

Virginia Child Support Guidelines Review Panel

February 27, 2025

12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

5600 Cox Road, Glen Allen, VA 23060 – York River Conference Room (111B)

Meeting Minutes

Members Present:

The Honorable Bryan K. Meals
The Honorable Tanya Bullock, Chair
Alana Tucker, Director of the Division of Child
Support Enforcement
H. Van Smith, Esq.
Nupur Bal, Esq.
Lauren Roaseau
Christian Paasch

Members of the Public Present

(In-person):

Chris Beach, Fatherhood Foundation of
Virginia
Emma Johnson

Members of the Public Present (Virtual):

Erica Winslow
Robert Whitfield

Members Not Present:

Senator Scott A. Surovell
Delegate James A. (Jay) Leftwich, Jr.
Delegate Katrina E. Callsen
Delegate Karrie K. Delaney
Erica Baez, Esq.
Lindsay Hartz, Esq.
Jennifer Miller

Panel Staff Present:

Taylor Ashe, Panel Administrator
Lauren Robinson, DCSE
Leslie Montgomery, DCSE
Mariellen Keely, DCSE
Shannon Woods, DCSE
Matthew Gomez, DCSE
Josh Ours, Office of Attorney General

Other attendees:

Dr. William S. Comanor

Notes:

1. 8 panel members are needed to make a quorum. Only 7 panel members were in attendance. Voting items are moved to the next Panel meeting scheduled for April 10th, 2025.
2. The meeting was originally scheduled to be held in the York River Conference Room (111B), but was moved to the James River Conference Room (111A) with posted notification and DCSE staff available to redirect attendees to the proper location. This change was made to better accommodate the number of attendees and provide adequate table space and seating arrangements.

Welcome

All

Madam Chair, The Honorable Tanya Bullock welcomed panel members and attendees and commenced the meeting.

PowerPoint Presentation by Dr. Comanor

1. Data presented from the Consumer Expenditure Survey published by the US Census Bureau in 2017, same as Dr. Venohr.
2. Need to balance between award amounts and the actual monetary costs of raising children.
 - a. If award is too low, custodial households are financially restrained from expenditures that would impact the children.
 - b. If award is too high, child custody becomes a financial asset that is funded by the payer.
3. Discussed using regression analysis to determine how much more is spent in households with children compared to those without.
 - a. Statistical results rely on findings published in 2015.
 - b. The values reported are those restated at 2024 price levels using the Consumer Price Index.
 - c. Compared figures based on Rothbarth methodology favored by Dr. Venohr.
4. Differences between Dr. Comanor's method and the Rothbarth Method
 - a. Dr. Venohr's preferred method rests on an "adult clothing theory of well-being."
 - b. Dr. Venohr's method requires that parents be compensated for sharing their households with their children.

Comments, Questions, and Answers

1. Judge Meals commented that adopting Dr. Comanor's method would result in lowering child support during difficult economic times.
2. Judge Meals questioned if the amount on the "Incremental Costs and Rothbarth Estimates" table were yearly figures. Dr. Comanor confirmed.
3. Judge Meals questioned if Dr. Comanor thought that income was keeping pace with inflation in either methodology. Dr. Comanor said there was a vast amount of inflation recently and he can imagine that adjustments for inflation in either methodology were necessary.
4. Judge Meals questioned if Dr. Comanor knew of any other states using incremental costs. Dr. Comanor said he's done the analysis but has not followed up with any states.
5. Christian Paasch stated that things are difficult across the board, making it difficult for people to make child support payments.
 - a. Mr. Paasch stated we have been doing things the same way for at least 10 years and the numbers haven't gotten any better. We need to make payments more achievable and focus on the ability to pay.
5. Judge Meals inquired why we don't use economists in Virginia. Mr. Paasch agrees maybe we should do this for the next economist contracted as part of the next Child Support Guidelines Review Panel quadrennial cycle.
6. H. Van Smith wants to know what percentages in Virginia child support are at these income bracket points.

- a. Judge Bullock commented that the data is from 2017, and we are nearly 10 years away from that.
- b. Alana Tucker would like to see a balance between the two methodologies. It would be helpful to see a side-by-side comparison of guidelines schedules based on the incremental cost and Rothbarth methodologies. Taylor confirmed we can ask for this.

