

From:

To:

Date:

Subject: FW: Committee on Children ~ Website email

Attachments: Letter to Senator Fair.doc

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Senator Shealy,

Please see the email below and the attached letter from Senator Fair sent in response to misinformation out there about DSS and child fatalities . This is one of the topics she will like to discuss

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**From:** DAVIS JR., HARRY [mailto:HWDAVIS@mailbox.sc.edu]

**Sent:** Friday, October 25, 2013 10:46 AM

**To:** 'Mike Fair'; 'cbhutto@aol.com'; Darrell Jackson (DarrellJackson@scsenate.gov); Darrell Jackson (djackson@bcwar.org); repshannonerickson@gmail.com; shannonerickson@schouse.gov; kitspires@schouse.org; 'mia@mcleodbutler.com'; Beverly Buscemi (bbuscemi@ddsn.sc.gov); John Magill; Koller, Lillian; mhbarb@scdjj.net; Scott English (senglish@ed.sc.gov); Derek Lewis (derek@greenvillefirststeps.org); gmm@milnerling.com; Marie Land (mland@sc.rr.com); Catherine Templeton (templecb@dhec.sc.gov); btoomey@daodas.sc.gov; keck@scdhhs.gov

**Cc:** Connie Mancari (cam35@scdmh.org); Stillinger, Linda; Lois Park Mole (lp mole@ddsn.sc.gov); sjodio@scdjj.net; Antjuan Seawright (antjuan@sunrisecommunications.co); 'barnesms@dhec.sc.gov'; 'teresa.higgins@dhec.sc.gov'; 'scollins@daodas.sc.gov'; alisapainter@scsenate.gov; 'annewallice@scsenate.gov' (annewallice@scsenate.gov); polattyj@scdhhs.gov; DAVIS JR., HARRY

**Subject:** FW: Committee on Children ~ Website email

Members, Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children:

Senator Fair asked me to forward to you the attached letter which he received regarding Town Hall testimony and a copy of his email sent in response to the letter. [The name and address of the letter's author have been removed.] Senator Fair wanted to make sure you that have copies of this testimony and his response as we conclude the public hearings and head into our planning retreat.

If you have any questions please give me a call.

Thank you,

Harry

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**From:** Mike Fair [mailto:MikeFair@scsenate.gov]

**Sent:** Wednesday, October 23, 2013 11:45 AM

**To:** -----

**Subject:** Committee on Children ~ Website email from \_\_\_\_\_

Ms. \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for your letter to the SC Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children. Your letter has been forwarded to the Children's Law Center to become a part of the record kept of the Town Hall meetings which occurred across the state this month. It is from the input submitted by the public that we are able to develop the legislative priorities for the coming year which most closely reflect the issues that are of the utmost importance to

you and to the people of South Carolina. We depend on the citizenry of the state as you represent a driving force in children's advocacy.

I did want to try and begin to address some of the concerns listed in your letter as efforts to eradicate trauma or danger to children need to remain on the forefront of any strategy for the coming year. The number of child fatalities within our state is too high, but, as you stated, one child death within our state is unacceptable and, therefore, any number would be too high.

You reference a "drastic rise in deaths of children whose family has had DSS involvement." As such a drastic rise would be cause for concern and immediate action, I wanted to follow up and ascertain the exact numbers as information we have received indicates that, in fact, child deaths where there has been DSS involvement have remained mostly consistent with a very slight decline over the previous years.

Our information stems from the presentation given by Mrs. Laura Hudson of the SC State Child Fatality Advisory Committee, whom you mention in your letter. It is my understanding that Mrs. Hudson, as a member of the Child Fatality Advisory Committee, looked into the child deaths that had occurred within South Carolina since the last official report was generated in 2009 in response to a Freedom of Information request. She provided the Children's Committee with the updated figures at the Town Hall meeting, as you mention.

From the information presented by her, on behalf of the Child Fatality Advisory Committee, in 2009, there were a total of 717 deaths of children from zero to seventeen years of age. Of those 717, 214 were referred to SLED for further investigation due to the unexpected/unexplained nature of the death. Of the 214, there had been DSS involvement in 73 cases. This includes DSS involvement with the deceased child as well as any siblings of the deceased child.

In 2010, there were 686 deaths of children from zero to seventeen years of age, with 183 referred to SLED. Of the 183 referred for further investigation, there had been DSS involvement in 67 cases.

In 2011, there were 665 deaths of children from zero to seventeen years of age, with 173 referred to SLED. Of the 173 referred for further investigation, there had been DSS involvement in 69 cases.

There was not a total number of child deaths available for 2012 or 2013. However, in 2012, there were 156 deaths that were referred to SLED, of which 62 had DSS involvement. In 2013, there have been 105 deaths referred to SLED, 41 of which included DSS involvement.

While any number of child deaths is unacceptable, from the information we have seen, the number of total child deaths referred to SLED has declined since 2009 and the percentage of child deaths where there had been DSS involvement have remained fairly consistent over the previous years. A copy of the table containing the figures listed above is included below:

2007	
2008	
2009	
2010	
2011	
2012	
2013	
South Carolina	

South Carolina	
	Deaths (age 0-17)
0	
0	
717	
686	
665	
0	
0	
	SLED/SCFAC*
0	
0	
214	
183	
173	
156	
105	
	DSS Involvement
0	
0	
73	
67	
69	
62	
41	
	SLED/SCFAC Cases Closed
0	
0	
191	
126	
99	
26	
0	

\*SCFAC – State Child Fatality Advisory Committee

Regarding your question as to what is included in the above figures as presented by Mrs. Hudson, the figures regarding DSS involvement do, in fact, include cases which were referred by DSS to Community Based Prevention Services.

As to whether or not there are dedicated intake workers within DSS, I am unsure of the answer to that question. I do believe it is essential to have experienced and knowledgeable employees that are tasked with evaluating intake reports as a mistake in the initial screening could cause a significant issue to be overlooked, possibly causing harm to the child. If there are not dedicated intake workers currently, that could be an important piece to further explore and see how we can better evaluate the cases that are brought to DSS to ensure the child receives the best possible response to his or her individual situation.

Again, thank you for your well thought out letter; it will provide a wealth of information for the Children's Committee as we continue to plan our priorities for the coming legislative session. Also, thank you for giving me the opportunity to respond personally to your comments and I look forward to a continuing dialogue as we look to better the system charged with caring for our most precious resource, the children of the state of South Carolina.

Sincerely,

Mike