Transcript for the November 14th JCHC Matrix Meeting.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children Policy Options Overview

Andrew Mitchell: So we were requested to announce for those requiring communication services: we had two ASL interpreters – one was in a car accident on the way here, that person is fine, but that just explains why there is only one. Just wanted to make that announcement.

So this is a study on language development milestones and parent resources for young deaf and hard of hearing children. There were 265 individuals who provided public comments and 9 organizations listed here. Most…the vast majority of these comments were in the form of 4 different kinds of form letters. Form letter #1, which you have in your packet, accounted for over 90% of the individual comments and around half of those who submitted comments that were aligned with form number 1 were Virginia residents. So moving to the policy options; number 1: take no action. One of those organizations was in support of that as a first preference although did provide positions on additional policy options if there is action taken. And then a number of organizations and individuals were against take no action. Number 2 was introducing legislation and a budget amendment based on the bill that was the mandate for the study and this slide and the following slide just lists the different recommended changes that the report provided. Form letter #1 supported this option and the other 3 form letters opposed it and you can see some individuals that were not from letter comments took positions as well; and that provides more information. Policy option number 3 has to do with leveraging existing literacy data that are already collected by the Department of Education (DOE) to expand knowledge about literacy achievement for this population. The report highlighted that the bill envisioned a new data collection effort on language development milestones. This would be to take existing literacy related data collected beginning in pre-kindergarten and through grade school using the Virginia Longitudinal Data System, combine that with VDH's early hearing detection and intervention data that will, going forward beginning next year, provide information on any child under the age of 3 diagnosed with hearing loss in order to understand literacy achievement, not just deaf and hard of hearing students who are on IEP's in the public schooling system, but any child who's in the public schooling system that was diagnosed with hearing loss by the age of 3. And the comments there was one form letter and one organization in support and two form letters and individuals opposed to this option. Policy option number 4 had to do with requesting the agencies listed here to, instead of developing a new parent resource, use existing resource guides that are already being produced for

this population, find a way to add language development milestones to that, involving a stake holder process, and then going forward incorporate language development milestones into those existing resource guides. Policy option number 5 is requesting the agencies listed here to come together and, given that childhood hearing loss is a low incidence condition, many stakeholders emphasized that at the beginning at least it can be difficult to understand who to turn to where to get resources and so this would be requesting these agencies to come together and make sure that the information that they produce and provide is both consistent in scope and content regardless of what their particular purview is. There is a complicated system of services and supports and this is to ensure that parents get that information in a user-friendly way. Policy option number 6 has to do with the delivery…the provision of early intervention services; currently it is not a MEDICAID covered service this is asking DMAS and DBHDS to come together to propose and way forward that early intervention services could be delivered by tele-practice and reimbursed as MEDICAID eligible service. And the last policy option has to do with, as written here, exploring opportunities to develop programs connecting families of deaf and hard of hearing children to deaf and hard of hearing adults. As a low incidence condition, stakeholders emphasized that just as difficult as it is to get information on services, it's also helpful to understand the trajectory this could take and be in contact with those who have lived experience. And so this is an option for these agencies to come together and propose a way forward for a mentoring program, combining deaf and hard of hearing adults with the goal of increasing the uptake of early intervention services. And as you can see here there were organizations both in support and opposition to this policy option. And those are the policy options in front of you.

Senator Dance: Members, any feedback? So what is the position of the members in regards to policy recommendations? Is this…does the silence mean that you are in agreement with number 1, take no action? So who's going to make the recommendation?

Senator Edwards: Madame Chair I intend to put in something myself.

Senator Dance: So you recommend that we take no action?

Senator Edwards: No I don't.

Delegate Hope: Andrew it looks like to me what you've laid out here there is no consensus amongst the different groups. Is that correct? So if that was your hope Senator Edwards to find some consensus I don't think you found it so it's probably

up to you if you want to bring your bill back and what form you want to do that. So I would ask that you make a motion, whatever you want to do.

Senator Edwards: It's certainly complicated. I've thumbed through this but have not digested it all. I think something does need to be done; at this point I don't have a recommendation as to what.

Senator Suetterlein: Madame Chair I'd like to make a motion. I move policy option number 1 and speaking to that motion briefly, which simply means that JCHC is not endorsing any posture today and that the General Assembly which will be meeting in two months, we're basically telling them that we don't have consensus yet. Hopefully that body will find consensus but we still don't have it yet. And we've been looking for consensus for about two years now and we still don't have it so that's what I think today that's still the best option.

Senator Dance: It's been moved and properly seconded.

Delegate Bulova: If I could because I agree we don't have the consensus on this and I think the hope was that we'd be able to work out something that we'd be able to move forward with and we'll leave it to Senator Edwards and the groups to continue to work through the General Assembly process. I guess the two that I was interested in hearing a little more about whether they were strong concerns was option number 4 and option number 5. So those are non-legislative. Option 4 seemed to move along the path of strengthening existing resources and then number 5 seemed to deal more with making sure that our complicated entry system is streamlined so that at least users of services have a better understanding of what their options are available. It looks like most of those have very strong support perhaps with two outliers there and I'm just curious what the potential opposition was to those two options, number 4 and 5.

Andrew Mitchell: Let me refer to my notes but yes that and actually option number 6 as well, there was some degree…there was no consensus on any of these as you can see but more…. In 4, 5 and 6, I think that the opposition was that it either didn't go far enough or it didn't really address what that particular group of people or persons thought was the most important issue.

Delegate Kory: I have a quick follow up question, so your last explanation of why they objected was not so much that they objected it just was not the issue that those two groups thought they should pursue.

Andrew Mitchell: I think it's a combination of both depending on the particular option and commenter, but there was a bit of both.

Delegate Kory: Well I was going to suggest what Delegate Bulova has suggested and I think I will do that anyway. Thank you.

Senator Dance: So was that a substitute? Because we have a motion that was moved and properly seconded.

Senator Carrico: That was my question, we're not discussing the motion, we're discussing other options and there has been not been any options put before us to discuss other than option 1.

Delegate Kory: So is the motion on the floor a substitute?

Senator Dance: No the motion on the floor is take no action number 1 and it has been moved and seconded so that's the only option that we have for discussion because we did not move to another option only option 1 and if option 1 passes it eliminates it.

Delegate Bulova: If I could, and I guess it relates to option number 1, because I'm trying to get a sense if there is interest in number 4 or number 5 as something to move forward and if there is not particular interest then I'm happy to go with option number 1 then we'll move forward that way. That was the purpose of my question and if there is not a particular interest from the maker of the motion I'll fall back and we'll just move forward with option number 1.

Senator Suetterlein: Yes, Madame Chair I will renew my motion for option 1. I just you know sitting between Senate Education and Health and this body I just don't think we're at a place yet to recommend any posture and I hope that by March we are but I don't know if we will be but we're still not there today. I just don't feel good about us I think when we recommend something it generally means a significant by partisan support from this group to go forward and I haven't seen significant support in either party or in any region to go forward with anything yet.

Senator Dance: I'll just say that there doesn't seem to be a consensus today to do anything but address option number 1 that's been moved and properly seconded and I think we need to do a roll call on this one to make sure where we are.

Votes taken and all in agreement for option 1

Delegate Kory: Aye with a comment that I'm disappointed that we haven't chosen to move forward on a couple of other options