

Chairman Wm. Weston J. Newton

*First Vice-Chair:
Laurie Slade Funderburk*

Legislative Oversight Committee

*Nathan Ballentine
Gary E. Clary
Kirkman Finlay III
Joseph H. Jefferson Jr.
Walton J. McLeod
Joshua Putnam
Samuel Rivers Jr.
Tommy M. Stringer
Bill Taylor*



*William K. (Bill) Bowers
Raye Felder
Phyllis J. Henderson
Mia S. McLeod
Ralph W. Norman
Robert L. Ridgeway III
James E. Smith, Jr.
Edward R. Tallon Sr.
Robert Q. Williams*

South Carolina House of Representatives

*Jennifer L. Dobson
Research Director*

*Cathy A. Greer
Administration Coordinator*

**Post Office Box 11867
Columbia, South Carolina 29211
Telephone: (803) 212-6810 • Fax: (803) 212-6811
Room 228 Blatt Building**

*Charles L. Appleby IV
Legal Counsel*

**Healthcare Subcommittee Meeting
February 11, 2016
9:00 a.m.
Room 110 - Blatt Building**

Archived Video Available

- I. You may access archived video of this meeting by visiting the South Carolina General Assembly's website (<http://www.scstatehouse.gov>) and click on "Citizens' Interests," then click on "House Legislative Oversight Committee Postings and Reports." Lastly, click on "Video Archives" for a listing of archived videos for the Legislative Oversight Committee.

Minutes

- I. House Rule 4.5 requires the standing committees of the House to prepare and make available for public inspection, in compliance with Section 30-4-90, the minutes of full committee meetings. House Rule 4.5 further provides that such minutes need not be verbatim accounts of such meetings. It is the practice of the House Legislative Oversight Committee to provide minutes, which are not verbatim accounts of such meetings, for its Subcommittee meetings.
- II. The Healthcare Subcommittee (Subcommittee) meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Subcommittee Chairman Nathan Ballentine on Thursday, February 11, 2016, in Room 110 of the Blatt Building, Columbia, South Carolina. The following Subcommittee Members were present when the meeting was called to order: Subcommittee Chairman Ballentine, Representative Mia McLeod, and Representative Bill Taylor. Representative Walton J. McLeod arrived later. Representatives Laurie Slade Funderburk and Robert Q. Williams were also in attendance.
- III. Representative Mia McLeod moved to approve the Subcommittee minutes from its meeting on February 3, 2016. A roll call vote was held, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Rep. Mia McLeod’s Motion to approve the Subcommittee Minutes from February 3, 2016:	Yea	Nay	Not Voting
Rep. Ballentine	✓		
Rep. Mia McLeod	✓		
Rep. Walton McLeod			Not Present
Rep. Taylor	✓		

Continued Discussion of the Department of Social Services

- I. This was the seventh meeting with the Department of Social Services (DSS). Chairman Ballentine explained that the purpose of the meeting was to continue the Subcommittee’s discussion with the Department of Social Services, with a focus on the agency’s responses to the Subcommittee’s inquiries and a timeline for the implementation of the agency’s recommendations.
- II. Chairman Ballentine reminded those present that all testimony must be given under oath. All of those who intended to testify were sworn in as a group. Those who were sworn in from DSS were: Susan Alford (Director), Taron Davis (Deputy Director of Child Welfare Services), and Karen Wingo (Director of Communications and Legislative Affairs).
- III. Chairman Ballentine explained that the Subcommittee members would ask questions of the agency, primarily questions dealing with the subjects of foster care and domestic violence, and that the appropriate agency representative would testify in response to the questions.

Representative Mia McLeod asked if the agency had considered implementing continuing education training in the subject of domestic violence so as to augment the training that DSS employees undergo when they first become employed at the agency. Director Alford testified that the agency provides optional continuing education to its staff in the subject of domestic violence, but that the training is not mandatory, although she admitted that such training should probably be mandatory.

Representative Mia McLeod asked if and how the agency tracks victims of domestic violence. Director Alford testified that the agency does not collect aggregate data about domestic violence victims because domestic violence data are stored in individual case files. She testified that the agency was considering implementing some type of aggregate tracking, although the implementation would be a long-term project.

