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## **Legislative Oversight Committee**



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**March 16, 2016**

**The Honorable Nikki R. Haley  
Office of the Governor  
1205 Pendleton Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201**

**HAND-DELIVERED**

**Dear Governor Haley:**

One of the defining characteristics of our democratic way of life is that we charge representatives chosen by the people at free elections with conducting the people's business. As Chairman of the House Legislative Oversight Committee, I read with interest the concerns you expressed to the media about this Committee's conduct of the people's business with regards to its study of the Department of Juvenile Justice, a cabinet agency.

As the concerns you expressed to the media touched upon the Committee's process of studying state agencies and their responsiveness to the needs of state citizens, I reviewed the video of the March 11, 2016, Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Subcommittee meeting. This video is available online, as it is the practice of the committee to conduct the people's business in an open and transparent manner. Also, I spoke with Subcommittee members in order to obtain their personal observations about the Committee's process.

This review of the video and conversations with Subcommittee members underscores there are concerns from the public, including a front line agency employee, about the agency's level of responsiveness to the needs of some of the state's most vulnerable citizens - juveniles entrusted to the care of the agency. Notably, this review indicates the Committee's process has provided the public with information about ongoing actions to address concerns with the agency, including posting the agency's improvement plan online and video of testimony received about this plan.

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While there has been emotion and intensity with questioning of the agency, the legislative process is neither quiet nor detached; rather it is a process that embraces frank debate as well as emotion. We are unable to discern any specific instances of lack of civility of the Subcommittee Chair during examination of the witnesses. If you have a particular and specific concern, please share it with me.

The Committee will continue to conduct the people's business in an open, transparent, and civil manner seeking the betterment of our great state. As you are aware, there is a large bronze plaque hanging in the lobby of the Blatt Building, the building where Legislative Oversight Committee meetings are held. On this plaque are the words of Speaker Rex L. Carter: "This building belongs to the people of South Carolina." My door is open at any time to discuss issues of concern that anyone may have about the Legislative Oversight Committee's process or any of its methods of inquiry.

Thank you for your dedication to the issues of importance to South Carolina and for all of your efforts seeking the betterment of our great state.

Sincerely,



Wm. Weston J. Newton  
Chair, House Legislative Oversight Committee

cc: The Honorable Jay Lucas, Speaker of the House  
The Honorable Kirkman Finlay III  
The Honorable William K. Bowers  
The Honorable Raye Felder  
The Honorable Edward R. Tallon Sr.