

State Representative Pamela A. DeLissio

Minority Chair / Children and Youth Committee



Dear Colleagues,

As minority chair of the House Children and Youth Committee, I want to keep you in the loop regarding the work of the committee. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or my staff if we can be of assistance. I also want to inform you of a temporary staff change on my team. Executive Director Camila Horst is on maternity leave. Please join me in welcoming Sofia Mae, who arrived on September 9. During Camila's maternity leave, please direct questions to Leza Perkins at LPerkins@pahouse.net. I am also thrilled to announce the marriage of Morgan Johnson, our committee's Legislative Assistant. Morgan married Dave Onorato on September 18.



Morgan & Dave married 9/18/2021



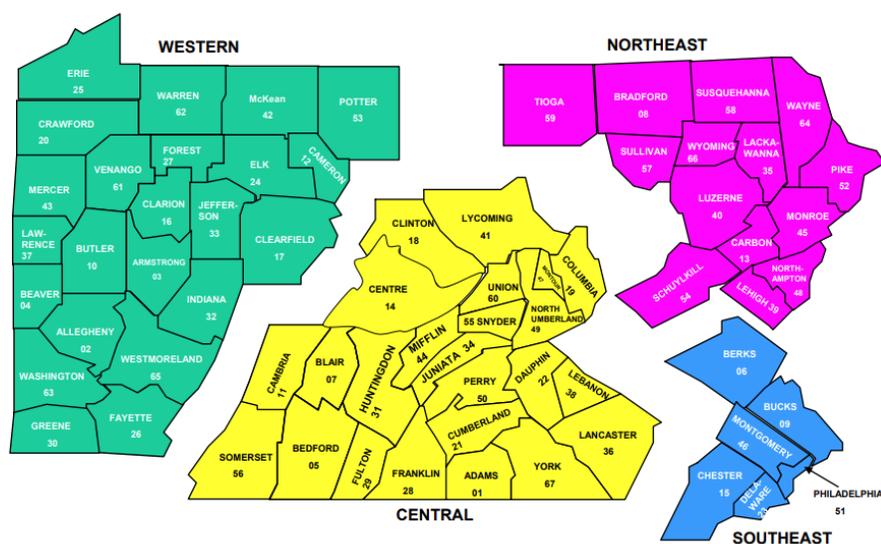
Team Pam's newest member, Sofia Mae! 9/9/21

COMMITTEE NEWS RECAP



Proud to work on behalf of our youngest citizens!

Regional Children and Youth Agency Virtual Meetings



During September, the committee held discussions, by region (regions pictured above), with county Children and Youth Agency staff. In Pennsylvania, we utilize a decentralized system to deliver children and youth services. The Bureau of Children and Family Services (BCFS) is primarily responsible for monitoring the delivery of services by county and private children and youth social service agencies, including foster care agencies, adoption agencies, and supervised independent living facilities throughout the Commonwealth. Oversight of these programs is conducted by the four Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) Regional Offices.

The purpose of these calls was to discern how these county agencies operated during the pandemic. We were particularly focused on the regulations that were suspended and whether or not certain of those regulations should be re-evaluated as to their benefit. The committee learned a lot regarding the challenges of delivering services during the pandemic as many of these challenges existed previously, particularly workforce recruitment and retention, the need for placements for cases designated as complex, and a licensing process that places more emphasis on 'checking a box' rather than quality outcomes. It is my hope that the majority chair, Rep. Delozier, and I can evaluate the information shared and address some issues through legislation and perhaps advocate for other needed changes through the regulatory process.

NATIONAL HEAD START AWARENESS MONTH- OCTOBER



Each October we commemorate Head Start Awareness Month and reflect on the important impact this crucial program has had on children and families for generations.

Head Start is a federally funded child development program designed to help break the cycle of poverty by providing preschool children of low-income families with a comprehensive program to meet their emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs. Head Start's approach is that the parent is the child's primary educator and that the entire family, as well as the community, must be involved in guiding and nurturing the child.

Since its founding in 1965, Head Start has been able to serve over 35 million children from low-income families through comprehensive early learning, health, nutrition, and family support services.

