

I. Welcome, Introductions and Call to Order

The Empowering Families to Live Well Council, ACT 581 of the 2018 legislative session, was called to order around 10:18 AM in Senate Committee Room A-B at the Louisiana State Capitol on Wednesday, December 18, 2024 by Senator Barrow, who welcomed attendees and provided opening remarks about the council's purpose and vision. The Empowering Families to Live Well Council was reconvening for the first time since 2023, with a renewed focus on addressing poverty and empowering families.

Roll Call Conducted by Ashley Sias.

Council Members and Proxies in attendance:

Senator Regina Barrow, Co-Chair; DCFS Family Support Assistant Secretary Sammy Guillory, Co-Chair; Peggy Jo Paine (DOTD); Yshauna Sanders (LDE); Sarah Hamilton Berthelot (LAUW); Stacey Roussel (Invest in LA); Elizabeth Kay (LDR); Jolie Williamson (Children's Cabinet); Andrew Kilshaw (Gov's Office); Fiona James (LWC); Brenda Evans (LHC)

Guest in Attendance:

Bret Hanemann (DCFS); Meagan Molter (DCFS); Kiera Cash (CCDBR); Vickki Maloid (CCDBR); Tafari Beard (Gov's Office Extern);

Presenters in Attendance:

Tom Costanza, Louisiana Council of Catholic Bishops; Stephanie Mills, Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of New Orleans; Stephanie Sterling, Catholic Charities Diocese of Baton Rouge; Khiry Van Allen, Trepwise; Rachel Fulcher Dawson, University of Notre Dame (**via Recorded Video**)

I. Meeting Minutes

The December meeting focused on reestablishing the council post-COVID and aligning stakeholders to address poverty and empower families. Key topics included eliminating silos among agencies, evaluating existing programs, addressing critical barriers such as housing and childcare, and leveraging evidence-based strategies for impactful solutions.

Presentations

1. Tom Costanza, Louisiana Council of Catholic Bishops

- **Overview:** Provided a historical context for the council, established under LA Revised Statute 51:1055-1058, to combat poverty and strengthen families.
- **Key Points:**
 - Highlighted Louisiana's rank as 49th in child poverty.
 - Stressed the need for coordinated systems and standards of care for poverty to eliminate silos among agencies.
 - Advocated for using evidence-based strategies to tackle poverty.
- **Proposed Focus:** Using 2025 to develop and implement strategies addressing poverty alleviation across Louisiana.

2. Stephanie Mills, Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of New Orleans

- **Program Updates:**
 - Celebrated 100 years of service.
 - Detailed reentry programs for formerly incarcerated individuals and homeless services.
- **Achievements:**
 - Assisted 991 individuals through reentry programs and 812 homeless individuals over five years.
 - Provided \$1.1M in direct assistance for basic needs.
- **Challenges:**
 - Increasing housing costs and limited resources to meet growing needs.
- **Future Goals:** Enhance case management services and secure funding extensions.

3. Stephanie Sterling, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Baton Rouge

- **Parents & Children Together (PACT) Program Overview:**
 - Focused on early childhood education and parent engagement.
 - Utilized a two-generational approach to address both parent and child needs.
- **Success Metrics:**
 - 90% improvement in children's school readiness.

- 50% increase in parent-child engagement.
 - 59 families served with a 92% retention rate.
- **Barriers:** Transportation, broadband access, and affordable childcare, especially in rural areas.

4. Rachel Fulcher Dawson, University of Notre Dame

- **Research Overview:**
 - Highlighted the effectiveness of programs evaluated through randomized control trials.
 - **Key Findings:**
 - Programs like Padua (wraparound case management) and Stay the Course (support for community college students) demonstrated measurable success in increasing employment, earnings, and educational persistence.
 - Presented data showcasing positive return on investment for interventions such as homelessness prevention.
 - **Future Collaboration:** Suggested replicating successful models in Louisiana.
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Discussion

Barriers Identified:

1. **Housing:** Rising rental costs and a lack of affordable options create instability for families.
 2. **Transportation:** Rural areas face limited public transportation options.
 3. **Childcare:** High costs and insufficient availability hinder employment opportunities.
 4. **Broadband:** Lack of access impacts education and job opportunities, particularly in rural communities.
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Key Takeaways

1. **Program Effectiveness:**
 - Catholic Charities' initiatives demonstrated significant progress in reducing homelessness and improving self-sufficiency.
 - The PACT program showed strong outcomes in early childhood education and family engagement.
2. **Collaboration Needs:**
 - Greater coordination among stakeholders is critical to eliminating silos and ensuring resources reach families effectively.
3. **Evidence-Based Practices:**
 - Programs with proven success, such as those evaluated by Notre Dame, should be scaled statewide.

Requested Items

1. Send slide presentations and document via email to council members.
2. Finalize evaluations of Catholic Charities programs by July 2025.
3. Advocate for increased funding to sustain and expand reentry and PACT initiatives.
4. Integrate Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) metrics into council's data tracking.
5. Include housing authorities, transportation experts, and broadband providers in future meetings.

Next Steps

1. Schedule a follow-up meeting to discuss funding proposals for programs expiring in March 2025.
2. Provide a list of all council members and contact information.
3. Gather key state-level stakeholders in a document. (Dr. Procopio Request)
4. Share evaluation results at the next council meeting.
5. Request Council to set new goals. (Request by Sen. Barrow)
6. Invite University of Notre Dame for an in-depth discussion on their research findings.

Next Meeting

Tentative Date: February 19, 2025

Time: 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Location: Senate Committee Room A-B

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:15 PM.

Minutes Pending Approval