

LDDC
Executive Committee
February 10, 2021

RANDALL BROWN: All right. Good afternoon everybody. Welcome to the meeting of the executive committee today. Thank you everyone for being here. Try to make this as quickly as possible today. We have some important topics to cover. Want to welcome everybody and thanks again for your attendance and time. Courtney, could you put our mission statement on the screen for everyone to see, please. Our mission statement for the Developmental Disabilities Council is as follows, to increase independence, self-determination productivity, integration and inclusion for Louisianians with developmental disabilities by engaging in advocacy, capacity building and systems change. And our protocols for today's meeting you see on the screen. The meetings are accessible via zoom and live streamed on YouTube. Council or committee members will participate via Zoom and shall be considered present when they display a live feed video of their face with their first and last name. Have microphone muted unless called upon by the chairperson. Electronically raise their hand to request the chair recognize them to speak. Once recognized to speak by the chair, their microphone shall be turned on. After speaking, the microphone shall be returned to mute. Guests may participate via Zoom or observe meetings live on YouTube. All public meetings will be recorded and may be made available on the council's YouTube channel as determined appropriate by the chairperson. Public comments submitted during the meeting via any format below shall be considered. During a Zoom meeting guests may electronically raise their hand to request to comment. Upon being recognized to speak by the chair their microphone should be turned on. After speaking the microphone shall be returned to mute. Post comments relevant to the item under consideration

in the chat box. Post comments during the live stream of the meeting on the council's YouTube channel. And you will see it linked there below. Public comments of a person's character will not be heard. If the comment continues after being asked to stop by the chairperson council staff may be instructed to end the meeting. The chairperson will notify the executive committee of this occurrence. Council chair will seek guidance to determine if it is legally appropriate to redact or share the video of the meeting on the council's social media. Those are the rules for today's meeting. Having said that, I know we have a quorum so would everybody like to introduce themselves. I am your chairperson, Randall Brown. We will go around, and I will call on you and you can introduce yourself. Mike are you present, sir.

MICHAEL BILLINGS: I am present. I am Michael Billings on the executive committee of the council.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you, sir. Mary, are you present with us today? She must not yet be with us. Steven are you present, sir.

STEVEN NGUYEN: Yes. I am. Good afternoon everyone. My name is Steven Nguyen from the Jefferson Parish area, self-advocate. And I am the member at large.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you, sir. And madam vice chair, are you present?

HYACINTH MCKEE: Greetings. I am Hyacinth McKee, vice chairperson of the DD Council.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you, madam chairperson. Okay. So that is everyone. Hopefully, Mary will be able to join us at some point today. But we do have a quorum so we will proceed. And Courtney, I am going to turn the floor over to you at this point and let you give us information that is relevant to the legislative agenda.

COURTNEY RYLAND: Hi there. Good afternoon again. I want to mirror what Randall had said, thank everybody for being able to attend on such short notice. I apologize if my internet happens to go in and out

throughout the meeting. If you happen to call on me and I can't respond immediately, preemptively apologize for that. But just wanted to make all of you aware that there have been some developments regarding potential budget cuts for next year. LDH had sent an email to me and other LDH entities anticipating a 202 million-dollar shortfall that will be coming down the pike for 2022. So I reached out to both Julie Foster Hagan and Jen Katzman to find out how that could affect services for our individuals with developmental disabilities. And I actually received a response last night from Jen Katzman that indicated that the entirety of the 202 million-dollar budget shortfall was going to be absorbed by the medical vendor payments portion of LDH. And that they think they can mitigate cuts to services through other funding they are anticipating to receive for F map. So I don't know that is a critical issue right now, but Jen Katzman also reiterated that it is still subject to change. That it's not definite that they are not going to see cuts to services. That we still need to monitor the legislative session and the revenue estimating committee to make sure there is not going to be any further cuts that are anticipated. Also we were contacted by Ms. Kelly Monroe with Arc of Louisiana. Ms. Carolyn Meehan of Community Provider Association and Ms. Jacky Blaney with Independent Living and they had some thoughts about our direct support professional legislative advocacy agenda ask and they also have some recommendations that I felt would be beneficial for the executive committee to hear. So actually, at this point, I am going to let those ladies present to you what was presented to us, the staff, last week.

