

**Human Services Levy Review Committee Meeting Minutes for
Franklin County Children Services
March 21, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER—CHAIR

The Human Services Levy Review Committee (HSLRC) meeting was called to order by Jerry Friedman on Thursday, March 21, 2024, at 11:26 A.M.

ROLL CALL

- HSLRC members present: Jerry Friedman; Michael Curtin; Nana Watson; Rose Handon, Ph.D.; and Zachary Talarek, Director, Office of Management and Budget.
- HSLRC members absent: Jesse Hemphill; Jim Bowman.
- Clerk’s Office: Lauren M. Graessle, Deputy Clerk to the Board of Commissioners & Assistant Director of Community Appointments.
- Commissioner Kevin L. Boyce’s office: Emily Cooner, Policy Manager; Katherine Page, Policy Aide.
- County Administration: Joy Bivens, Deputy County Administrator.
- Office of Management and Budget (OMB): Rachel Buske, Budget Analyst 3; and Madeline Gresham, Budget Analyst 2.

DISCUSSION OF FCCS REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE HISTORY—OMB

Ms. Buske provided an overview of current FCCS levies with the proposed increase for 2025. She explained that when the 3.1 mill levy (renewed in 2019) is combined with the proposed 1.9 mill levy renewal with a 1.2 mill increase, the proposed total annual cost to a homeowner in 2025 would be \$119.83 per \$100,000 in property value, which is a 54% increase in cost from the existing 3.1 mill levy and the 1.9 mill levy if renewed.

Ms. Buske reviewed FCCS's historical revenue and expenditures, as well as the FCCS and the OMB 2024 projections. She noted that OMB’s projections differ from the FCCS projections. The ending cash balance in the 2024 OMB projection was calculated to be approximately \$135.9 million, which is approximately \$9.5 million higher than the 2024 FCCS projection (\$126.4 million).

Ms. Buske also provided an overview of FCCS expenditures versus its revised budget. She explained that the 2024 FCCS projection is to expend 99.5% of its budget, whereas the OMB

projection is closer to 97% of budget. Historically, FCCS has not expended 99.5% of its revised budget. Thus, the OMB projection more closely aligns with historical spending.

Ms. Buske stated that every way she ran the numbers, the results suggested that a straight levy renewal with no increase would not be enough to sustain FCCS operations based on anticipated revenue and expenditures.

HSLRC DISCUSSION OF LEVY REQUEST—HSLRC

Ms. Buske opined that the gap between what FCCS is bringing in and what it is spending is too significant not to ask for an increase, and the discussion should be around the size of the increase. Dr. Handon asked if, based on her calculations, Ms. Buske believes the 1.2 mill increase is justifiable. Ms. Buske explained that FCCS is asking for a 1.2 mill increase because it wants to be able to go ten years without asking for another increase. She stated that based on her calculations, she believes FCCS needs to ask for an increase, but it is up to the HSLRC to decide if they want to advise FCCS to ask for enough levy funding for ten years or to advise a smaller increase, knowing FCCS most likely would have to return in five years and ask for an increase. Dr. Handon asked if the HSLRC accepted the levy as proposed, then FCCS would not need to come before the public again for ten years. Ms. Buske explained that FCCS would not need to ask for an increase in ten years, but in five years, its 3.1 mill levy will expire, and FCCS can ask for a renewal of that levy if they get a larger increase this time around.

Mr. Curtin stated that according to realtor.com, the median home value in Franklin County, as of February 2024, is \$274,700. Since the levy amounts are based on a home value of \$100,000, the owner of a median home would need to multiply the annual cost by a factor of 2.7. He also noted that FCCS should take into consideration how levies fared during the March 19, 2024, primary election. He suggested that FCCS calculate the cost of a defeat to the levy, and suggested they consider whether asking for a smaller increase is beneficial.

Ms. Watson expressed concern, especially for senior citizens, regarding the increase in taxes that would result from the proposed levy. She suggested that extreme caution is used when deciding how to bring this proposal forward, especially in light of recent levies that failed. Dr. Handon considered whether a reduction in the amount of millage increased in the proposal would be effective. Mr. Talarek noted that when FCCS asked for increases in the past, the HSLRC recommended a renewal rather than an increase. He agreed that an increase is likely needed in this case, but the increase may not need to be as large as 1.2 mill, particularly if the Committee looks at the millage necessary for the next five years of operations, with the understanding that FCCS will need an increase with its 3.1 mill levy that expires in 2029.

Ms. Buske summarized that there is consensus among the committee to explore other options for the FCCS levy proposal amount, with a focus on looking at the next five years of operations before the 3.1 mill levy expires in 2029.

HSLRC QUESTIONS FOR FCCS STAFF—HSLRC & OMB

Ms. Buske asked the HSLRC for questions they would like to ask FCCS. A robust discussion ensued. Ms. Buske compiled the questions into the attached Addendum (see pages 4-6).

NEXT STEPS—OMB

Mr. Friedman noted that the upcoming meetings would give the HSLRC an opportunity to receive responses from FCCS to the questions that were posed. He noted that there will be several more meetings before a final report is generated.

CLOSING REMARKS—CHAIR

Mr. Friedman had no closing remarks.

With no further business before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 1:03 P.M.