Representative Mia McLeod asked what actions the agency is taking in order to ensure that its employees are properly supervised in light of the fact that the agency is in the process of becoming fully staffed. Director Alford testified that long-term solutions to the problem are reducing the caseloads of DSS employees by hiring more caseworkers and providing more training to DSS employees, and that a short-term solution is connecting caseworkers and their supervisors with other departments in an effort to have an agency-wide focus on domestic violence.

Representative Funderburk asked if the agency considers a domestic violence survivor to be a “vulnerable adult.” Director Alford testified that men or women who have been victims of domestic violence are “vulnerable adults,” although they may not be defined as such in state law. She testified that domestic

violence survivors qualify for DSS services as “victims,” but that they do not qualify for services as “vulnerable adults,” as the term is defined in law.

Chairman Ballentine asked for the length of Director Alford’s tenure as Director of DSS. Director Alford testified that she had been Director for approximately on year. Chairman Ballentine and Representative Mia McLeod thanked Director Alford for during great work in such a short amount of time.

Representative Taylor asked Director Alford what she would do to reform DSS if she had complete authority over the agency. Director Alford testified that she would ensure that the agency has individuals in leadership roles who are intentional about dealing with the problem of domestic violence, ensure that the agency forms better and stronger partnerships to combat domestic violence, and ensure that caseworkers have the training necessary to identify families with domestic violence issues and to effectively deal with domestic violence without simply referring all cases out to other agencies.

Representative Funderburk asked for the number of foster parent applications statewide that had been neither approved nor denied. Deputy Director Davis testified that there were approximately 512 pending foster parent applications.

Representative Funderburk asked for the number of those 512 pending foster parent applications that had been pending for more than 120 days, which is the maximum application time allowable under state law. Deputy Director Davis testified that the average time for a foster parent application to be approved or denied was 7.3 months in 2013, 10.1 months in 2014, and 12.6 months in 2015. She testified that the agency was reforming the foster parent licensing process to shorten the wait time.

Representative Funderburk asked for the number of children in foster care statewide. Deputy Director Davis testified that, as of February 11, there were 3,989 children in foster care and only 2,334 foster home families. She explained that the agency’s goal was to have one foster home family for every foster child.

Representative Funderburk related to Deputy Director Davis the concerns of a constituent that the foster parent application process was outdated and did not have any online component, and asked if the agency had plans to update the application process. Deputy Director Davis testified that some of the foster parent application process is handled by an outside organization, but that the agency could look into the process to make sure that it is updated.

Representative Funderburk asked for an estimated timeline for the agency’s plan of separating the foster parent application process from the foster parent support process. Deputy Director Davis testified that the agency could not yet provide a timeline for the separation of the foster parent application and support processes, but that such a timeline would be forthcoming once the foster parent offices have been fully staffed within the next year or so.

Representative Funderburk asked what the agency would do in terms of separating the foster parent application and support processes in the event that the General Assembly does not provide the necessary funding to fully staff the offices. Deputy Director Davis testified that that agency is completely dedicated to filling the unstaffed positions in the foster parent offices in order to reform the offices, and that it will seek to fill the positions until they have been filled since the reform of the offices is no essential to improving the agency’s foster parent services.

Representative Funderburk asked of Deputy Director Davis what her advice would be to individuals who have been licensed as foster parents, but are not getting the foster parent support from DSS that they need and are entitled to. Deputy Director Davis testified that she would advise the foster parents to always make sure that they are voicing their concerns and needs to DSS so that the agency can act on them, and that she hopes that the foster parent support offices would improve so as to be able to meet the needs of foster parents.

Representative Funderburk suggested that the Subcommittee adopt some recommendations relating to foster care and DSS so as to reform the foster parent application process and track the agency's performance in that area.

Representative Mia McLeod asked if the agency has a process in place by which foster parents, domestic violence victims, and other DSS consumers can provide feedback to DSS about their experiences with the agency. Deputy Director Davis testified that the agency does not currently have a systemic process for the agency's consumers to provide feedback, although she stated that many of the consumers do provide feedback haphazardly.

Representative Walton McLeod expressed his disapproval of the suggestion that foster care parent applicants be allowed to submit any part of the foster parent application online.

IV. Chairman Ballentine explained that he would provide suggested agency reforms, and would ask for Director Alford to provide a timeline for implementation of each of the reforms.

