ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND TECHNOLOGY OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
OF THE
DUTCHESS COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Thursday, August 6, 2026, 5:30 p.m.

Committee Chair Munn called the committee to order at 5:32 p.m.

PRESENT: 11 ARNOFF, ATKINS, DARROW, HOUSE, KAUL, LAWLER, METZGER, MUNN, POLASEK, SHAH, VALDÉS SMITH

ABSENT: 1 DRAGO

PRESENT/LATE: 0

QUORUM PRESENT

Presentations and Reports

Presentation on Electronic Virtual Assistant by Commissioner Sabrina Jaar Marzouka, Department of Community and Family Services (DCFS)

Legislature Chair Valdes Smith asked if there has been an increase in SNAP applications.

Commissioner Marzouka said not by comparison to 2025, the big jump was in 2025.

Chair Valdes Smith asked about user disconnections.

Commissioner Marzouka said there were more user disconnections early in the rollout and that as users have gotten used to the system there is a reduction is users disconnecting.

Chair Valdes Smith asked about the difference between freeing workers from certain time consuming tasks and using AI to reduce workforce size.

Commissioner Marzouka said the system is only used to save workers' time which can be better spent on more important functions by handling certain mundane tasks which do not involve any type of decision-making functions.

Chair Valdes Smith asked about data storage. Commissioner Marzouka said that the system stores the data for 10 years.

Legislator Lawler asked about the system's translation services and how accuracy is guaranteed. Commissioner Marzouka said that staff have been reviewing the foreign language translations to ensure the translations are accurate.

Legislator Lawler asked about “doom loops” and whether there have been any issues for users getting stuck in a revolving cycle of menus. Commissioner Marzouka said that the system is not designed to cycle endlessly and that a live person is available to speak to through the system. Commissioner Marzouka further said that the system is designed to check for the audible clarity of the user, and if the user isn’t audible the system will prompt to transfer the user to a live person for assistance.

Legislator Lawler asked about unfunded federal mandates regarding error rates and data privacy. Commissioner Marzouka said they are really two separate issues, with the error rate calculations made by a formula which are unfair to every state. She said that if a client reports an incorrect piece of information to the agency, the federal government considers it an error by the state/county, and that the calculations are made by sampling, meaning that states can’t tell individual counties what their actual error rate is. She further said that data storage is done separate from the DCFS systems, meaning all DCFS internal systems are untouched and cannot be accessed by the data storage systems.

Legislator Kaul asked about the process if someone has a question during the recitation of rights and responsibilities. Commissioner Marzouka said the system has a built-in function which interrupts itself if the user asks for clarification or says they do not understand. The system is further designed to transfer the user to a live person for assistance if it cannot provide an explanation to the user.

Legislator Shah asked if the EVA service will be limited to the SNAP program. Commissioner Marzouka said that at the present time there are no plans to use EVA for anything other than SNAP. She further said that the vendor which developed the EVA system were former SNAP workers who understood what the work entails.

Legislator Alexander asked about cost. Commissioner Marzouka said EVA Phone is $100,000 and EVA R+R is $60,000, which is quickly recouped by higher employee productivity, higher morale, better attendance and more paid man-hours by the department.

Legislator Alexander asked if there were any positions she thought she needed to fill which the system has caused her to feel are unnecessary. Commissioner Marzouka said absolutely not.

Majority Leader Atkins asked who within the department can monitor the system to ensure it is functioning properly and how the department might shut the system off when it malfunctions or there is an issue. Commissioner Marzouka said a staff member can call OCIS and have the system deactivated and have all incoming calls directed to DCFS staff.

Assistant Minority Leader Metzger asked about time and call length. Commissioner Marzouka said OCIS provides reports which go so far as to tell her how often calls are received and what hours of the day receive the highest call volume.

Assistant Minority Leader Metzger noted that average call time is very short and asked why call times are often so short. Commissioner Marzouka said callers are often calling to speak to their specific case manager and are transferred, while others are calling asking about the status of their application.

Assistant Minority Leader Metzger asked about automated options to reduce call time. Commissioner Marzouka said that is exactly what the system is designed to do by having information available through the automated system.

Assistant Minority Leader Metzger asked about who sets the standards for determination or eligibility and whether there has been any guidance or consensus about the use of EVA for SNAP systems. Commissioner Marzouka said that the system is rapidly growing in use across the country and that the USDA is actively encouraging the use of technology to help agencies handle the volume of calls and applications they receive.

Assistant Minority Leader asked about the EVA Companion function which the County does not use. Commissioner Marzouka said that the Companion doesn't make determinations for the human worker but does provide information which the worker can use to make their decision.

Legislator Johnson asked about the interface, and whether it complies with the web accessibility standards for visually impaired or hearing impaired people. Commissioner Marzouka said no, it is a language service only, and that when those calls are received they are handled by human staff internally.

Committee Chair Munn asked if the categories of calls tracked by EVA compare to the categories of calls received before EVA. Commissioner Marzouka said the department had never tracked call volume by category the way that the EVA system tracks calls due to manpower limitations, and thus she could not answer the question.

Committee Chair Munn asked how busy staff were with answering phones before EVA. A member of Commissioner Marzouka's staff indicated that calls were almost endless before EVA, with staff members picking up the phone to answer a new call almost immediately after their current call ends.

Legislator Kaul asked if the EVA system has any negative impact on the call experience for the caller. Commissioner Marzouka said that if the caller is looking for information the EVA system is more efficient than a traditional call, but if the caller is in crisis or experiencing an emergency they will automatically be connected with a human who will provide service to the caller directly.

Committee Chair Munn asked what the resolution rate was during the pilot period for the EVA system. Commissioner Marzouka said she didn't have that answer to hand but could obtain it from the OCIS report and provide it as a follow-up.

Committee Chair Munn asked if there is any resolution rate for the calls which EVA handled directly. Commissioner Marzouka said that in the breakdown, unresolved calls would likely be considered “disconnected” calls, and a member of Commissioner Marzouka’s staff said they could get that information.

Legislator Shah asked if any consideration has been given to the possibility that upon recognizing they are speaking to an AI assistant, that the caller hangs up or becomes skeptical of the system. Commissioner Marzouka said she is working with her team on this very issue internally but that the system identifies itself as an AI assistant and does not attempt to appear.

Committee Chair Munn asked if the system is a language service only or if there is an LLM involved. A member of Commissioner Marzouka’s staff indicated that there is an LLM beneath the surface.

Committee Chair Munn thanked Commissioner Marzouka for the presentation.

Privilege of the Floor with respect to printed agenda items

None.

Resolutions

None.

Other Business

There being no further business, Committee Chair Munn adjourned the Committee meeting at 6:22 p.m.