

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

FINAL REPORT

Select Committee on Minority Issues

2013 - 2014 Interim Legislative Session

Senate Members

Senator Miller, Chair
Senator Cookman
Senator Nohe
Senator Yost

House Members

Delegate Moore, Chair
Delegate Guthrie
Delegate Lawrence
Delegate Marshall
Delegate Stephens
Delegate Evans
Delegate Folk
Delegate Kump
Delegate McCuskey

The Select Committee on Minority Issues was appointed by the Joint Committee on Government and Finance following the 2012 regular session of the 80th Legislature. The Committee was not directed to study any particular resolution or area of interest, but was given the task of studying a vast array of issues effecting West Virginia's minority population. The areas of concern included: minority health and the Office of Minority Health, housing discrimination, employment discrimination, minority unemployment and underemployment, economic development, state police recruitment and retention of minority officers, prison overcrowding, community development for at-risk youths, and education.

JUNE 2013 MEETING

The Committee reviewed the 2012-2013 Committee on Minority Issues Final Report and heard from Dr. Carolyn Stuart, Executive Director, Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs, regarding issues that her office was currently examining and to express the need for the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs' funding to be restored to the previous level.

JULY 2013 MEETING

The Committee heard a presentation from the West Virginia State Police regarding employee retention, employee diversity, recruitment, funding, and functions of the different departments within the State Police Department.

Colonel Smithers, Superintendent, WV State Police, gave an overview of the services offered by the WV State Police, detailed the Department's current employment statistics and diversity and stressed the need for additional funding.

Lieutenant Patterson, WV State Police, discussed diversity among employees and the WV State Police's efforts to recruit diverse employees, specifically females and racial minorities. Lt. Patterson cited lack of consistency of a recruitment class, perception of the force's makeup, employee morale and lack of full time recruiters as obstacles to achieving their desired goals.

Lieutenant Corsaro, WV State Police, addressed the issue of the State Police's broadband and the effect on the office's functionality. Lt. Corsaro stated that if the broadband system would fail, it would negatively effect the efficiency and utilization of the current database, which is essential on numerous facets of the State Police's day to day functions. Lt. Corsaro stated that the database needs upgraded at a cost in excess of approximately \$5 million.

AUGUST 2013 MEETING

The Committee heard a presentation from Reverend Matthew Watts, representing the Tuesday Morning Group, the HOPE Community Development Center and the Charleston Branch of the NAACP. Reverend Watts made a presentation regarding the need for the Select Committee on Minority Issues to entertain presentations from various state agencies relating to the current state of minority affairs in their respective agencies. Specifically, Reverend Watts explained the importance of the Committee following up on any initiatives undertaken by agencies engaged in the fields of education, employment, economic development, criminal and juvenile justice, health and racial profiling. Reverend Watts and Kenneth

Hale, President, WV NAACP (Charleston) entertained questions from Committee members. The Committee stated that they would indeed attempt to secure the Secretary of the WV DHHR to make a presentation during the September interim meeting.

SEPTEMBER 2013 MEETING

The Committee heard a presentation from Molly Jordan, Deputy Secretary, West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources. Ms. Jordan that there were three areas the WV DHHR was looking at to improve minority health in the State of West Virginia and introduced three speakers that would address each of these with the Committee.

First, Angie Booker, CEO, Jackie Winthrop Hospital, and Chair of the Multicultural Equity Work Group, addressed the Committee regarding plans to work with the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs in the future to improve minority health in the State noting that minorities are less likely to receive regular health care than non-minority counterparts. Ms. Booker stated that the Multicultural Equity Work Group is preparing suggestions based on data it is currently in the process of collecting. The Multicultural Equity Work Group intends on having a report compiled by November to share with the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs.

Next, Ann Williams, Deputy Commissioner of Health Improvement, Bureau of Public Health, addressed the Committee. Ms. Williams stated that the Office of Minority Health is seeking to fill a new position, funded by the State, to work closely with the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs. The Office of Minority Health, which is currently funded by federal dollars from the federal REACH program is set to expire September 30, 2013. The Bureau of Public Health intends on issuing a Minority Health Report in late November or early December detailing the current status of minority health in the state. The last report was issued in 2007.

