

Florida Health and Human Services Board, Inc.

A Not-for-Profit Organization founded in 2001 for putting "Community" into Community Based Care
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December 21, 2006

Mr. Robert Butterworth
Secretary Designate, DCF
School of Law, St. Thomas University
16401 NW 37th Avenue
Miami Gardens, FL 33054

Dear Mr. Butterworth:

The Florida Health and Human Services Board, Inc.(FHHSB), is pleased that you have accepted the appointment as Secretary of the Department of Children and Families, and we offer whatever help we can give you in what certainly must be the most challenging position in Florida.

We feel very close to you because FHHSB, Inc. is the unofficial successor of the Statewide Health and Human Services Board which you probably remember from your time as Attorney General. The Statewide HHSB was abolished when the legislature privatized "foster care and related services" in 2000 and did away with the sixteen District Health and Human Services Boards made up of citizens publicly appointed to represent local communities.

Since that time, there has been no official statewide advisory board. The statutory "community alliances" mandated in F.S. 20.19 (6) have been for the most part inadequate to the task of planning, assessing, advocating, and allocating services in local areas under the so-called "community based care" program, as the privatization effort came to be called.

The Statewide Health and Human Services Board served a much broader array of needs, anyway. Perhaps you recall that our annual meeting in June of 1999 was a convocation of directors and administrators to discuss the importance of interdepartmental collaboration and the reality of integration of services such as health, mental health, employment, transportation, juvenile justice, etc. Little did we know then that we were slated for demolition the following year.

The current system permits no involvement of citizens, whether statewide or locally, because all DCF contracts under "community based care" are written and approved in Tallahassee. Only the contractors (CBC providers) discuss terms of the contracts. There are no public voices involved now in foster care and adoptions.

I don't have to tell you how things have gone in the area of forensic mental health. Those problems are at least being heard in the courts and in the public media.

The Florida Health and Human Services Board hopes that you recognize that the State of Florida needs to open its ears once again to the voices of public citizens who are not interested in seeking contracts but who are advocates for vulnerable children and families. The interests we represent are broad and interconnected, including not only those children at risk of abuse and neglect, but also disabled adults and those with mental illnesses that lead to behavioral problems. Our web site is <http://www.fhhsb.org>

Standing ready to help in any way we can, sincerely,

Alvin W. Wolfe, Ph.D.
Chair, Florida Health and Human Services Board, Inc.

FHHSB Board of Directors: David Buby, D.O.; L. David de la Parte, Esq.; Marietta Mischia, E.D.