|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Seal2  **CHARLES D. BAKER**  Governor  **KARYN E. POLITO**  Lt. Governor | The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  Executive Office of Public Safety and Security  One Ashburton Place, Room 2133  Boston, Massachusetts 02108  Tel: (617) 727-7775  TTY Tel: (617) 727-6618  Fax: (617) 727-4764  [www.mass.gov/eops](http://www.mass.gov/eops) | **THOMAS A. TURCO, III**  Secretary |

**Panel of Justice-Involved Women Meeting Minutes**

Monday, November 25th, 2019

11:00am-1:00pm.

McCormack Building

21st Floor – Conference Room #2

One Ashburton Place

Boston, MA 02133

The meeting was called to order at 11:13am.

**1. Presentation by Rep. Barber and Rep. Khan**

Rep. Khan and Barber spoke about their experiences working with incarcerated women and other capacities in which they were involved in looking at legislation that would affect that population. Rep. Khan discussed the Section 35 women she is particularly interested in assisting. She spoke about her involvement as co-chair of the Caucus of Women Legislators. She spoke about legislation she had proposed and how she believes there is often attention on incarcerated men but not women and that we need to change that. She spoke about the Mommy and Me camp at MCI-Framingham and what a success it has been. She said that they have a barbeque, events, and games for the women and children at the camp. Rep. Barber introduced herself and said she really appreciates the Panelists for participating in this work. She said this is a project of the Caucus of Women Legislators, of which Senator Friedman is Chair. She said there are many legislators and community members interested in women in the justice system and looking at the differences that women have. She said that during the CJRA, Rep. Khan and she had worked on getting a bigger panel together to think about these issues and identify women’s needs. She said a priority of theirs has been visitation and supporting family relationships. She said they have worked on toy drives, visitation rooms, and the Mommy and Me camp. She said they have also focused on transportation to and from Framingham and increasing visitation opportunities to keep visitation going within families. Rep. Khan mentioned that they recently visited Framingham and that they toured the pre-release facility as well. She mentioned the other legislators that participated in the tour. She spoke about some of the programming opportunities at Framingham, including cosmetology and educational programs. She acknowledged that receiving an education while incarcerated can be a challenge but that it does reduce the rate of recidivism if accomplished. She mentioned that the county women are moving out and going to Suffolk and maybe some other counties. Jen Sordi asked if there was a plan to visit other facilities that house women. Rep. Khan mentioned they plan to visit Suffolk after the holidays. She invited the Reps. to visit their regional facility in Hampden. Allison spoke about the Dignity Act and how this Panel will be looking at the Act. Rep. Barber said that the Caucus does not have active legislative priorities at the moment but that they want to focus on issues like visitation and programming. She spoke about vocational needs and challenges they are dealing with as well. She said that they have turned their attention recently to the county women that have been transferred from Framingham. Rep. Khan mentioned that they visited the McGrath House in Boston and that it is a program with up to 30 beds that is available to the women at Framingham as well. She wanted to ensure that this option was presented to the women at Framingham. She also mentioned that they are looking into industries and companies that are more sympathetic to those with CORIs. She mentioned Home Depot and Whole Foods as being prospective companies hiring those with CORIs. Senator Friedman spoke about whether or not Mommy and Me is truly a meaningful activity for incarcerated women and wanting to make more comprehensive changes in the lives of these women. She mentioned that she is struggling with identifying a focus on this Panel to hone in on and how to make systemic and necessary changes. She mentioned that visitation seems to be a bigger issue and would like to highlight that as a potential focus point. Rep. Barber mentioned that she also struggles with those questions as well. Andrea James mentioned there are quite a few formerly incarcerated women present at today’s meeting. She said that this Panel should expand the framework to all justice-involved women rather than simply focusing on incarcerated women. She said that we have a unique opportunity in Massachusetts to be an example for the rest of the country. She mentioned that she personally would not want her children coming to a camp at MCI-Framingham but that she understands other women may want to participate in that sort of an activity. She mentioned that we should focus on “de-carcerating” and not putting more women in prison. Andrea said that while programming is important, it does not occur often enough. She mentioned that de-carcerating should be the starting point. Andrea said she is incredulous that Rep. Barber does not have any legislative priorities at the moment. Mallory also spoke about how the women around the room were instrumental in the legislation establishing this Panel. Mallory mentioned she feels tension that legislators don’t always understand the conditions of confinement that community members and incarcerated women are sharing with Mallory and others. She mentioned that Sheriffs should have MOUs with community-based programming. Chairwoman Hallett said that as a starting point we must know what is going on in our facilities but that we should look at early-intervention programs in the community to keep these women from engaging in criminal behavior to