



State of Connecticut  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Commission on Children

# Minutes of Meeting

## Connecticut Commission on Children

Tuesday, May 13, 2008  
10 a.m. – Noon

Commission conference room, 18-20 Trinity St., Hartford

**Voting members present:** Judith Busch, George A. Coleman, James P. Cordier, Dr. M. Alex Geertsma, Alison Hilding, Josh Piteo, Mary Grace Reed, Laura Lee Simon, and Leslie Wolfgang.

**Ex-Officio members present:** George Coleman, Department of Education; Anne Foley, Office of Policy and Management; Sylvia Gafford-Alexander, Department of Social Services; Norma Gyle, Department of Public Health; Mary Marcial, Department of Correction; and Peter O'Meara, Department of Developmental Services.

**Members absent:** Representative Andrew M. Fleischmann, Mary K. Fox, Senator Mary Ann Handley, Senator Jonathan A. Harris, Representative Mike Lawlor, and designees of the following ex-officio members: Attorney General, Chief Court Administrator, and the Department of Children and Families.

**Excused absence:** John Yrchik.

**Commission staff present:** Elaine Zimmerman, Thomas Brooks, Elizabeth Brown, Patricia Estill, Kevin Flood, Dawn Homer-Bouthiette, Mary Kate Lowndes, Rachel Levy, and intern Chelsea Krombel.

**Handouts:** Agenda; draft minutes of the January 8, 2008 meeting; draft minutes of the April 8, 2008 meeting; May 8, 2008 draft of the Goal 2 Committee report to the Early Childhood Cabinet, "Fine by Nine: All Children Healthy, Safe and Successful in School by Age 9"; May 12, 2008 report, "School Bullying Legislation Approved by the Connecticut House and Senate"; Commission on Children report, "Stand Up to Bullying! Strategies to Make Connecticut Safe for Learning"; LCO No. 5636, amendment to Substitute House Bill No. 5826, An Act Concerning Learning Environment"; LCO No. 5806, amendment to Substitute Senate Bill No. 244, An Act Concerning Family Prosperity and Recommendations of the Child Poverty and Prevention Council"; LCO No. 5203, amendment to Substitute House Bill No. 5650, An Act Concerning Child Product Safety; May 8, 2008 Hartford Courant article, "State to Require Teachers to Take

Test on Reading”; and Nominations Committee report, “Slate of Candidates for Commission on Children Officers.”

### **Meeting Convened**

Chairman James Cordier convened the meeting at 10 a.m.

### **Review of Minutes**

The minutes of the January 8 meeting were approved unanimously, as were the minutes of the April 8 meeting.

### **Executive Director’s Report**

Executive Director Elaine Zimmerman formally introduced the Commission to a new staff member, Grant Writer and Accounts Manager Mary Kate Lowndes, and thanked Commission member Josh Piteo for participating in the interview process that led to the hiring of Ms. Lowndes. Ms. Zimmerman also introduced summer intern Chelsea Krombel, who is studying political science at the University of Connecticut.

Ms. Zimmerman said the April 8 presentation on youth gangs in Connecticut by John Aldi, statewide security risk group coordinator for Department of Correction, has already had an impact. In particular, she said, agencies and lawmakers have said they want to craft an agenda to curb gang violence for next year’s General Assembly session. Mary Marcial of the Department of Correction said the Commission, with its focus on prevention, is in a good position to facilitate such an effort.

In reviewing children’s legislation from the recently completed General Assembly session, Ms. Zimmerman said one of the key accomplishments came without the need for actual legislation: the state Board of Higher Education’s agreement to require would-be early childhood and elementary school teachers to prove they know how to teach reading as condition of winning certification.

Legislative Director Elizabeth C. Brown and Director of Policy and Research Analysis Thomas R. Brooks briefed the Commission on other legislation, noting that bills requiring new spending died because of the agreement between the governor and legislative leaders to stick with the existing spending plan for the second year of the current two-year budget. Among the bills that did pass, they said, were:

- HB 5826, AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT;
- HB 5666, AN ACT CONCERNING EXPANSION OF THE PILOT PROGRAM FOR PERSONS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS;
- HB 5696, AN ACT REQUIRING INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER THERAPIES;
- HB 5748, AN ACT CONCERNING TEENAGE DRIVERS;

- HB 5650, AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD PRODUCT SAFETY; AND
- HB 5028, AN ACT AMENDING AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD PRODUCT SAFETY

See the Commission publications “School Bullying Legislation Approved by the Connecticut House and Senate” (May 12, 2008) and “2008 Legislation for Children and Youth: End-of-Session Update” for details on the legislation.

**Nomination of Officers for 2008-2009**

The chair of the Nominations Committee, Laura Lee Simon, presented the Committee’s slate of candidates for Commission on Children officers in 2008-2009. The slate is:

Chair: M. Alex Geertsma  
Vice Chair: George A. Coleman  
Secretary: Judith Busch  
Treasurer: Alison Hilding

Mr. Cordier opened the floor for further nominations. Hearing none, he closed the nominations and said the election of officers would take place at the June 10, 2008 meeting, in accordance with Commission bylaws. Among the bills that did pass, they said, were:

May 12, 2008 report, “School Bullying Legislation Approved by the Connecticut House and Senate”;

**Adjournment**

Mr. Cordier adjourned the meeting at noon.

Respectfully submitted,



Alison Hilding, Secretary