- 1) *Examining operational units for the elimination, duplication, and streamlining of functions.* Director Alford testified that the timeline depends on whether her budget request for the establishment of an Inspector General at DSS is granted. If the request is granted, she stated that she expected the date of implementation to be December 31, 2016. If the request is not granted, she stated that it would take longer for the agency to develop a plan to deal with the issue.
- 2) *Examining the specific functions of the agency to determine if they best fit with the agency's core mission.* Director Alford testified that this process is ongoing, and the agency does not have a specific implementation date.
- 3) *Examining the need to reduce the agency's administrative function.* Director Alford testified that about 6% of the agency's employees are administrative employees, so the agency has begun reviewing its new hires to make sure that the position is necessary before the position is filled. In light of that, she stated that the process is ongoing.
- 4) *Merging the administrative functions into a single division.* Director Alford testified that this had been accomplished in May 2015.
- 5) *Examine the agency's overreliance on contracting core services to outside providers.* Director Alford testified that this was an ongoing process and that she could not provide an exact timeline.
- 6) *Aligning the supervision of the county DSS offices with the regional structure.* Director Alford testified that this had been accomplished in February 2016.
- 7) *Standardizing the regional structure for economic services and human services.* Director Alford testified that the agency's goal was to complete this by December 31, 2017.

Representative Mia McLeod moved that the Subcommittee meeting with DSS again at the beginning of the 2017 calendar year in order to follow-up with the agency’s progress in implementing the aforementioned changes. A roll call vote was held, and the motion passed unanimously.

Rep. Mia McLeod’s motion that the Subcommittee meet with DSS at the beginning of 2017 to follow-up with the agency:	Yea	Nay	Not Voting
Rep. Ballentine	✓		
Rep. Mia McLeod	✓		
Rep. Walton McLeod	✓		
Rep. Taylor	✓		

V. Representative Mia McLeod moved that the Subcommittee include in its study of DSS a recommendation that the agency be required to institute mandatory employee training related to domestic violence, to be provided to DSS employees on at least an annual basis. A roll call vote was held, and the motion was passed unanimously.

Rep. Mia McLeod’s motion that the Subcommittee include in its study of DSS a recommendation that the agency be required to institute mandatory employee training related to domestic violence, to be provided to DSS employees on at least an annual basis:	Yea	Nay	Not Voting
Rep. Ballentine	✓		
Rep. Mia McLeod	✓		
Rep. Walton McLeod	✓		
Rep. Taylor	✓		

Chairman Ballentine explained that a suggested motion was provided to him from Representative Funderburk that the agency consider and implement, as appropriate, internal changes to track the practices and performance measures relating to the recruitment, licensure, and support services for foster families. Representative Walton McLeod made the motion. A roll call vote was held, and the motion was passed unanimously.

Rep. Walton McLeod’s motion that the agency consider and implement, as appropriate, internal changes to track the practices and performance measures relating to the recruitment, licensure, and support services for foster families:	Yea	Nay	Not Voting
Rep. Ballentine	✓		
Rep. Mia McLeod	✓		
Rep. Walton McLeod	✓		
Rep. Taylor	✓		

Representative Taylor moved that members of the Subcommittee be allowed to include a timely submitted written statement with the Subcommittee’s study of DSS. A roll call vote was held, and the motion was passed unanimously.

Rep. Taylor’s motion that members of the Subcommittee be allowed to include a timely submitted written statement with the Subcommittee’s study of DSS:	Yea	Nay	Not Voting
Rep. Ballentine	✓		
Rep. Mia McLeod	✓		
Rep. Walton McLeod	✓		
Rep. Taylor	✓		

Representative Taylor moved that the meeting be the Subcommittee’s final meeting with DSS unless, after a review of the written study a Subcommittee member submits a timely written request to the Subcommittee Chairman for an additional meeting to discuss any issue of concern with the written study. A roll call vote was held, and the motion was passed unanimously.

Rep. Taylor’s motion that the meeting be the Subcommittee’s final meeting with DSS unless, after a review of the written study a Subcommittee member submits a timely written request to the Subcommittee Chairman for an additional meeting to discuss any issue of concern with the written study:	Yea	Nay	Not Voting
Rep. Ballentine	✓		
Rep. Mia McLeod	✓		
Rep. Walton McLeod	✓		
Rep. Taylor	✓		

Chairman Ballentine explained that, if by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, February 24, 2016, no member of the Subcommittee has requested another meeting with DSS in writing, the Subcommittee study of DSS will be provided to the Full Committee for the Committee’s consideration. Chairman Ballentine thanked Committee staff and DSS staff for their diligent work in the oversight process.

VI. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.