RANDALL BROWN: Yes. Absolutely. Who is leading the conversation among the ladies so I can give them the floor? Kelly.

KELLY MONROE: I can do that.

RANDALL BROWN: I know you saw me picking on you first. Thank you for being here.

KELLY MONROE: Thank you so much. And thank you

for scheduling this meeting at such short notice. We really do appreciate that. We wanted to kind of talk to you guys because we too heard about the 209 million-dollar shortfall, it's actually 900 and something, but 209 of it is going straight to medical vendor payments. Which is basically all of our services. So it's our services and hospitals. And during covid I just can't see them cutting hospitals at all. So it looks like it's going to come straight to disability services at this time. So but in addition to that, we wanted to kind of talk about the 2-dollar wage passthrough to the DSPs. I know we have had lots and lots of conversation about this. We have had a lot of discussion of whether or not we should set a floor, we should give the DSPs an increase. And we, you know, and I know I said this before, like we would love to. We would love nothing more but to do that. Right now we have, we were able to get a little bit of money to kind of help us during covid. But we are still working on a 2008 rate. If they give us the 2-dollars to put the passthrough for the DSPs it still doesn't cover the cost of the increase to that individual. I know that we decided we would say like 70 percent could go to the individual and 30 percent would go to the provider to cover some of those cost. But what some of the things you may not be aware of is that, well first, and I can only speak for the arcs, but I know that many other provider agencies are the same where we, because we have such a workforce crisis, we had already given them a pretty significant raise to kind of try to keep people during covid. And not that we didn't want to. We wanted to. But especially during covid, we needed to. It was a necessity. So we have already done that. But what happens is every time you increase that, you also have to think about the managers and supervisors. Now we have to increase all of these other salaries with no additional dollars, no additional funding source. We know that some of the DSPs, I'm assuming, are getting paid minimum wage. I don't know where that is actually coming from. I know none of the arcs are

doing that. But I'm just concerned because as it is the feds are trying to increase the minimum wage to 15-dollars an hour. Our rate reimbursement doesn't even cover 15-dollars an hour. It's a broken system that I don't think we are prepared for and we were just hoping that you guys would take that in consideration. And us knowing what you are trying to accomplish or what you want to accomplish maybe we can all work together next year to accomplish that goal together and make sure that it's healthy on both sides. If it's not healthy on both sides, it's just not going to work. And I know Jackie and Caroline both have things they can add to that.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you for that prospective, Kelly. If you are finished, at this point I will move onto Carolyn and Jackie to get their prospective as well. Did you have more you need to add.

KELLY MONROE: No. I'm good. Thank you.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you. So Ms. Carolyn, you have the floor. And welcome.

CAROLINE MEEHAN: Thanks, Randall. And hi to all of you. I know I have met some of you, but not all. I'm Caroline Meehan, the executive director of the Community Provider Association. So we represent disability providers across the state. And I don't have much to add to what Kelly said. I think just talking to members of my association, again I will say across the board, every single provider wants to raise the wage for their DSPs. That goes without saying. I think a lot of them are a bit worried about proposals like this because they experienced the last wage passthrough that the department did and then clawed back. So they were in the position of, you know, having to make tough choices about how to pay their staff. And like Kelly said, with wage compression it's not just DSPs. It's with supervisors on up. And again, we want to pay everybody more. It's just difficult to do that when we are rate takers and not rate setters. The states determines what the rate is, and we can't do much more about that.