begin with. She mentioned childcare and other issues to look into. Andrea said she hopes the Panel can be more work-effective. She asked for everyone to make the commitment to work on these issues. Patty Murphy said that she believes we need to take a different approach and make a commitment to working groups. She mentioned that she worked for DYS for over 20 years and that they do contract with community-based providers. DYS would often have custody of the children but would go in community-based treatment programs or other programs. Senator Friedman said that we should focus on things that are external (how/why women get into the system and how to map them or divert them out) and take something meaningful inside and define those things. She also mentioned that if Sheriff Koutoujian has an MOU, we should bring him in to discuss how it is working and how it was accomplished. Mallory said we should focus on pre-conviction diversion. Mallory said it would be very powerful to move women away from incarceration and include that in our report. Mallory also mentioned pathways out might be another idea. Andrea said framing it as external or internal would be good and also can apply those to the working groups that are formed. She said for the internal, we should be thinking about clemency. She thanked Allison for her advocacy in releasing an inmate diagnosed with cancer from Framingham. She mentioned having someone have their sentence looked at again after many years. She mentioned that she went to McGrath House after 18 months and said some women at halfway houses would like to go back to prison because of the terrible conditions at the homes. She said parole is a second sentence after already serving. Mallory said that this is a very exciting and interesting time in the Commonwealth. She mentioned the Suffolk DA’s involvement in these issues and her new unit (sentencing and integrity). She said if we can get behind that, hopefully some of the other counties will also get involved and propose similar things. She spoke about legislation that is currently being proposed to reconfigure the parole board in a way that would increase parole opportunities. Rep. Barber clarified that by no legislative priorities, she meant that she hopes to continue the work that was identified in the CJRA. Andrea thanked Rep. Khan for focusing on women throughout her career. Senator Friedman said she feels pre-conviction diversion is critical. She said that there are things in the criminal justice bill that are not being implemented to the legislature’s satisfaction. Senator Friedman said that for the internal piece, she would like to see more of a focus on trauma. She mentioned their obligation to address trauma and looking at evidence-based models. Maureen mentioned that trauma touches on both prongs as well. Andrea mentioned Ayanna Pressley’s resolution for criminal justice at the federal level. She mentioned that incarcerated women have traumatic childhoods and that we need to be looking at that as well. Mallory said she will share the reports from the listening tours in Roxbury that were done by Families for Justice as Healing sharing their experiences from the most incarcerated area of the Commonwealth. It is in response to the Mass Inc. report. Andrea said the complexity of the lives of the women and girls is very overwhelming and that incarceration adds to it. Rep. Khan thanked everyone for speaking up and added that she is the House Chair on Women, Children, and Persons with Disabilities and that there is some legislation (which she can hand out) to raise the age to at least 21, but hopefully closer to 26 and would like everyone to reach out to their legislators to get it passed. She said the needs of foster children are very important and that we need to be paying attention to the child. Senator Friedman made a motion to focus on pre-conviction diversion and an internal focus as well. For next steps, she said we can see what the gaps are and what folks are doing for diversion. She said it should be easy to bring to this Panel because it already exists. She moved that we identify two areas—one internal and one external to focus on at the next meeting. Patty Murphy seconded the motion and all voted in favor. The motion passed unanimously. Chair Hallett asked if we want to focus on parenting and keeping mothers and their children communicating and in a relationship or another internal issue such as protracted parole or a “look-back”. Andrea put it out to the group and asked which we should focus on. Allison read some of the internal issues that the group could potentially focus on. Mallory suggested looking at each of these priorities through a trauma lens. Senator Friedman said she does not agree and that we do not directly address trauma and wanted to know what it means to have trauma-informed decisions and care. She used substance-use disorder as being trauma-informed but that we are not really looking at the fundamental of all these issues. Patty said that the surveys have all come in and she is in the process of having the data gathered and sent out to the Panel and that a lot of the data was regarding trauma and that the data could be used as a jumping-off point. Senator Friedman said that trauma deserves its own focus but that we should take a vote. Maureen said she really likes Mallory’s idea of not being too specific and discuss pathways out. Senator Friedman made a motion to accept Maureen’s language on the well-being and dignity for incarcerated women and pathways out for the internal component. Sarah Ruiz seconded the motion and all voted in favor. The motion carried.

**2. Report Deadline Discussion**

Senator Friedman suggested a status report for December and that they can do a larger report next year. She asked that we vote on the report by a poll online. Arielle raised concerns about not having everyone able to review the report.

