

Government Oversight Committee
(Joint Legislative Committee on Program Evaluation
and Government Accountability)

**Meeting Summary
November 28, 2005**

CALL TO ORDER

The Ranking Minority Member, Rep. Trahan, called the meeting to order at approximately 10:12 a.m. in the Labor Committee Room.

ATTENDANCE

Senators: Sen. Bartlett, Sen. Courtney
Sen. Dow (joined the meeting in progress)
Sen. Mitchell (joined the meeting in progress)
Sen. Raye (joined the meeting in progress)

Absent: Sen. Perry

Representatives: Rep. Collins, Rep. Crosthwaite, Rep. O'Brien, Rep. Trahan
Rep. Canavan (joined the meeting in progress)
Rep. DuGay (joined the meeting in progress)

Legislative Officers and Staff: Beth Ashcroft, Director
Diana Stiles Friou, Principal Analyst
Jennifer Reichenbach, Analyst
Lorna Pelkey, Administrative Secretary

Introduction of Government Oversight Committee Members

Members of the Government Oversight Committee introduced themselves for the benefit of the listening audience.

OPEGA FINAL REPORT PRESENTATION

Director Ashcroft presented the OPEGA Report regarding the Follow-up Review of Title IV-E Adoption Assistance Compliance Efforts. After finishing the presentation, she opened the meeting up to Committee questions. The questions were quite varied but included:

- What are follow-up plans to the report
- Will this report require any legislation
- How binding are the recommendations

- Please clarify the role of proposed DHHS compliance officer
- Please discuss the roles of the compliance officer vs. the DHHS Director of Internal Audit
- How will findings be monitored
- Describe the relationship between the Division of Regional Operations and the Office of Child and Family Services
- Where are “hard-to-place” children defined
- What triggers the money and the federal match
- Please define the many different audits that have occurred
- Whose responsibility is testing of corrective actions
- What is the State Audit Department’s role in this area
- Describe foster care vs. adoption and the criteria used to determine each
- Describe the financial incentive to keep or not to keep children
- How much money have ineligible claims cost the state
- Where in the report is the management response

A brief discussion ensued regarding the Committee voting process. Director Ashcroft reminded the Committee that they could vote on the report today; vote at the next meeting; or hold a public hearing and work session on the report and then vote. Their voting options are to vote to endorse the report, endorse the report in part, or not endorse the report.

Sen. Bartlett suggested OPEGA encourage folks to write in with their public testimony in order to save time. It was the consensus of the Committee to vote at the next GOC meeting on December 19, 2005 after a brief public hearing and work session.

Director Ashcroft extended OPEGA’s thanks to the Department of Health and Human Services for their helpfulness and cooperation during the course of preparing this report. Sen. Mitchell echoed the Director’s comments.

OPEGA INTERIM REPORT PRESENTATION

Director Ashcroft presented the OPEGA Interim Report regarding MECMS Stabilization Reporting. Upon finishing the presentation, she opened the meeting up to Committee questions. Included in questions from the Committee were:

- How did the program ever go on-line in the first place
- How are interim payment amounts determined
- Was a formula used
- Has there been appropriate communication with providers
- Has there been appropriate communication with OPEGA
- Does the situation with MECMS violate federal law
- How will over/under payments to providers be handled
- Will OPEGA have communication with providers who have gone out of business

REVIEW UPDATED SCOPE STATEMENT FOR SPURWINK PROJECT

A discussion ensued regarding the revision of the Scope Statement for the Spurwink project. Director Ashcroft described the proposed revisions including increasing the project hours

from 200 to 600 and focusing the scope on processes for awarding and managing Spurwink contracts. Some Committee members were concerned about doing a review of Spurwink without including others who provide the same type of services. Director Ashcroft stated that she feels it is appropriate to look at contract management related to any State contractor without having to look at them all. Committee members indicated they were also interested in performance. From the proposed review scope, OPEGA can determine what Spurwink's contract relationship is with Maine and how their performance is taken into consideration in the contracting process.

Motion: That the revised Scope Statement presented by OPEGA with Committee changes incorporated be approved for the Spurwink review. (Motion by Rep. O'Brien, second by Rep. Trahan. Motion – PASSED; vote unanimous.)

Sen. Mitchell briefed the Committee on a new topic she plans to propose for OPEGA review: the effect of bed shortage at Riverview. She asked the Committee to think about this item for discussion at a future meeting.

NEXT MEETING

Sen. Mitchell reiterated that the next GOC meeting has been scheduled for December 19, 2005 but she would like to start at 9:00 a.m. The agenda will be lengthy due to the vote on Adoption Assistance which will include a public hearing and work session, as well as the planned release of two more reports.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.