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These minutes are a general summary of the Human Services Levy Review Committee meeting on Thursday, March 21, 2024.

Submitted by:

Lauren M. Graessle,
Deputy Clerk to the Board of Commissioners &
Assistant Director of Community Appointments

Addendum

Organizational Information

1. Please provide an updated Table of Organization.
2. Please provide demographic information on staff, both in general, for caseworkers, and for the Executive Leadership Team.
3. Please provide demographic information on Managed Board & Care contractors (number and percent).
4. Please provide a 5-year history of total FTEs (not employees) and a 5-year history of caseworker FTEs. Please provide FTE count for approved positions by functional area.
5. What is the average caseload per caseworker currently? What is the best practice caseload per caseworker? (Please provide information on how caseloads are stratified)
6. What does FCCS do to ensure it remains connected and engaged with the community? In terms of community relations, how will FCCS continue or expand these efforts during the next levy cycle?

Managed Board & Care

7. Please describe how cases are assigned to the Managed Board & Care entities. There are some cases they are not legally allowed to handle, correct?
8. For each of the Managed Board & Care entities, please provide the following:
 - a. Name
 - b. Number of cases per month
 - c. Contract Amount
 - d. Any updated metrics since the mid-levy review
9. For the Managed Board & Care entities, what are you seeing in terms of their contributions and how they contribute to helping the agency meet its goals? What are the overall strengths and weaknesses of the model?
10. Managed Board & Care – if your staffing level goes up, will you consider reverting to having only two contracted partners or would you potentially reduce the cases maintained in the contracts? Please explain.

Program Evaluation and Client Information

11. When you are tracking initiatives, how do you address initiatives that don't seem to be working? At what point do you discontinue the program/initiative? Can you give any examples of initiatives you no longer use?
12. How does FCCS evaluate paid placements to determine if they are successful or not, and what if any lessons can be learned?
13. How does FCCS address and evaluate the needs of its caregivers (foster parents, kinship caregivers, etc.)? How do you collect feedback, and can you share any of the overarching lessons learned?
14. Please provide the number of children served, broken out by boys and girls.
15. How many of the youth served are eligible for Medicaid? Do you have information on how this compares to other Ohio counties and other States?

Budget/Policy

16. Please explain how/if FCCS has been able to utilize funding from private foundations and whether this is something the agency expects to pursue further.
17. Are there any additional opportunities to expand Medicaid reimbursement?
18. If FCCS is in a position where spending reductions are necessary, what will you prioritize reducing?
19. How does FCCS measure its contracts for return on commitment? How does FCCS handle coordination, when necessary, among contract partners? Does FCCS provide funding for specific services or more general operational support?
20. Please explain what is meant by “Nearly all employees will see an 2.25% annual cost of living adjustment and a 5% step/retention adjustment for each of the next two years.” Have you seen a noticeable impact on the number of employees going to the State?
21. Please provide mean and median salaries for caseworkers and the general terms of the collective bargaining unit.
22. Has FCCS experienced any setbacks in its Diversity, Equity & Inclusion efforts in light of legal challenges and rulings? Please explain.
23. Is there any legislation or pending legislation in the pipeline that could impact how FCCS provides services? Please explain.
24. Please briefly explain the difference between the types of contracts/partnerships listed in the table on page 15 and give examples.
25. Please provide more information on the number and percentage of contracts with minority and/or woman owned businesses.
26. Page 36: Increase monthly kinship stipend to \$500/month. The stipend is \$380/month currently, correct? Is this per family or per child? Would this be in addition to any public assistance the child is receiving or is the sum total \$500? What portion of this is the \$58 million that will be invested over 10 years?
27. Are there any efforts underway to work (FCCS, PCSAO, and other counties/organizations) to address some of the impacts of the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act? (Specifically, the loss of revenue for congregate care and a need to increase prevention services reimbursement)

Prevention and Mental Health Programs

28. Are some or all in-home services considered prevention services? Please explain.
29. What are some of the new intervention strategies other than mental health that the agency has implemented?
30. Please provide data regarding the current investment level and usage of community-based prevention programs.
31. With the proposed increase in prevention expenditures, will you be expanding existing programs or piloting/implementing new initiatives? Please explain.
32. FCCS mentions investing \$2.5 million in mental health services. Please elaborate on this investment plan.
33. Are any of the prevention programs reimbursable under the Family First Prevention Services Act? Please explain.

34. Page 21 mentions the potential to serve referrals who were screened out but would benefit from services. Does FCCS intent to serve this population? If so, how do you plan to take this on operationally and what is the estimated cost?

Placement

35. The factbook states that while days in custody have decreased, the complexity of cases has increased. At the same time, FCCS has seen a decrease in congregate care placements. Is the complexity mainly being seen in terms of longer lengths of stay or are there other factors?
36. Did providers offer details on case complexity in requesting higher per diem rates, or was the increase mainly driven by inflation?
37. Please provide information on the per diem rate broken down by type (foster, kinship, congregate) for a 5-year period (current year projection included).
38. Please provide 5 years of actuals for the number of children in custody by type of placement (current year projection included).
39. What is the cost/impact on the agency of dealing with the more difficult youth, including those in the Department of Youth Services (DYS)?
40. What efforts across systems are being utilized to help protect more vulnerable children, such as siblings that may be separated, teens, etc.?