I think another big issue is just the diversity among providers where they are in the state, the population they serve, the people they employ. It's just sort of hard to do a one size fits all passthrough in this way. So I'm just hearing sort of a lot of consternation from my members, especially during the pandemic when they are having some pretty significant staffing challenges. So to echo, I don't know this year is going to be a tough legislative session, and I know we are running towards it already, but I hope next year we can work together and talk through how we can increase wages in a way that works for everybody. Thanks again for having us today. Good to virtually meet all of you.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you for your perspective. If you have no more to add I am going to yield the floor to Jackie from independent living.

JACKIE BLANEY: Thank you. Thank you so much. My name is Jackie Blaney. I am the executive director of independent living as well as the coordinator of the Louisiana supported living network. And I appreciate, and our members appreciate the council's concern and interest in supporting our staff and supporting this industry to remain and become healthier and sustainable and to ensure that the supports and services continue to improve. We know some of us were around with the previous passthrough and know there was some unfortunate unintended consequences with that particular effort. We want to make sure that we learn from that and that some of those things that maybe need to be considered when we look at the very real and very important issue of improving the living wage of home and community-based staff. As Caroline mentioned, we need to look at the issue from a holistic perspective. We need to have competent and consistent frontline staff as well as internal support staff. In order to have a healthy organization to support people all of those things are necessary. So we want to, we look forward to working with you guys and to working as a group so that we can make our industry and continue

to be helpful to people and sustainable for years to come.

Not even since the shortfall that is coming this year is very, very scary. But we want to work together in the best interest of people, families, and those who provide the support. We know that there were some things that, you know, previous efforts towards this may be were not sufficiently included in the process of looking at it. Things like I think was already mentioned the variation in providers in terms of how many people are supported based on the rates they receive. So there is a lot of variation. There is a lot of variation in expenses. There is going to be huge increases in insurance, including health insurance, liability insurance, those things. Lots of things that need to be looked at and worked on in order to make increase the wages for all staff a doable and successful thing across the state. So we look forward to working with y'all. Look forward to working as a team hopefully to ensure that we have a good ask so that people can be supported consistently and competently ongoing. Thanks for allowing us to have this time with you. Appreciate it.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you very much for asking for this time with us. And let me reiterate before we begin asking questions. We agree, the council agrees we all are in this together. We certainly understand the importance of all of your agencies and how important your staff and your teams are to helping our community. And that is why we have this ask. A passionate thing for our members to really want to see a wage increase for their direct service workers. And that is something that we had a robust discussion in our October meeting about this agenda item. And there is a lot of passion out there, and rightly so. DSWs do very important, critical work for our community. I want to thank you all for the part you play in making that to happen. Before I begin, I will turn it over to questions from the committee. I have one simple question to ask. And that is if we make no change to

our current legislative agenda ask for this item will you oppose it or support it? I am asking that of all three of you independently.

JACKIE BLANEY: I was going to say based on what I have read of your proposal we could not support it.

RANDALL BROWN: That is important for us to know. Kelly, what about the arc.

KELLY MONROE: When we met with the arc we would come out in opposition. We would not be able to support it either. It would put a lot of our chapters in a huge financial bind and we just would not be able to sustain that. We already are sustaining a terrible situation financially as it is. Unfortunately, we would have to come in opposition.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you for your candor. Caroline. And I apologize, I think I call you Carolyn earlier. What is your position?

CAROLINE MEEHAN: That's okay. It happens all the time. I thank you. So the CPA its nuance, I guess, we are never going to oppose a rate increase. But we would not openly support it. We would provide information to legislators about why it's important that we get rates up since we're at 2008 levels. But we don't feel a wage passthrough is appropriate.

RANDALL BROWN: Important information for us to note. Let me ask one more question before we turn it over to questions from the committee. And that is should we agree to delay this agenda item for next year? Do we have commitment from all three of your entities today that we will work together, all three of us, on the cohesive plan to raise rates next year?

KELLY MONROE: Yeah. We would love to work to make sure like all sides are healthy, absolutely.

JACKIE BLANEY: Yes.

