



TO: Legislative Operating Committee (LOC)
FROM: Clorissa N. Santiago, Legislative Reference Office, Senior Staff Attorney *CMS*
DATE: June 1, 2022
RE: Healing to Wellness Court Law: Public Comment Review with LOC Consideration

On May 4, 2022, a public meeting was held regarding the proposed Healing to Wellness Court law (“the Law”). The public comment period was then held open until May 11, 2022. On May 18, 2022, the Legislative Operating Committee reviewed and considered all public comments received.

Comments 1 through 2 – Community Health Services Department Support:

Michelle Myers (oral): Afternoon. I just wanted to make a comment that I'm reviewing the information that was available on this proposed law, that there is a lot of scientific evidence, evidence - evidence based information to support the success of drug courts. So, looking at it through the lens of public health lens, this is definitely something that we would support. That's my comment.

Michelle Myers (written): To whom it may concern: The Community Health Services Department of the Oneida Comprehensive Health Division supports the proposed Wellness Court Law.

1. Drug court is a strategy supported by scientific evidence to reduce recidivism, reduce drug use, and reduce incarceration among criminal offenders with drug dependency problems. When reviewing available information on drug courts, research going back several years can be found to support the success of drug courts (County Health Rankings, 2016).

2. Drug court is a strategy that promotes health equity, which is achieved when every person has the opportunity to live a healthy life. Health inequities can contribute to increase overdose deaths and other negative health outcomes. Social Determinants of Health or the conditions in which people live, work, learn and play, can also contribute to health inequities and result in intergenerational risk for substance use and overdose (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2021).

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Response

The commenter expresses support for the Healing to Wellness Court law from not only herself but from the Community Health Services Department of the Oneida Comprehensive Health Division. There is no revision to the Law recommended based on this comment.

LOC Consideration

The Legislative Operating Committee thanks Michelle Myers for expressing support for the Healing to Wellness Court law on behalf of the Community Health Services Department of the Oneida Comprehensive Health Division. The Legislative Operating Committee determined there is no revision to the Law needed based on this comment.

Comment 3 – Cultural Heritage Support:

Tsyoshaat Delgado (oral): I'm calling on behalf of myself in regards to and in of the program on the cultural part of this is in. In reading through the information that that was sent out the Healing to Wellness Court I have about five (5) years experience working with the corrections in trying to reintegrate individuals, Native Americans, specifically from Menominee, Oneida, and Stockbridge Munsee Nations, to come back into the community to find the resources they need to to get reintegrated into the community. And so I'm in support of this and I think it'll be really key and important to help people develop a foundation in regards to our culture and language and to be able to uh, contribute in some way in regards to their learning and also to be able to contribute in a way to the community around culture and language.

And so I'm in support of this and, and I know we had a meeting yesterday, if I'm not mistaken, with Simone Ninham and trying to figure out how we can implement culture into the program and so I'm in support of it. And there's definitely some information in there that pertains specifically to, you know, alcohol use. And it's basically covers everything on just what you put in your system that's a mind changer, you know. And there's all kinds of things unfortunately, in today's society that that changes our minds right now, you know, all the drug addiction, whether it's a needle or you're snorting or huffing or smoking or popping a pill or shooting up. There's all those things. So it doesn't only pertain to alcoholism.

As it is mentioned in some of our teachings and so I'm in support of this and trying to figure out what would be the best way to support this going forward in educating those individuals. And I'm thinking we're primarily talking about Oneida members, but introducing them to some culture and how they can impact the community and support that happening amongst ourselves.

And so if it also can be fitting to find out what their gifts are. What are some of the things that they have themselves that they can contribute? Because we all come, come about this earth with certain gifts and we have to find out what they are. And unfortunately, when we have mind changing things happen to our bodies, then we lose sight of what those gifts are. And if we can get back to that and try and educate them and, and kind of flame their fire to support them being able to figure out what their gift is so they can share that with their families, their community, you know the Nation. You know, and just the whole human family. I think that would be some of the things that will be very, Umm, influential in contributing in that way. So they don't only feel like, oh, you know, I've got a conviction and now I gotta do all these things, and now I have to do this. No, we're not interested in making them do anything, but it's creating an awareness for them so that they can support these things that are going to be happening that are always still happening. All of our ceremonies, our medicines and you know our Thanksgiving and you know addressing trauma things.

Such as they did, you know, trying to revisit and help the healing along with what had happened at the Radisson, you know about a year ago. You know, so it's all of those things and, and it doesn't have to necessarily say that now you're committed and you have to do this. No, it's about what is it that they come to into this world with? What gifts are they? How can we feed their fire in a way so that it's in a positive way. What happened to them as they got lost as they went along and and began to use whatever they're using and end up landing, you know, in the court system within the Nation. So I'm just speaking on behalf of, of myself and somewhat of Cultural Heritage to support, you know, the healing process happening for these individuals.

I think that it'll be important moving forward that the education for those individuals that are implementing these types of things are educated as well, in some shape or form. I'm not sure what all that looks like, and I'm guessing they have a lot of work and the development of those kinds of things, but that's gonna be key just as much as it is for those individuals that are gonna have to be, that are gonna be assigned or willing to do this kind of healing.

So it's, it's almost like you can't really teach something that you don't really know about, and so that's what I'm where I'm coming from in regards to the education of the staff that work there, and do they even know what they're sending these individuals to? And if not, then then there has to be some kind of bridge that's there to to support them going to this because we don't want, you know, to be doing things and say ohh, I don't understand that and I'm not gonna do that - I'm just, you know, that doesn't sound right to me, OK. Well, then it it's a matter of it becoming educated about that and entertaining the questions and, and having answers or being able to refer them to where they can get answers. But that's gonna be key just as well. So that's all I have and thank you for listening.

Response

The commenter expresses support for the Healing to Wellness Court law from not only herself but from the Cultural Heritage Department, and speaks to the importance of connecting culture and tradition to the practices of the Healing to Wellness Court law in a meaningful way. There is no revision to the Law recommended based on this comment.

LOC Consideration

The Legislative Operating Committee thanks Tsyoshaat Delgado for expressing support for the Healing to Wellness Court law on behalf of herself and the Cultural Heritage Department. The Legislative Operating Committee determined there is no revision to the Law needed based on this comment.