Lastly, Alicia McIntyre, Bureau of Children and Families, discussed the present status of foster care in the state. She stated that there are approximately 3,890 foster care homes currently in the state. Of these, approximately 2100 are private homes. Ms. McIntyre stressed that of recruitment and retention of suitable foster care homes has been a persistent problem and the Bureau is attempting to address this problem.

The presenters were asked questions by Members of the Committee and the Committee fielded questions from those present in the audience including Kenneth Hale, President, Charleston NAACP; Robert Hardy, Tuesday Morning Group; and Loretta Young, Minority Health Advocacy Group.

OCTOBER 2013 MEETING

The Committee first heard a power point presentation from Zach Brown, Executive Director, Coalition to End Homelessness, regarding homelessness in West Virginia. Mr. Brown stated that there are approximately 1623 persons in shelters on any given night in WV and 622 persons on the street. Of those in shelters, 23% are in Emergency Shelters and 15% are in transitional housing, 15% are chronically homeless, 18% are veterans and 20% are children. Of those on the street, 20% are families, 29% are chronically homeless and .5% are veterans. Mr. Brown next discussed the four Continuums of Care ("COC") operating within the boundaries of WV and offered solutions to address the problem of homelessness in the State. Mr. Brown finished his presentation by discussing the current services offered by the Coalition to End Homelessness and what direction the organization is headed to maximize efficiency and effectiveness.

Julie Haden, West Virginia Office of Economic Opportunity, next addressed the Committee regarding the West Virginia Emergency Solutions Grants program. Ms. Haden stated that the definition of "homeless" is an individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This year, over \$1.5 million has been given to the State by federal emergency solutions grants. This money has been given to prevent low and extremely low income families and individuals from becoming homeless and to assist those that are currently homeless. These grants helped operate homeless facilities; increased the quality and quantity of facilities available; provided essential services such as food, physical and mental health care, substance abuse assistance, domestic violence shelters, educational assistance, and life skills tutoring; and helped re-house homeless individuals and families. Ms. Haden emphasized the importance of this funding to help the State combat the homelessness problem. Ms. Haden briefly described how homeless individuals in the State can receive assistance and described services currently available.

NOVEMBER 2013 MEETING

Mark White, Committee Counsel, discussed the nature of proposed working groups which would each discuss a selected area of concern for the minority population of the State. These topics include education, employment, economic development, criminal and juvenile justice, and health.

Dr. Carolyn Stuart, Executive Director, Herbert H. Henderson Office of Minority Affairs, discussed several issues of concern that the Committee cited in a memo to her Office in 2012. These issues included the state procurement process, convicted drugs offenders and lack of State sponsored treatment, the need for aptitude tests for convicted individuals re-entering society, lack

of women's work programs in correctional facilities, shortage of housing discrimination complaint investigators, social services such as foster care, educational issues, minority health concerns, and problems within the juvenile and criminal justice system.

DECEMBER 2013 MEETING

Chairman Moore spoke briefly about the working group process and designated topics. These topics of study include: Health, Education, Employment, Business and Economic Development, and Juvenile and Criminal Justice.

JANUARY 2014 MEETING

The Committee discussed designated working group topics and presented recommendations and ideas to address these issues.

Mark White, House Counsel, presented and explained the contents of the Select Committee on Minority Issues Final Report for the 2013-2014 Interim Legislative Session.

CONCLUSION

This Committee has existed since the 2003 Interim Legislative Session and has examined many issues in depth over the past decade and recommended numerous pieces of legislation to address problematic areas. The Committee recommends that the Select Committee on Minority Issues continue during the 2014-2015 Interim Legislative Session to continue studying areas of concern which still need to be addressed and continual monitoring. These issues include, but are not limited to, employment discrimination, housing discrimination, economic development, prison overcrowding, criminal and juvenile justice, education and healthcare disparity.

Additionally, the Committee intends to work closely with the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs in the next year to find feasible solutions to many of the issues examined by the Committee.

Respectfully submitted:

Senator Ronald F. Miller
Co-Chair

Delegate Clif Moore
Co-Chair