RANDALL BROWN: I want to get us on record before we begin discussion. For us to change it, we would have to have your commitment publicly that we are going to work together, all of us. And I believe Jackie said holistic approach. A holistic approach to this for all of our entities and all of our communities so we get

something put out there that is effective and will be long-term. We don't want something out there that is going to be temporary and pulled back if we can help it. Of course, we never know that. But we, obviously, want to come out together and our voices are stronger together, no question about it. Having said that, I will turn it over now to questions from the executive committee. Does anybody on the executive committee have any questions for the group? Any comments from the executive committee members? None?

MARY TARVER: It's Mary. I just wanted to say thank y'all to give us more information about this. I think we struggled with it a few times. So I think it's good, in my opinion, we want to all be on the same page. So I appreciate that.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you, Mary. Anybody else have any questions or comments from the committee? Steven, you have the floor, sir.

STEVEN NGUYEN: Yeah, I just wanted to say I concur with the message we should all work together. When we work together, we are stronger. Let's continue to work together and get these increases that DSWs work so hard for and so deserve. Thank you.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you, sir. Any other questions or comments from the executive committee? Hearing none, do we have any questions or comments from the public?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Kathy Dwyer has her hand raised. And then Bambi will be after Ms. Dwyer.

RANDALL BROWN: Okay. Ms. Kathy, you have the floor and then Bambi you will be next.

KATHY DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to say I do agree we need to all work together for this. My daughter has been probably one of the first hundred to receive the waiver. And so I have pretty lengthy experience of services from DSWs. And I definitely feel for the providers, and I feel especially for the direct support workers at some of the pay levels they receive. I understand and appreciate providers such as the arc that gave a

significant raise during covid. But that doesn't mean every provider has done that. And I also understand the considerations for managers and supervisors and so forth. But we are talking about the boots on the ground workers who make probably the least who can't afford, especially these days with the cost of living. The cost of living in New Orleans is just over 16-dollars an hour. So I don't know how you expect the DSWs to be able to work and pay for all the things that are necessary to live. I've had experience, huge turnovers with staff for my daughter. Which has presented a huge problem. And most of them have said it's the pay. Especially when I found the really good ones. We can probably find people who are willing to flip burgers, or whatever, and no offense to them, you know, at a lesser rate. But actually they get paid more. We need to start treating our workers with a little more respect and get them the wages they need. I feel for the providers. I understand the overhead costs, the administrative costs having worked in grants and contracts for years preparing budgets for projects and having to include fringe benefits and administrative costs and so forth. I understand all that. But that is what that 30 percent was supposed to be for to kind of help with that. If that 30 percent needs to be a little more, I would suggest consider increasing the 30 percent to 35 or something. But I find 30 percent pretty reasonable. Back when I was managing budgets the overall administrative costs, or what we would refer to as indirect costs, for service programs was in the low 20 percent. So I felt like, as mentioned, we have discussed this pretty lengthy and discussed all the details and the pros and cons and so forth. You have already admitted there is staffing challenges. There is going to continue to be staffing challenges at the low rate of pay. To have someone paid at 2008 to me is frankly embarrassing at 2008 levels. I know it's not providers fault, at all. Unfortunately, we do in a poor state. We can't keep putting this off.

The mission of the DD Council is to make sure the families receive the services they need in order for their loved ones to live independent and integrated lives. They are not going to receive those services with low pay wages. If we don't commit to doing this every year and somehow finding a way to agree on what needs to happen instead of postponing, it's just going to get bigger and bigger. The problem, that is. I would suggest the provider organizations somehow look at their data and come up with what they would need to support a 2-dollar passthrough increase for the DSWs. We are not looking to increase wages for administrative personnel. But that is going to come into the 30 percent. I appreciate every one of y'all. I wish you could see me cause I'm smiling right now. I really do appreciate every single one of y'all. But I haven't heard a good argument not to go forward when I think about how long our children go without staff and how we struggle. I'm going to tell you as I'm in my senior years, it concerns me because it's going to get to the point that I can't keep filling in when the provider doesn't and that's what happens. You're going to start having people at my age needing somebody dependent and you are not going to get that at 7.25 an hour.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you, Ms. Kathy. And we appreciate your prospective today.