Head Start was transferred to the Office of Child Development in the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare and is now a program within the Administration on Children, Youth and Families in the Department of Health and Human Services, and administered by the Office of Head Start (OHS). Today, Head Start programs are operated by over 1,500 community-based organizations in all 50 states and U.S. territories.

POLICY POINT

▷▷▷ Policy Point of the Day ◁◁◁



HOMELESS YOUTH

Each year, 4.2 million youth and young adults experience homelessness in the United States. Family conflict and abuse, rejection of a youth's sexual orientation, problems at school, and substance use disorders are all risk factors for youth becoming homeless.



BILLS & RESOLUTIONS CURRENTLY IN THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH COMMITTEE

[H.B. 159: Child Abuse Reporting and Military Personnel](#) – Rep. F. Todd Polinchock

[H.B. 193: COVID-19 Childcare Assistance](#) – Rep. Liz Hanbidge

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[H.B. 369: COVID-19: Support for Frontline Workers](#) – Rep. Austin Davis

[H.B. 628: Student Loan Forgiveness for Child Welfare Workers](#) – Rep. Tarah Toohil

[H.B. 631: Keys to Independence for Foster Youth Age 16-21](#) – Rep. Tarah Toohil

[H.B. 1155: Exempts public preschool recreation programs from the requirement to be certified by the Department of Human Services as child care facilities by specifically excluding such programs from the definition of child day care center.](#) – Rep. Barry Jozwiak

[H.B. 1687: Autism Screening for Children Aged 18 Months to 4 Years](#) – Rep. Brian Smith

[H.B. 1731: Establishes the Pennsylvania Advisory Committee on Greater Father Involvement](#) – Rep. Lori A. Mizgorski

[H.B. 1737: Drug Screening](#) – Rep. Ann Flood

[H.B. 1769: Adding Nurses to County Children & Youth Agency Staff](#) – Rep. Karen Boback

[HB 1843: Protecting Children in Foster Care/Adoption - Grace Packer](#) – Rep. Christopher B. Quinn

[HB 1844: Protecting Children in Foster Care/Adoption - Grace Packer](#) – Rep. Craig T. Staats

[HB 1845: Protecting Children in Foster Care/Adoption - Grace Packer](#) – Rep. Craig T. Staats

[HB 1863: Updating Definition in Child Protective Services Law](#) - Rep. Sheryl M. Delozier

[HB1866: Helping Older Foster Youth Find Permanency](#)- Rep. Karen Boback

[H.R. 119: Joint State Government Commission Study on Statewide Children and Youth Services Computer System Project \(Grace Packer Case\)](#) – Rep. Karen Boback

[H.R. 126: Recognizing the Impact of Childhood Emotional Abuse](#) – Rep. Brian Kirkland

[H.R. 133: Recognizing the Harmful Effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences](#) – Rep. Stephen Kinsey

GETTING TO KNOW YOU



Each month, I spotlight members of the Children and Youth Committee so you can get to know them better. This month we chatted with State Rep. Kristine C. Howard, D- Chester.

Rep. Howard is serving her second term with the Children and Youth Committee (and second term as a state representative) and said that she was lucky to receive her first choice of committee assignment.

As a devoted single mother of seven, she focuses on the principle to put children first and work constantly to ensure their safety. Kristine used her degrees from the University of Pennsylvania and Rutgers Law School to run a small legal and social services organization in New Mexico, before returning to Pennsylvania and joining the Philadelphia Lawyers for the Arts as an advocate for youth in foster care. She eventually joined the Chester County Department of Children, Youth, and Family services to investigate child abuse.

Throughout her time serving on the committee, Kristine has noted how the legislative process is often slow moving and there are many competing demands that can overshadow Children and Youth legislation. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated those dynamics.

You can [read more about Rep. Howard's story here.](#)

HAVE A QUESTION?

If you have questions or would like to share ideas for the Children & Youth Committee, email Leza Perkins at LPerkins@pahouse.net as Camila Horst is on maternity leave.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pam". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.