

DANIELE MONROE-MORENO

ASSEMBLYWOMAN

District No. 1



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State of Nevada Assembly

January 15, 2019

James Dzurenda, Director
Nevada's Department of Corrections
Post Office Box 7011
Carson City, Nevada 89702

Dear Director Dzurenda:

At its meeting on August 24, 2018, the Legislative Committee on Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice (*Nevada Revised Statutes* 218E.705) voted to request that Nevada's Department of Corrections (NDOC) seek to develop Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between itself and the various facilities in Nevada that are not under NDOC jurisdiction. Developing these MOUs would facilitate the transfer of youthful female offenders from NDOC facilities to juvenile facilities to ensure these young women are housed in the most appropriate settings possible and are never sent out of state.

In choosing to make this recommendation, the Committee considered testimony from members of the juvenile justice community as well as recommendations made by the American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada specifically addressing the housing of youthful female offenders. Testimony indicated that Nevada struggles to provide adolescent female offenders with appropriate housing and programming, especially those who are sent to adult facilities.

Housing youth in dedicated facilities closer to their communities and families gives them access to more effective services and learning opportunities, helps lower recidivism rates, and avoids difficult and costly compliance requirements under the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003.

Taking a regional approach to housing may also prove more cost effective. As you know, the expense of upgrading existing facilities or building entirely new ones in order to house adults and youth at the same sites is prohibitive. If the possibility exists that the state could generate substantial savings by pursuing separate housing for youths and adults through MOUs with local entities, then we owe it to our citizens to examine this option fully.



On behalf of the members of the Legislative Committee on Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice,
I thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Assemblywoman Daniele Monroe-Moreno, Chair
Legislative Committee on Child Welfare and
Juvenile Justice

DMM/jk:W190314

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State of Nevada Assembly

January 15, 2019

The Honorable Steve Sisolak
Governor of the State of Nevada
101 North Carson Street, Suite 1
Carson City, Nevada 89701-4786

Dear Governor Sisolak:

At its meeting on August 24, 2018, the Legislative Committee on Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice (*Nevada Revised Statutes* 218E.705) voted to request your support, via the *Executive Budget*, for fully funding child care costs for foster children at current market rates. This request represents one of several recommendations the Committee is pursuing regarding foster children for the 2019 Legislative Session.

In choosing to make this request, the Committee considered testimony from national and local child welfare and foster care experts as well as from foster parents. For example, information provided by the Children's Advocacy Alliance indicated that the average annual cost of day care in Nevada ranges from \$10,324 for an infant to \$8,702 for a preschooler. At these rates, a single parent earning minimum wage would have to spend 60 percent of his or her pretax annual income on infant care. This is an unacceptable burden to place on a foster parent who is making incredible sacrifices to provide a child with a loving family and helping make his or her way in the world. Presently, Nevada's child care subsidy program serves only 3.21 percent of its eligible population. We believe Nevada can and must do more to support its foster community.

On behalf of the entire Committee and the foster families we seek to help, thank you for your kind consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Assemblywoman Daniele Monroe-Moreno, Chair
Legislative Committee on Child Welfare and
Juvenile Justice

DMM/jk:W190314-1

cc: Joyce Woodhouse, Chair, Senate Committee on Finance
Maggie Carlton, Chair, Assembly Committee on Ways and Means
Richard Whitley, M.S., Director, Department of Health and Human Services



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State of Nevada Assembly

January 15, 2019

The Honorable Steve Sisolak
Governor of the State of Nevada
101 North Carson Street, Suite 1
Carson City, Nevada 89701-4786

Dear Governor Sisolak:

At its meeting on August 24, 2018, the Legislative Committee on Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice (*Nevada Revised Statutes* 218E.705) voted to request your support for the creation of a statewide discretionary fee waiver program for families of limited means whose children are involved with the juvenile justice system.

As you are likely aware, a majority of the children who become involved with the juvenile justice system have limited financial resources, and the daunting prospect of owing a multitude of fees deters them and their families from getting back on the right track. One missed payment risks increased financial hardship and deeper involvement with the justice system. In fact, multiple studies have shown that nonpayment leads to adverse results ranging from debt collection to criminal liability, a situation far more likely to produce failure than success. Further complicating the issue, in Nevada, fees are set by the courts and can vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Judges also have the discretion to waive or reduce fees under certain circumstances. While several groups, including the Children's Advocacy Alliance, have begun working to gather statewide data on juvenile court fees, much work remains to be done.

