

**HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, JULY 20, 2021
3:30 P.M.**

PRESENT: Rob Sassi, Chairman
Michael Amo, James O'Donnell, Janet Sutherland, Laurie R. Tautel, Peter V. Tuohy

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman
Katie Bonelli, Majority Leader
Barry J. Cheney, Legislator
Betsy N. Abraham, Legislative Counsel
Darcie Miller, Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health
Todd Craner, Fiscal Director, Department of Social Services
Gretchen Riordan, Budget Analyst

Mr. Sassi opened the committee meeting at 3:32 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present with the exception of Legislator Amo who arrived at 3:33 p.m. and Legislator Anagnostakis who was absent.

On the agenda were the highlighted important issues from the Department of Social Services monthly report.

Ms. Miller reported that Temporary Assistance and Family Assistance numbers continue to trend downward. Many people have received their child tax credits which has helped some families move out of poverty. The expanded unemployment benefit is scheduled to end in September and when that occurs, they are prepared to respond to that anticipated need for help. The challenge of getting people back to work remains a concern but New York State has put federal funds toward hiring bonuses for the workforce. HEAP payments are nearing the end with \$5,436,941.00 paid in 2020-2021. Homeless and/or temporarily housed numbers continue to decrease and they continue to work with their providers on assisting with rental arrears once the eviction moratorium lifts. \$22 million was allotted and dedicated to Orange County residents for rental and utility arrears through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. Every few days they receive a report from the New York State Office of Temporary Disability Assistance vendor on the total number applications received by zip code and municipality from Orange County which she would gladly forward to the committee. Orange County has submitted over 1,500 applications; however, they do not know how much in arrears they are looking for, but they do know that many have asked for the additional three months, and many have asked for utility arrears. They have estimated that based on 1,500 applications at \$1,000.00 per month rent and possibly 12 months in arrears it comes to slightly over \$17 million. Unfortunately, that is only a guess until the state is able to provide the requested amounts in the applications and the approval rates of the applications, they actually do not know how much of the funds dedicated to Orange County is coming back. They are currently unable to provide that at this time and there has been some criticism that no funds have been distributed yet. They will continue to monitor and put pressure on the state but in her opinion, they still made the best decision to go with New York State to administer the program because it is a huge undertaking. The total number of Orange County residents on Medicaid was 119,436 and during the pandemic recertification for Medicaid was waived; however, that has been lifted and they may see this number decrease. Child Protective Services caseloads have increased, Raise the Age numbers

remain low, Foster Care average for 2021 was 293, Adult Protective Services remain consistent, and Child Support Collection came in at approximately \$44 million for 2020.

Mr. Tuohy commented that one of his constituents had a renter who was in arrears "skip-out" and would he be eligible for this program. Ms. Miller replied that it is a tenant-based program so they would need tenant cooperation. She recommended that the individual call 3-1-1 or the New York State number because if they can find the tenant and they are willing to supply their information it could help; however, the program is designed to maintain stable living and to prevent homelessness so if the person has already left the apartment they would not apply.

Ms. Tautel stated that she has a constituent whose tenant refuses to participate in the program.

Ms. Miller suggested that the landlord complete the landlord portion of the application because someone from her department would reach out the tenant and try to get cooperation.

Ms. Tautel asked if they have a plan in place once the eviction moratorium is lifted. Ms. Miller replied that they have capacity in their temporary housing options and any overflow would go to hotel/motels. Her position has always been to create permanent housing options and Nicole Andersen, Director of Community Development, is working with the HOME funds they have received and some of the competitive applications they have received and what they want to support. They have learned through the pandemic and eviction moratorium that their homeless numbers decrease when people are not being evicted as eviction leads to situational homelessness.

Mr. Tuohy commented that the Hope Not Handcuffs Black Poster Project will be held in Monroe on August 7, 2021, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Crane Park in the village of Monroe. The legislative office would be forwarding information on the event to all legislators, and he asked that Ms. Miller and legislators share the information. He recently read that there were 93,000 deaths across the country, and he understands that the numbers for Orange County have increased, and would Ms. Miller have the number for 2020 and how it has progressed for 2021.

Ms. Miller replied that it is tracked through OD Maps, she would need to confirm that number with the Medical Examiner's office but once confirmed she would forward that number to the committee. She expressed her excitement with this project as the Department of Mental Health was able to provide funding to Hope Not Handcuffs to assist with positions.

The meeting adjourned at 3:49 p.m.