sup> at the West Baton Rouge Conference Center.

Nick Albares discussed the newly developed 'Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies' Council that focuses on maternal mortality. Another piece is a pilot program looking at neo-natal opiate syndrome. This program will look at children who are born substance addicted and how to meet their needs and manage those issues. Discussion followed.

Susan Nelson informed the Children's Cabinet that Louisiana has been chosen to join the Children's Health Leadership Network.

First Lady Donna Edwards stressed the importance of having more dialogue between agencies concerning what needs to be done and what can be done. The more we talk to each other across the departments the better. First Lady Edwards says it's more important to invest in early childhood education so you don't have to invest in incarceration. Early intervention is important.

**Schedule of Upcoming 2018 Meetings:**

Tuesday, September 11, 2018 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	State Capitol Press Room 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor
Tuesday, November 6, 2018 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	State Capitol Press Room 4 <sup>th</sup> Floor

**Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned.

**Next meeting:** September 11, 2018  
Capitol Press Room, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor