

Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)

Legislative and Public Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

August 30, 2021

Attendance

Members Present

Amy Porterfield, Chair
Bob Kresmer
Ed House
Donald Porterfield
John McCann

Members Absent

Guests Present
Ted Chittenden
David Steinmetz
Nathan Pullen
Steve Tepper
Jonathan Pringle
Bea Shapiro

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Minutes

Call to Order and Introductions

Amy Porterfield, Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:10 pm. Introductions were made and a quorum was present.

Approval of February 3, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Amy Porterfield motioned to table the approval of the February 3, 2020 minutes. Bob Kresmer seconded the motion. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

Review the Scope of the Committee

Amy Porterfield stated she wanted to discuss the scope of the committee's activities surrounding Legislation and policies and discuss some current Legislative efforts. Ms. Porterfield stated the Legislative and Public Policy Committee was designed to address any state level policies and would not be able to address Federal level policies or Legislation. Amy Porterfield stated the committee was able to address any issues within the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), the Department of Economic Security (DES), or other state agencies for example. David Steinmetz inquired how the council determined whether members could advocate for certain Legislation or policies. Amy Porterfield stated the council could advise the Governor of what best served the blindness community through the Governor's Liaison, Christina Corieri. Amy Porterfield stated Christina Corieri would indicate whether the Governor was in support of or neutral on an item, in which the council could continue advocacy efforts. Ms. Porterfield noted that Ms. Corieri would also direct council members to appropriate contacts within other agencies, such as the Department of Education, if appropriate. Amy Porterfield stated the council could advocate for transportation issues at the state level, although most transportation issues were at the county level. Jonathan Pringle inquired whether the committee ever invited a Division of the State Government to discuss their services that were available to blind and deaf-blind individuals. Amy Porterfield stated the committee had invited individuals to provide information to committee members or to the Full Council. David Steinmetz inquired whether the committee typically received feedback from consumer groups or the public regarding issues or Legislation. Amy Porterfield stated the committee would receive feedback from consumer groups, the public, or from the resolutions passed by consumer groups and examine whether they would follow under the purview of the committee and the council. Bob Kresmer stated the committees or other agencies such as the Talking Book Library would also bring items to the Legislative and Public Policy Committee. Amy Porterfield agreed and noted the committee would need to determine whether the issue was in the scope of the committee.

ILB Proposal Discussion

Amy Porterfield stated the council was interested in additional funding for the Independent Living Blind (ILB) program and inquired whether the Arizona Council of the Blind (AzCB) made a resolution regarding that item. John McCann stated the AzCB had passed the resolution for an additional \$500,000. Amy Porterfield stated the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona (NFBA) was now requesting 1 million in additional funding, and she would begin developing the Talking Points for discussions with the Governor's Office. Bea Shapiro suggested that part of the funds be used for equipment for ILB services and clients. Amy Porterfield cautioned the council from trying to micromanage the funds at the Governor's level, and that it be managed at the

agency level. Amy Porterfield stated the council previously asked the funding to be written as a line item, so the funds could not be moved to other areas within DES. Jonathan Pringle suggested the council indicate whether the budget should be added to either above the line or below the line. Amy Porterfield stated the council would not typically tell the Legislation where to put the funds. Donald Porterfield stated the council would request the item be added as a line item within the ILB program, so that it could not be moved from that program. Amy Porterfield stated the funds could be used for client services, staff salaries, or equipment although the council would not micromanage where to put the funds.

Ted Chittenden stated his recollection that the structure for ILB services for individuals under 55 had been removed and inquired whether that would be part of the additional ILB funding. Amy Porterfield stated that any additional ILB funds could not be used for ILB services for individuals under 55. Ms. Porterfield stated that when the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was implemented, the IL services separated from RSA. Amy Porterfield stated the funds were passed through RSA to the Centers for Independent Living (CIL)s to manage their IL services and ILB services separated out so they could be managed by RSA. Ms. Porterfield stated that ILB services for individuals under 55 did not exist under the Federal government. Amy Porterfield stated she could develop Talking Points regarding the potential ILB funding and allow the committee to review them. Ted Chittenden motioned the committee to support an increase in ILB funds for individuals over 55. John McCann seconded the motion. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

State Level Legislation Concerns Discussion

John McCann stated he would be interested in exploring advocacy efforts for accessible voting and noted that many consumer groups were involved in those efforts. Amy Porterfield agreed and stated that it would depend on how the council presented the information to the Governor's Office. Amy Porterfield stated the committee could craft a neutral approach that outlined the access challenges for blind and visually impaired individuals.