**3. Scheduling Future Meetings**

There was some discussion about scheduling. It was agreed the December meeting would be held on December 30th and the future meetings would be held on the second Tuesday of the month. Andrea requested e-mails and phone numbers for all members to make sure someone else is able to come to the meetings if they know they cannot come. Arielle explained the differences between a working group and a subcommittee and deliberation issues that may arise. Arielle asked if the group would like EOPSS to draft a status report and a discussion of what they have done. Arielle said EOPSS will send something out the week before December 30th to review the draft report and vote on it on the 30th. She suggested limiting the agenda to the review of the report and a discussion of how to proceed.

**4. Review/Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes from September 13, 2019 Meeting**

A motion was made by Maureen Gallagher to approve the minutes. It was seconded by Jen Sordi. All voted in favor and the motion carried unanimously.

**5. Changes at MCI-Framingham and other related updates**

Acting Superintendent Kyle Pelletier spoke of the transfer of county women from Framingham. In October, MCI-Framingham was notified by Essex, Plymouth, and Norfolk counties that they entered into a MOU that DOC was not a part of. On October 8th, Kyle was notified that the county inmates would be moved from Framingham. She was informed that this would be happening over several months and that it would start on October 15th. MCI-Framingham put a memo out to the staff and the incarcerated women letting them know what was going to happen and that they would have informational sessions to discuss further. She presented all the information she had available and confirmed those county women would be held in Suffolk to the women in their units or as a group in the chapel, addressing all housing units. The transfer ended on November 7th. Kyle let the women know they would be given a live check and that property would be moved to the new facility. She was not able to let them know what property would be allowed. She let them know that they should be conservative about what they are ordering in canteen and property. She asked them to let their family and friends know about the transfer. She mentioned that their medication would be going with them. Additionally, she let the women know they would do an additionally access hour to allow the women to come and as department heads specific questions they might have regarding the moves. She said she made this announcement to all the women regardless of their status. Many of the women took advantage of that. Kyle noted that mental health went around and reached out to any women that seemed distressed. She mentioned the peer support program and that Framingham staff made that program available for the women during this time. They did not have too many issues on the day of transfer but she checked to make sure the phone system was the same and she provided the county inmates and phone vendor the numbers for each woman. Kyle noted that the transfers were all scheduled to occur after lunch so they could eat breakfast and lunch and take medication in the morning. When the counties reached out, she looked at their re-entry dates. Essex identified a few women that they wanted Framingham to hold onto so they could continue those re-entry plans. She said their awaiting-trial population has gone down to 55 from approximately 200. They are still holding for Middlesex County. Michelle Wetherbee from the Parole Board said she wanted to see what programming was added for the women in Suffolk and wanted to make sure that the woman would not be penalized with respect to programming. They added additional parole dates and transferred the files over. Michelle said there are more hearings and they are getting them done quicker. Kyle said they have a minimum component at South Middlesex and none of those women were transferred unless they were returned to higher custody but none have to this date. There were between 150-170 women transferred overall. Maureen asked what the big picture reason was for the transfer. Kyle answered she cannot respond from a DOC perspective because the ask did not come from DOC. Kyle said she was initially under the impression she would have until the end of the year and the timeframe got pushed up with no indication as to why. Andrea said that kind of a transfer is very traumatic. Kyle acknowledged this and did all within the Department’s power to make the transfers go as smoothly as possible. Andrea said it was odd and asked how that cannot happen again. Andrea said that for Sheriffs to make these decisions is very odd. She asked what the urgency was. Mallory said she contacted Senator Friedman and sent a public letter and was told programming already existed for women. Women are not able to move around the facility. The county rate of phone calls is significantly higher. She said when legislators call the Sheriffs, they get a different response than when people on the Panel ask. Maureen asked if this Panel can make a formal inquiry and ask what occurred from the Sheriffs. Arielle answered that the Panel can write a letter if they wish but that the Sheriffs are under no obligation to respond. Andrea said it is important we ask and remind people that we are speaking about these women. She spoke about her aversion to the use of the word “inmate” and asked that this group refer to them as incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women. Patty said she will bring this back to Sheriff Cocchi and ask that he inquire. Andrea mentioned the Sheriffs’ populations dealing with mental illness and that they should not be housed in Suffolk. Chair Hallett asked who would like to draft the letter. Andrea said she can do it. Maureen offered to help as well.

**6. Proposed/Pending Legislation – Dignity Act**

Patty asked about the Dignity Act. Chair Hallett spoke about the participants in the meeting discussing the Dignity Act. Chair Hallett said that Senator Brownsberger asked that she bring it to this Panel for discussion. Lisa said that the Panel should be doing things to let everyone know this Panel exists. She said the legislators should put it own their own newsletters and try to let as many people know. She said we should be prominent about distributing the status report to the entire legislature. There was a motion by Andrea to adjourn the meeting. Patty seconded it. The meeting adjourned at 1:17pm.