Discussion on SB 805

All

Judge Bullock confirmed that the bill has already passed and is waiting on the governor's approval. No further comments were offered by Panel members.

Administrative Matters

All

1. Virtual Meeting Dates
 - a. Confirming all-virtual meeting dates was pushed to the next Panel meeting in April, as no quorum prevented the Panel from voting.
2. Reviewed Response from the Board of Appointments (re: Noncustodial parent applications)
 - a. Taylor Ashe reviewed response from the Board of Appointments regarding the Panel's inquiry into what is considered of applicants. The language provided was that the Board of Appointments reviews "social media, general alignment with the Governor, and history of child support payments."
 - b. Mr. Paasch wanted to know what "general alignment with the Governor" included. Mr. Ashe will reach out for clarification.
3. Dr. Venohr's engagement with Dr. Comanor's materials
 - a. Dr. Venohr is preparing materials in response and will present them for the Panel to review at the next meeting.
4. Review of Panel emails
 - a. No action items for the Panel. Taylor Ashe broke down the count of emails related to specific topics, with the majority being comment on SB 805. Mr. Ashe encouraged the Panel to review the emails at their leisure.
5. Public Comments and Questions
 - a. Chris Beach, from Fatherhood Foundation of Virginia, presented in person
 - i. Stated SB 805 effects Black fathers the most.
 - ii. Discussed the difficulty of dads who have been incarcerated.
 1. Already in arrears with child support payments
 2. No license
 3. Trying to find employment
 4. Many go back to doing the same things because they are trying to make their payments.
 5. People are scared to go to court

- iii. He applauds the Black caucuses for listening to their constituents
- b. Emma Johnson, Custodial mother, presented in person
 - i. Most of the time there are two houses and parents involved in the upbringing of children.
 - ii. Keeping both parents involved and active in their children's lives is important.
 - iii. Less people are signing up for child support
 - 1. Child support is not popular with constituents
 - 2. Dads are already involved
 - 3. Families are figuring it out on their own.
 - 4. Moms don't want more child support
 - 5. Children don't need more.
 - 6. Not listening to the families
 - iv. Arrears are putting fathers out of their children's lives.
- c. Erica Winslow, noncustodial parent, presented virtually
 - i. Confirmed understanding that the panel doesn't produce legislation, but they have influence
 - ii. Because of our laws with modifications, judges don't feel comfortable correcting arrears balances. We need a law to be able to adjust them.
 - iii. Domestic violence is not addressed in Circuit Court, but her child support case was. Her children's safety should have been taken into account.
- d. Robert Whitfield, presented virtually
 - i. We need data that reflects Virginia, not data from another state.
 - ii. Need to consider that cost of living in Virginia varies by locality. It's more expensive in northern Virginia.
 - iii. Courts have been making wrong decisions, and we need to rectify them.
 - iv. Laws are in the best interests of the lawyers and not the children, as they monetarily benefit.
 - v. Decisions made by the panel will affect many people
 - vi. There is not good representation from the people. Outreach is needed.
 - vii. We need to rectify issues with the courts
 - 1. Mr. Paasch wanted to confirm that the panel doesn't do anything with legislation. Madam Chair confirmed the Panel does not.

Adjourn

All

The Panel adjourned at 1:45pm.

Action items for Panel members:

1. Review the presentation materials, emails from the public, scheduled meetings, and send any questions or concerns to Madam Chair, The Honorable Tanya Bullock.
2. Send any interested non-custodial parents interested in serving on the panel to Taylor Ashe.

Action items for Panel staff:

1. Taylor Ashe to distribute 2017 US Census Data Report to Panel members.
2. Mr. Ashe to follow up on Judge Meals' question regarding the lack of contracted economists located in Virginia for the Panel's work.
3. Mr. Ashe will follow up with Dr. Venohr to clarify how VA's current guidelines sit in terms of percentage of household expenditures.
4. Mr. Ashe will ask for Dr. Venohr to include any information about states that have employed Dr. Comanor's methodology.
5. Mr. Ashe will follow up with Board of Appointments to get clarification on "general alignment with the Governor."