



Foster Care Coalition Meeting
March 12, 2023 | 10 – 11AM

Zoom Link: <https://zoom.us/j/91264502310?pwd=eERhNWp2ZkRHajlpenpEbk0xb3drQT09>

Meeting ID: 912 6450 2310; Passcode: 11888; Call in: +1 305 224 1968

NOTES

Welcome and Introductions

Co-Chair: Jay Turillo, CFP

CLM Staff: Susan Anamier O'Callaghan, CLM; Rachel Gwaltney, CLM; Tasmiah Ahmad, CLM

Members: Michele Morrissey, LUK Inc; Bridget Roth, Children's Services Roxbury; Emily Rouleau, MSPCC Elliot; Claire Byrne, Devereux; Joanne Kirk, Mass Mentor; Manuela Bermudez, Gandara; Stephanie DiMichele, 18 Degrees; Laqunda Nystrom, Bridges Homeward; Marcia Galavotti, Kennedy-Donovan Center; Sharon Vanderhoff, Mass Mentor; Caryn Lister, Home for Little Wanderers; Robert Costa, JRI

Please let Jay, Imani or Sue know who from your agency you want to add. We can update who is on our list – to have those who will attend. Also, if you know of people at other providers we're missing, let us know.

FC Legislative Agenda

REACH OUT TO YOUR LEGISLATORS to advocate for the passage of priority bills this session.

- **Legislators contact info.:** Find [your state legislator's contact info. here](#). You can compare it to the [Committee Members' list here](#).
 - Let them know the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities still needs to report out by May 2 priority bills including.
 - **Outreach Templates** - for all the bills still needing Committee Reports: [Outreach Templates](#)
 - **Joint Committee** on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities Chairs: Robyn.Kennedy@masenate.gov; (617) 722-1544 and Jay.Livingstone@mahouse.gov; (617) 722-2011
 - **Full List of CLM Bills here:** [CLM's 2023-2024 Legislative Agenda](#)
 - **KEY for bills below:**
 - [Blue highlights – Committee Deadlines Extended](#)

2022-2023 FC Task Force Bills (See also CLM's [state advocacy webpage](#))

- **An Act to Eliminate Disproportionality and Inequities for At-Risk Children** [S.120](#) / [H.153](#) (Sen. Susan L. Moran; Rep. Paul J. Donato) Requires child-serving state agencies to report on disproportionality and inequity in services. [Fact Sheet](#). *Committee:* Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities; *Deadline:* May 2
- **Bill of Rights for Children in Foster Care** [S.68](#) / [H.164](#) (Sen. Comerford; Rep. Finn) Codifies and creates rights for children in care, such as regarding sharing documents, promoting connection to family, and more. (Content of this bill is also in the Child Welfare Omnibus bill). *Committee:* Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities;



Deadline: May 2

- **Protecting benefits owed to foster children S.65 / H.157** (Sen. Comerford; Rep. Farley-Bouvier) Ensuring kids eligible for benefits are getting them; “Benefits of a foster child shall not be used by the department to offset the cost of providing foster care”; make sure benefits aren’t being used for things DCF purchases for other children in care; providing financial literacy training (Additional supporters include The Disability Law Center and Child Protection and the Committee for Public Counsel Services). Committee: Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities; Deadline: May 2
- **An Act minimizing trauma to court-involved children and families S.71 / H.204** (Sen. Creem; Rep. Meschino) Promotes foster care placements with relatives, that keep siblings and half siblings together, and preserve/promote cultural, racial, ethnic, religion, and linguistic identities. It also updates DCF reporting requirements. Committee: Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities; Deadline: May 2
- **An Act Establishing the Massachusetts Foster Care Review Office S.66 / H.158** (Sen. Comerford; Rep. Farley-Bouvier) Creates an independent Foster Care Review Board/process external to the Department of Children and Families to address challenges both at the individual case level and at the systems level. Read more about the issue here: [Fact Sheet](#) and [FAQs](#). Led by [Friends of Children](#). Committee: Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities; Deadline: May 2
- **SENT TO STUDY (aka tabled this session): An Act Clarifying Insurance Liability for Foster Care Providers S.1134 / H.1600** (Sen. John C. Velis; Rep. Sally P. Karens) Providers of foster care services for children and/or youth contracted by the state’s Department of Children and Families shall not be held liable for injury to persons or damage to property caused by negligence or other action(s) or inaction(s) of the state or its employees or other third parties. [Fact Sheet](#).
 - STATUS UPDATE: Bill sent to study; Want to strengthen bill language to move it forward again next session; JRI just saw another 25% increase; Rachel connecting with USI to partner as advocates over summer; CLM meeting with national orgs to collaborate on this; at end of day we may need non-legislative solution but not sure what that is

Budget

CLM’s House Ways and Means advocacy letter going out today with blog post. You can ask your Representatives to support the bills above and our budget priorities. After the House Budget advocacy, we will engage everyone on the Senate advocacy.