As such, the Committee believes that a good step would be for the Administrative Office of the Courts to gather information from the various jurisdictions on the fees it assesses (and waives or reduces) over a given time period in order to develop a best practices model for implementation across the entire state. That information should be reported to the newly created Commission on Statewide Juvenile Justice Reform and shared with the Legislature as soon as possible. While we may not be able to eliminate these fees entirely, reducing them and making them uniform across the state would be a good start. On behalf of the entire Committee, I thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

Assemblywoman Daniele Monroe-Moreno, Chair
Legislative Committee on Child Welfare and
Juvenile Justice

DMM/jk:W190314-2

cc: Joyce Woodhouse, Chair, Senate Committee on Finance
Maggie Carlton, Chair, Assembly Committee on Ways and Means
Richard Whitley, M.S., Director, Department of Health and Human Services
Robin L. Sweet, Director and State Court Administrator, Administrative Office of the Courts



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State of Nevada Assembly

January 15, 2019

The Honorable Steve Sisolak,
Governor of the State of Nevada
101 North Carson Street, Suite 1
Carson City, Nevada 89701-4786

Dear Governor Sisolak:

At its meeting on August 24, 2018, the Legislative Committee on Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice (*Nevada Revised Statutes* 218E.705) voted to request your support for the establishment of an independent auditor within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to receive and review complaints from youth involved in the child welfare and/or juvenile justice systems. Additionally, the Committee requests that you direct DHHS to work with relevant entities to assess the feasibility of establishing the complaint system to function in coordination with the SafeVoice system that is already familiar to students, faculty, and parents across the state.

During the 2017 Legislative Session, I was proud to sponsor Assembly Bill 180 (Chapter 165, *Statutes of Nevada*), which established for the first time in Nevada a Juvenile Justice Bill of Rights for children involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. I believe the Committee has identified an excellent addition to the Bill of Rights in making this request for an expanded avenue for youth to file a complaint or grievance with an unbiased auditor who is not beholden to any child welfare or juvenile justice agency.

One of the most difficult, frightening, and unfair things we can ask a child who has experienced trauma or who has special needs to do is to report a problem to someone who may themselves be a part of the problem. It is vital that we provide our most vulnerable and troubled children with safe avenues to speak out and that we listen to them. I do not mean to disparage the amazing people who work so hard every day to make these children's lives better. However, the simple truth is that once a child is frightened or has lost trust in an adult, it is difficult at best to win back his or her confidence. Creating an independent auditor and a standalone reporting system would make clear our commitment to serving these children honestly, fairly, and without bias.

On behalf of the entire Committee, I thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Assemblywoman Daniele Monroe-Moreno, Chair
Legislative Committee on Child Welfare and
Juvenile Justice



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State of Nevada Assembly

January 15, 2019

The Honorable Steve Sisolak
Governor of the State of Nevada
101 North Carson Street, Suite 1
Carson City, Nevada 89701

Dear Governor Sisolak:

At its final meeting on August 24, 2018, the Legislative Committee on Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice (*Nevada Revised Statutes* 218E.705) voted to urge your support of the 2018 service priorities of the Nevada Children's Behavioral Health Consortium (NCBHC) as you craft your budget for the 2019–2020 Biennium. Assembly Bill 1 (Chapter 1, *Statutes of Nevada 2001, 17th Special Session*) created consortia across the state—one in Clark County, one in Washoe County, and one serving rural Nevada. Among other duties, the consortia are tasked with creating annual plans for the continued provision and improvement of mental health services for emotionally disturbed children and their families in their respective jurisdictions.

In choosing to make this recommendation, the Committee relied on testimony from Dan Musgrove, Vice Chair of the NCBHC, and several other consortia members, who updated the Committee on the Consortium's ten-year strategic plan and its ongoing service priorities. The Consortium's full report to the Committee and explanation of legislative priorities can be accessed online in Tab E of the Committee's Work Session Document for the meeting held on August 24, 2018.