State Agency Policy Concerns Discussion

Bob Kresmer stated the council met with Statewide Independent Living (SILC) representatives previously, who indicated the agency would support the council's efforts regarding services to individuals under 55. Amy Porterfield inquired whether that would fall under a policy or a Best Practice. Jonathan Pringle stated that it would fall under Best Practice and noted that many CILs did not receive referrals from individuals outside of Phoenix and Tucson. Ed House cautioned the committee against those efforts, which could potentially decrease control over those services. Amy Porterfield

stated the services were separated and inquired how the council could advocate for services to individuals under 55. Ed House stated that in the past, there were several ways that RSA would receive funds for ILB services. Amy Porterfield stated the funds could be used for salary increases, as well as increased services to individuals. Ed House inquired regarding the percentage of funds that would go to contractors or staff. Amy Porterfield stated the council would have that conversation with RSA, and not at the Governor's level. Amy Porterfield stated that SILC had indicated that they would support the council's advocacy efforts in providing services to individuals under 55. Ted Chittenden stated that during the National Convention of the American Council of the Blind, the Virginian Commissioner indicated that he was able to receive funding for individuals under 55, but he was not sure how that was achieved. Amy Porterfield stated that it might depend on the relationship between the agency and the CIL. Ms. Porterfield inquired whether committee members would benefit from having that conversation with RSA or Brian Dulude. Bob Kresmer stated that he had a meeting planned with Kristen Mackey, and he would add it to his agenda.

Ted Chittenden stated his recollection that some state agencies were requiring individuals submit their driver's license for employment. Amy Porterfield stated she could inquire regarding the appropriate contact on that issue. Ted Chittenden stated the committee had also previously discussed an issue regarding the differentiation between interpreting services and Support Service Provider (SSP) services. Jonathan Pringle stated the funding and administration for SSP services was handled by the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and was overseeing the training of individuals. Mr. Pringle stated that if a deaf-blind individual needed assistance to call a doctor, a hearing person could act as a relay interpreter, although there were questions if that person was providing ASL interpreting services. Jonathan Pringle stated the funds were thin and were being administered primarily in Phoenix and Tucson. Amy Porterfield stated the committee had previously discussed individuals potentially being made eligible for Arizona Long Term Care Services (ALTCS). Jonathan Pringle stated that individuals were not eligible for those funds if they were too independent, and there was a service gap. Amy Porterfield stated the committee would benefit from an education session on what the policy or law stated. Bob Kresmer stated he would include that on his agenda when he spoke to Kristen Mackey. Ted Chittenden stated the committee had also previously discussed the delay for clients to receive equipment due to the purchasing process and inquired whether that had been resolved. Bea Shapiro stated that RSA staff did not wait to purchase Assistive Technology (AT) equipment for clients. Bob Kresmer noted that several Purchasing Technicians (PT) had been hired also, which helped to expedite that process. Bea Shapiro stated that some counselors might be slower in processing the requests, although it was not a procedural issue.

Jonathan Pringle inquired whether the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) vendors had considered offering services other than vending services. Nathan Pullen stated the Randolph Sheppard Act at the Federal and State level prescribed a priority for a merchandising business, which was generally accepted to be food service delivery. Mr. Pullen noted that some BEP vendors in larger sites, such as the Pentagon, could offer additional services, although the vendors at the state level typically provided food services. Nathan Pullen stated that BEP could consider alternate opportunities for vendors that were small in scope. Amy Porterfield stated that RSA had a policy that the agency would only provide 12 units of remedial education for a student to be college-ready, which was not enough. Ms. Porterfield stated she also felt there was systemic bias built into the policy for individuals that were not English speaking.

Agenda and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Legislative and Public Policy Committee TBD. Agenda items are as follows:

- ILB Proposal Discussion

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Public Comment

A call to the public was made with no response forthcoming.

Adjournment of Meeting

Bob Kresmer moved to adjourn the meeting. John McCann seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:36 pm.