Keep your eyes out for our newsletters and action alerts for advocacy opportunities/requests. Please email tasmiah@childrensleague.org if you haven’t been getting CLM’s newsletters and action alerts and would like to.

Strategic/Meeting Plans:

- June - planning on DCF participation every other meeting (they’re invited to the June meeting)



- by June meeting some rates should be out and so we can talk about coordinating testimony; want to hear from you about the effects and needs of your organizations

Member Input/Updates/Best Practices

- MAAP – new version – if it happens at all, it could happen at end of year; consider that this is a group that could help work together on the MAAP training.
- Foster Parent College issue for our families to be included has been heard but still waiting as they figure it out for their families
- Chpt. 257 Rate Setting – as you'll see in CLM's budget letter we expect FY25 rate setting will probably be steady from FY24 due to a tight budget year; we saw in last rate review – they are going beyond the 53rd percentile rate in some levels;
- IFC rates will be one of few heard in FY25 season (odd/off year)
- Support & Stabilization rates raised the unbundled amount fairly significantly – could be a sign that it should lead to a bigger jump in some of our FC provider rates; Support and Stabilization RFR is expected next; once that's out there will be new rate hearings and we can revisit if there are FC components we want to comment on
 - Discussing Area Leads being involved with unbundled; rate increase retro to January (\$62 to \$63/day); support some respite, manageable case loads
- RFR is from 2014 (oldest functioning RFR) - haven't heard anything other than, we need to get to it at some point
- CLM Board is meeting with Operating Commissioner Staverne Miller soon – Adoption RFR is expected next and FC one is on their radar, we think
- Have you been seeing retention concerns increase with foster parents? Yes, over last 6-12 months longer-term parents have decided to retire from this work; and some don't want to be done but due to what they're now comfortable with, they are almost unplaceable – some COVID carry over; a lot of working families are struggling lately - Dept. has increasingly been less flexible with scheduling and availability (sometimes not understanding parents work until 5pm too); also higher acuity of the kids; tenured families don't have emotional, physical or space capacity (Uncle X moved in); loss rate greater than open rate not because of lack of demand.
 - Focus for MSPCC work on this: ongoing and adoption workers seem to need training on working with foster parents on scheduling and foster parent role
- Recruitment side is challenging too – prior 51As or background check not clearing for parents or people in the home
- NEXT STEP: Propose what we want to see in next IFC Contract – themes on how unbundled works; we've circled around some of these issues with recruitment, retention, unbundled; due to slower pace at which administration is working, it'll be to our advantage to proactively elevate these issues; keep in mind different sizes, structures, titles; what's bare minimum needed to exist as CFC? – fund training requirements, recruitment (generally funding a position is needed), fund caseload at lower number (most staff have more than 8); we're often trying to do more with less.
- Co-chairs are also working with MSPCC on rate review

Next Steps/Meetings

- **Create Advocacy Document we will share with DCF regarding what we need/want to see in next RFR/CFC Contract - Email Jay, Imani and Sue bare minimum agency needs that should be included in next RFR to help us create our advocacy letter's framework;** we'll follow up, likely with a Google Doc for input as well



- **Updating Our CLM Foster Care Task Force List:** email Jay, Imani and/or Sue about who should be added or deleted from our FC Task Force List
- **Reach out the your legislators** to encourage passage of our priority bills this session and budget priorities (see details in section above)
- **Next FC Task Force Meeting:** June 11
- **March 25, 10am Member Meeting:** in person at JRI with the Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities Co-Chairs – advocacy opportunity
- **CLM State House Day:** Hall of Flags, May 16, 10am
 - **Last Training during member forum in advance:** May 5/10: Hill Day Prep
 - **CLM's Awards Ceremony:** [Nominate](#) program leaders and direct service staff for CLM Awards by March 31st. You [can circulate this link](#) with your staff, so they can self-nominate/nominate their peers, as well.