KELLY MONROE: Can I respond to Kathy. Thank you so much, Kathy. I agree. But the 2008 levels, those are what we are paid. We pay more than that, but that's what's reimbursed to us. And I agree, that's terrible for us to be working on a rate that old. So you can imagine all the costs that have gone up between 2008 to 2021. And has to deal with the same amount of money. But I know like, and like I said, I can't speak up for everybody, but I know the average when we did a survey, the average rate of pay was like between 9.50 and 10-dollars an hour for DSPs. Which is not wonderful, but it's not as terrible I think as what people think it is. I think some people may be looking at some old data.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you, Kelly, for that prospective. Bambi, you have the floor. I do have to say Ms. Kathy did comment while you were speaking Kelly and she said she understands that. Bambi, you have the floor.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Hi everyone. Thank you. First off, I just want to say in regards to the provider associations that are on the meeting in regards to them collaborating, they have always collaborated and worked and advocated for people with disabilities. That's who they are. I know these ladies and their organizations, and I appreciate them coming on the meeting.

But secondly, I really feel like the issue is is that people do not understand, the people who are receiving the services I don't feel understand what providers have to deal with. I have been both. And so I know this. I have worked in numerous jobs across my career. Special education teacher, working in the governor's officer through 100-year flood and a pandemic. I have also worked as a director of a provider agency. There is nothing, no job more challenging than having to be an administrator of a provider agency. These provider agencies are having to, some of the costs they have to incur that I don't think is understood, it's not like another business or contract grants that are received. It's not the same.

Just a few years ago they have had to incur the cost of health insurance, they had to incur the cost with the changes in time and half. None of those things were reimbursed. These are labor laws and health laws they've had to pay for their employees. And so I just feel like people do not understand all that is involved. The other thing that is involved their entity as providers of services is different than a hospital setting, or a group home setting, or some other type of setting. Because they have to ensure the health and safety of all of their clients and their clients are across large areas. And so it's not like they can go down a hall and make sure everyone is getting a service. It's a lot of overhead they are

aren't reimbursed for. When they talk about supervisor pay or manager pay, that's the cost that is a very important cost because they have to ensure the health and safety.

So I say all that to say we need to start advocating as if we believe the services they provide are critical and valued and important the same way we reimburse nursing homes or other health services. We need to say they need to be reimbursed in a professional manner so they can pay professionals to work with our developmental disability population. So I think we should continue to advocate for that 2-dollars an hour. I do not think there is a feasible way to enforce. I said that at the last meeting to be able to enforce that, I don't know what that looks like to be able to do the management of ensuring that everybody got this wage passthrough that is being proposed. But if we say we deserve they should be paid more, then that's what we should advocate for. And then once we are paying them more then we can have our expectations higher. But where we are at right now, they are not given enough to be able to do the job we're expected to do. My advice is to continue to advocate for the 2-dollars an hour more. But just remove the requirements for pay at this time. Thank you.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you, Bambi. Are there any other questions or comments from the public?

HANNAH JENKINS: You have comments from the public and Ms. Hyacinth McKee has her hand raised.

RANDALL BROWN: Madam vice chair, you have the floor first and then we will go to the public.

HYACINTH MCKEE: I will defer to the public and then I'll jump in.

RANDALL BROWN: So our public comment, Hannah, if it's in the chat box can you read it please.

HANNAH JENKINS: It's from Ms. Melinda Elliot. She said the DSPs in my area do not get paid that much. Many are making minimum wage in my area.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you for that information

Melinda. And thank you Bambi for your information today.

HANNAH JENKINS: And Ms. Julie Folse has her hand raised as well.

RANDALL BROWN: Julie, you have the floor.

JULIE FOLSE: Hi can y'all hear me?

RANDALL BROWN: Yes. You have the floor.

