



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE
State House, Boston, MA 02133-1053

SENATOR KAREN E. SPILKA
2nd Middlesex and Norfolk District
Room 511C
Tel: (617) 722-1640
Fax: (617) 722-1077
Email: Karen.E.Spilka@state.ma.us

COMMITTEES
Children and Families (Chair)
Election Laws (Vice Chair)
Economic Development and
Emerging Technologies
Education
Healthcare Finance

July 10, 2006

Dear Members of the CHINS Data Sub-Committee,

First, I want to thank you all for your time and dedication to the CHINS Task Force and the Data Sub-Committee. I know that you all have very busy schedules and your time is truly appreciated. I apologize for not being at the last meeting because I was sick with bronchitis, but I hear that you all accomplished a lot.

As you know the Vera Institute compiled a diagnostic review as a result of their interviews with many members of the Sub-Committee. I hope that you have had time to review the report and please feel free to send any questions or concerns along to my office.

My understanding is that there was a lengthy discussion at the last meeting concerning the possibility of administering a survey similar to the sample survey provided by Vera. As mentioned at the meeting, it is my position that collecting and reviewing data regarding the services the children and families of the Commonwealth receive via the CHINS system is not only a vital piece of the work of the CHINS Task Force but also critical to future assessments of these services. My understanding is that many members of the Sub-Committee also expressed their support for the collection of this type of data as well as their concerns regarding how it will be implemented and analyzed. As I continue to pursue ways to secure funding for the analysis of the data I would request that each member of the Sub- Committee discuss the possible implementation of such a survey with the Commissioners/Head of your department.

I also understand that at the last meeting some of the departments agreed to put together some preliminary reports from their existing data sources for our next meeting. As we have previously discussed, we are looking for aggregate data on your respective departments' CHINS cases for the 2005 calendar year.

Therefore, based on our prior discussions, the following is what I am expecting to see at the next meeting in August, and please advise my office if you are not able to collect the information over the next month:

- EOHHS, DSS, DYS and DMH – will work together to compile a report of their aggregate data regarding CHINS kids
- Probation – will provide the Sub-Committee with the aggregate data that they collect

This will give us a place to start and move forward. At the August meeting we will have an opportunity to review each department's reports and determine what the next steps will be.

I thank you for all the hard work each of you have put into researching the CHINS system. Your dedication to the families and children you serve shows in all that you do. The Data Sub-Committee has gained valuable information from each one of you and now we look to you to help us complete this next step. I look forward to reading your reports and discussing the next steps to take at the August meeting.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Karen Spilka".

Senator Karen E. Spilka
2nd Norfolk & Middlesex