

Testimony Concerning
Staff Briefing: State Long-Term Planning
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Program Review and Investigations Committee
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Dear Senator Meyer, Representative Wasserman, and Members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee:

We testify today concerning the Staff Briefing about State Long-Term Planning. Shelley Geballe is President and Mary Glassman is Director of Legislative Affairs of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based public education and advocacy organization that works statewide to promote the well being of Connecticut's children, youth and families.

We congratulate the Committee for deciding to do this important study, and congratulate Committee staff on a competently-researched and well-written briefing on a topic that has been too long ignored by state government – long-term planning. What is striking about this report is some of the conclusions it reaches.

How likely is it that any successful \$17.7 billion/year business enterprise with 3.5 million “customers” could have the following written about it:

- It has “no clear vision” for “where it wishes to be in 20 years (or some long-term period) or how it intends to get there” (p. 34);
- It appears “unequipped in terms of organizational structure and centralized staffing capacity to coordinate or conduct comprehensive planning” (p. 34);
- It has “no comprehensive oversight of any of” its planning, “causing duplication to exist, while in other areas...requirements for certain plans are essentially ignored” (p. 29);
- Its “decentralized planning approach meets few of the desired goals” for long-term and strategic planning (p. 29);
- It has a lack of planning staff (p. 32)
- There is “generally no one place where data are collected and analyzed that could be used in long-term planning, or in monitoring progress toward achieving established...goals” (p. 32);
- There is “no link, analysis, or evaluation of how...[its] spending is tied to overall...policy or how well each [division] is performing in reaching ...[its] goals” (p. 33).

Yet, these are some of the conclusions drawn by Committee staff in assessing Connecticut’s current long-range planning efforts. However, as the study also points out, there *has* been more robust planning in Connecticut in the past, and there are multiple models in use in other states that allow states to “choose their preferred future” for the state and/or “avoid the cost of bad results.” Such long-term and strategic planning *must* be a *core part* of state government operations, *not peripheral and subject to the whim of changes in*

leadership and shifting budget priorities. Further, planning must be *well* integrated across *all* state functions including economic and community development, human resources, and land use.

As comprehensive as this Briefing is, some areas of the report could benefit from some greater detail. They include.

Data: The briefing notes that “for about 10 years, Connecticut has had no active state data center, the only state in the nation with an inactive center” and that, although now housed at UConn, it is funded at just \$75,000 for one position. The Briefing comments: “Without basic population and demographic analysis being conducted on an on-going basis (rather than every 12 years), Connecticut decision-makers are lacking crucial information about what long-term policies should be developed...” *Not* discussed in the Briefing are other significant deficits in state data, including data that are not kept current enough for planning purposes (e.g., Department of Public Health incidence data and vital statistics data), that are not kept in a form that is useful for planning (e.g., longitudinal data on student performance by SDE). More comprehensive information on “best practice” models for data collection, management, and public reporting in states with strong long-range planning efforts would be helpful.

Staffing: The Briefing notes that the Weicker administration placed a “strong emphasis on planning and performance management” within OPM; it was staffed by 227 full-time employees in 1993 – “more than double the 131 staff persons it had in FY 06” (p. 25). It further notes that “of the thousands of state government employees in classified service,” just 82 are “predominantly planners” and 21 of them are at OPM. The Briefing could benefit by some examination of trends in the number of planning and evaluation staff in state agencies other than OPM – particularly since the FY 03 budget crisis – and the impacts of diminished planning capacity within such key agencies as SDE, DCF, DSS, DEP, DECD and other agencies on outcomes for children and families and resulting long-term costs to the state from inadequate planning.

Scope of Planning. The Briefing notes that Connecticut does not place the same emphasis on planning for “human resources” as it does for land use and development, and also fails to assure “a convergence of all the specific policy planning – to oversee all the disparate plans created in the various agencies to cull out what might be common among them, and to assess whether they are directed toward the state’s overarching goals.” (p. 31). Greater discussion about how such planning is better done in other states, and how it can be maintained during changes in executive and legislative leadership, would be helpful.

Relationship to Budget Decisions. The Briefing notes that “Connecticut continues to use the budget as the sole overall planning document” yet makes “no link, analysis, or evaluation of how each agency’s spending is tied to overall state policy or how well each agency is performing in reaching any statewide goals” (p. 33). Some discussion about the General Assembly’s current efforts at Results-Based Accountability in budgeting can be melded with better long-range and strategic planning, and best practice models in other states for integrating the two, would be helpful. It would be particularly useful to know which states focus not only on state appropriations, but also on tax expenditures in evaluating budget choices against statewide goals. This is a particularly important issue given the millions of dollars of revenues foregone through tax expenditures that are not re-evaluated annually, as appropriations are.

Transparency and Accountability. A theme in the Briefing is the importance of transparency and accountability in setting statewide goals, defining strategies, and reporting on progress in meeting goals. Other examples of how this is done well in other states would be helpful.