

**Behavioral Health Planning Council
Legislative Committee**

**Wednesday, December 16, 2020
12:00 PM, CT**

Call to Order. Brenda Bergsrud, Chairperson, called the organizational meeting of the BHPC Legislative Committee to order at 12:01 PM, CT.

Members Present. Brenda Bergsrud; Teresa Larsen; Emma Quinn; Carlotta McCleary.

Observers. Tami Conrad, Department of Human Services

Facilitator. Greg Gallagher, The Consensus Council.

Legislative Committee Charge. Greg Gallagher provided background information regarding the formation and mission of the BHPC Legislative Committee. During the December 9, 2020, quarterly business meeting of the BHPC, Carlotta McCleary made and Kurt Snyder seconded a motion to establish a BHPC Legislative Committee, charged with (1) identifying prospective legislative initiatives aligned with the purpose of the BHPC; (2) monitoring legislative initiatives through the legislative process; (3) coordinating communications with BHPC members and facilitating effective BHPC input throughout the process; (4) soliciting the active participation of BHPC members; (5) drafting legislation that might advance the aims of the BHPC and the state's behavioral health strategic plan; and (6) empowering the BHPC Legislative Council, with full participation of the BHPC Executive Committee, to transact legislative activities that support the aims of the BHPC. The motion passed unanimously. The following BHPC members were appointed as members of the BHPC Legislative Committee: Brenda Bergsrud (Executive Committee Member); Kurt Snyder (Executive Committee Member); Teresa Larsen; Carlotta McCleary; and Emma Quinn.

The purpose of this organizational meeting is to review the charge of the Committee, develop a plan to achieve each of the Committee responsibilities, and to develop a list of possible BHPC legislative priorities.

Legislative Committee Organizational Structure. Legislative Committee members discussed and enacted a series of measures to structure its activity throughout the 2021 Legislative Session, including:

1. **Standing Committee Status.** Members discussed the organizational standing of the Legislative Committee, resulting in the enactment of the following resolution:

TERESA LARSEN MADE AND EMMA QUINN SECONDED A MOTION TO SPECIFY THE BHPC LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE AS AN ACTING STANDING COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED BY THE

BHPC FULL MEMBERSHIP TO TRANSACT BUSINESS IN PREPARATION FOR AND PROGRESSING THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE 2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. CHAIRPERSON BERGSRUD ANNOUNCED THE PASSAGE OF THE MOTION.

2. *Solicitation for and Collection of Legislative Proposals.* Members agreed that the Legislative Committee would seek out the engagement of the full BHPC membership to identify any legislative proposals, including bills, resolutions, or proffered ideas, that might fall within the domain of the BHPC's mandated responsibility. The Legislative Committee will assume responsibility for the management of any legislative proposals or activities.
3. *Participation in Weekly Protection and Advocacy Project Legislative Summary Sessions.* Members agreed that the Legislative Committee would attend and contribute to the weekly Friday-afternoon legislative summary sessions sponsored by the Protection and Advocacy Project. The Legislative Committee would use these weekly sessions as a means to learn, exchange information, and identify possible collaboration with other interested parties.
4. *Exchange of Legislative Summaries Prepared by Teresa Larsen.* Teresa Larsen agreed to forward any legislative summaries, produced by the Protection and Advocacy Project in support of the weekly legislative summary meetings, to the Legislative Committee and the full BHPC membership. Mr. Gallagher will assist Ms. Larsen in the distribution of materials to the BHPC membership.
5. *Legislative Committee Weekly Meetings.* Members agreed that the Legislative Committee would schedule weekly planning meetings every Friday morning from 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM, CT. Meeting scheduling may lessen in frequency as the session progresses and the Committee achieves increased efficiency. The Committee will establish a regular means of communicating directly with all BHPC members in a timely manner, respecting the need to move quickly on certain legislation.
6. *Legislative Committee Authority to Act on Behalf of the BHPC Membership.* Members acknowledged the authority placed with it, acting in concert with the BHPC Executive Committee, to transact legislative business on behalf of the BHPC membership. Members affirmed the importance to act with care and in keeping with the aims and reputation of the BHPC.

Identification of BHPC Legislative Initiatives. Committee members identified an initial list of legislative initiatives that may fall within the BHPC's purview, including:

- *Construction of a New State Hospital.* Members identified the proposal to build a new state hospital as a principal item of interest, arising from previous BHPC discussions. Members expressed interest to learn more about the details of the proposed project's

design and impact across the state. Members requested that Mr. Gallagher (1) reach out and request a meeting with Dr. Rosalie Etherington sometime during December 28-31, 2020, to discuss the various considerations of this proposal, and (2) to request a one-page summary descriptor of the project and its merits.

- *Protect Existing Programs from Possible Budget Cuts.* Members expressed an interest to sustain, minimally, the state's current funding levels for behavioral health programming. Members identified a need to carefully review the forthcoming DHS budget to ascertain budget priorities, including the anticipated impact of reallocations brought on by the implementation of the state's Medicaid 1915(i) plan.
- *Support of Medicaid Expansion.* Members reiterated the BHPC's support for the continuation of the state's Medicaid Expansion program, as reaffirmed during the December 9, 2020, meeting of the BHPC.
- *Establishing a Balance Between Substance Use and Mental Health Efforts.* Members identified a need to establish a programmatic and budgetary balance that supports both substance use disorder and mental health initiatives, forestalling any inequitable redistribution of funds that might introduce disparity.
- *Assessing the Balanced Use of Federal and State Funding.* Members expressed a need to learn more about the manner in which DHS or other state agencies are optimizing the use of both federal and state funding and resisting any effort to transfer funding inordinately from state to federal responsibility. Both funding sources are important and should be optimally used.
- *Support for Juvenile Justice Act.* Members expressed support for reforming the state's juvenile justice system and advancing the proposed Juvenile Justice Act, which appropriately transfers certain program service caseloads to the DHS system and away from the juvenile justice system, reflecting treatment best practices. Members speculated that current funding levels within DHS may not be sufficient to support such service transfers, concerns exacerbated given the lack of 2021-2023 budget details from DHS. Members requested an opportunity to meet with Pam Sagness for a conversation on the DHS' program budget details.
- *Telehealth.* Members identified the increased use of telehealth services during the current public health emergency as a positive development during this past year. Members stated that the BHPC should support any legislative initiatives that further institutionalize telehealth service options. Members agreed that telehealth activities should be carefully monitored with the intent to actively support promising measures.

Adjournment. Having complete the stated aims of the meeting, Chairperson Bergsrud entertained a motion to adjourn.

TERESA LARSEN MADE AND EMMA QUINN SECONDED A MOTION TO ADJOURN. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. CHAIRPERSON BERGRUD ANNOUNCED THE PASSAGE OF THE MOTION AND DECLARED THE MEETING ADJOURNED.

The meeting adjourned at 1:05 PM, CT.

Respectfully submitted,

Greg Gallagher
Facilitator
Deputy Director, The Consensus Council