Mental illnesses are common among teens and young adults. Nationwide, approximately one in five youth, 13 to 18 years of age, will experience a seriously debilitating mental health disorder in their lifetime. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, most mental illnesses begin in childhood or adolescence; one-half of youth and young adults with a mental health disorder develop the condition by 14 years of age, and three-quarters develop the condition by 24 years of age.

Implementing the priorities outlined by the NCBHC continues to require cooperation and planning between involved parties as well as financial support from both the Executive Branch and the Legislature. It is the Committee's hope that, as you move forward with budgetary planning for health and human services during the upcoming biennium, you will consider these priorities and choose to continue funding the NCBHC accordingly.



Governor Sisolak

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January 8, 2019

If I or any members of the Committee or our staff can be of assistance in this regard, we would be pleased to participate. On behalf of my fellow Committee members, I thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Assemblywoman Daniele Monroe-Moreno, Chair
Legislative Committee on Child Welfare and
Juvenile Justice

DMM/jk:W190314-4

cc: Joyce Woodhouse, Chair, Senate Committee on Finance
Maggie Carlton, Chair, Assembly Committee on Ways and Means
Richard Whitley, M.S., Director, Department of Health and Human Services

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State of Nevada Assembly

January 15, 2019

Members of the Legislative Commission
Legislative Building
401 South Carson Street
Carson City, Nevada 89701-4747

Dear Chair Frierson and Commission Members:

At its final meeting on August 24, 2018, the Legislative Committee on Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice (*Nevada Revised Statutes* 218E.705) voted to request that the Legislative Commission direct the legislative auditor to conduct an audit of the family peer-to-peer support pilot project the Legislature authorized under Assembly Bill 307 (Chapter 307, *Statutes of Nevada* 2015).

As you may remember, the goal of this pilot program was for Nevada to start piecing back together services for children and families who are dealing with both intellectual disabilities and behavioral issues after the economic downturn decimated these services so severely that many of these children could not get the assistance they needed without leaving the state.

Reporting requirements were built into the bill for the Department of Health and Human Services and the rural counties, and anecdotal accounts suggest the program has been a success. However, we are now at the point where a larger review of the entire program is needed before the legislation sunsets in July 2019. The Committee believes that the legislative auditor is ideally suited to conduct such a review so that the Legislature can make an informed decision about how best to go forward with providing appropriate funding and oversight for these vitally important services.

On behalf of the Committee, I thank you for your consideration of this request and will be happy to provide any further information or assistance you may require.

Sincerely,

Assemblywoman Daniele Monroe-Moreno, Chair
Legislative Committee on Child Welfare and
Juvenile Justice

DMM/jk:W190314-5



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State of Nevada Assembly

January 15, 2019

The Honorable Steve Sisolak
Governor of the State of Nevada
101 North Carson Street, Suite 1
Carson City, Nevada 89701

Dear Governor Sisolak:

At its meeting on August 24, 2018, the Legislative Committee on Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice (*Nevada Revised Statutes* 218E.705) voted to request your support, via the *Executive Budget*, for fully funding specialized foster care programs across the state.

In approving this request, the Committee considered testimony from then Senator Patricia Farley. She discussed her experience as a foster parent raising children with special needs and depending on the assistance of a family counselor at the same time funding to support such counselling had been cut repeatedly over the previous several legislative sessions.

Additionally, David Doyle, Director of Operations, Eagle Quest, noted that at the time of the meeting, there were 350 children in specialized foster care placements and an additional 100 special needs foster children involved in the juvenile justice system in Clark County. Mr. Doyle further explained that there have been problems with the funding model for specialized foster care in Nevada since at least 2008 when the economic downturn hit Nevada. Consistent and timely funding is crucial to avoid keeping children in care facilities longer than necessary. These children do much better when they are with a family and are receiving appropriate support and care; however, that care is costly, labor intensive, and requires expertise. In short, foster parents who are willing to take on this challenge need reliable financial assistance from the state, and these children deserve better from us.

On behalf of the Committee, I urge you—in the strongest possible terms—to provide in the *Executive Budget* for consistent, timely, and adequate funding for specialized foster care programming in our state. I thank you for your consideration of this request and will be more than happy to provide any further information or assistance you require.

Sincerely,

Assemblywoman Daniele Monroe-Moreno, Chair
Legislative Committee on Child Welfare and
Juvenile Justice

DMM/jk:W190314-6