JULIE FOLSE: Thank you, Randall. So my name is Julie. I am the LaCAN leader for region three. My only suggestion is this is the third or fourth year that the LaCAN leaders from our member meetings have come with this of wanting the DSP rates raised. What I was wondering is I want all of us to work together. I want the DD Council, I want the providers, and the public, is there anyway like some type of committee or something to where everybody can work together, and we can get this done. Because if not, every year we are just going to keep coming back with it and then it's just going to keep getting hit back.

RANDALL BROWN: We understand. I will say that I think that's a good idea. And part of why I said is I want to get our commitment while everyone is present today and on record, I wanted to get our commitment. And I applaud everyone for the work done up to this point. I think everyone here is committed to the community and wants to see these changes happen for our community. I don't think a person here either on the council or any of us who don't want to see this become a reality. I want to make that clear. But at the outset that's why I asked the question of the entities present today if they will be willing to work together. And I think we will do so in whatever format that takes. I think all are willing to do it.

JULIE FOLSE: That was my only thing was just all of us getting together since we all, everybody wants to see this happen. We all want to see it happen in a feasible way. So I think everybody just, I think we need to come up with some type of format where everybody just has a seat at the table, and we all talk about it and try to figure out a way to make this

happen and that's all I have.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you for that suggestion, Julie. Any other questions or comments from the public?

HANNAH JENKINS: A few comments in the chat box I believe regarding that.

HYACINTH MCKEE: I'm going to jump in. I was just deferring to let one person speak then I wanted to jump in. Greetings and thank you to all the providers that are here on the call today. I'm noticing that Julie Foster Hagan is also on the call. Thank you, Julie, for joining us today as well. Sometimes you attend different meetings throughout the year and then you have your mind made up and then when you listen to the comments from the public and from the comments of the people that the policies actually effect it then begins to work on whether or not you should make a decision based on our conscience. And I'm saying that to say that I look on this Zoom call and I see everyone present at the table except a direct support professional. And that is concerning to me. I believe that we should, as Julie Folsie mentioned, have everyone at the table. The last couple of conversations and dialogue we have had, we have not had a direct service professional present to speak their prospective. I can, as a historian, say that I acted in the role of a direct support professional as well as a family member who as Ms. Kathy Dwyer said had to step in throughout the day to fill in when a DSP was unavailable or when the provider agency could not find one and had to go in and provide that support to a family member. And so I emphasize with Ms. Kathy Dwyer on that prospective. So she does bring a side to the conversation that is missing from today. And so I would like to encourage us to have a direct support professional and professionals to be part of this conversation so that they can speak to their experience.

And to speak to Bambi's note, and I appreciate her comment and her passion in that it reminds me so much of the plight of the social worker, right. Social work

has always been the type of profession that has, for many years, been minimized as to doing everything other than what other value is brought to lives. It takes a crisis such as a global crisis of what we just went through in 2020 to all of a sudden value what the social worker brings. And so again, I share with in the position of Bambi if not now then when. So we constantly keep delaying this. So again, we need do really, if we are going to either support this or not support this we really need to come to the table and really put together some clear-cut objectives including everybody on how we are going to attack this. This conversation, the DD council, executive committee has heard this about the wage increases for the past three council meetings. So now we are at an EC meeting where we are deciding whether or not we are going to support what we already put out in our legislative agenda. So again, I just want to encourage us to include the direct support professionals in this conversation to get their prospective before we make a final decision.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you, madam vice chair. Any other comments from the council before I proceed to public comment? Any council member wish to make a comment at this time? Hannah, do we have those public comments ready to read?

HANNAH JENKINS: Yes, sir. Ashley McReynolds said ad hoc committee is a great idea Julie. Ms. Bambi Polotzola said very good suggestion Julie. And Ms. Kathy Dwyer said I would hope the providers would support an increase even if it's not exactly as they would like it because they would still benefit with 30 percent of the increase.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you all for those comments. Are there any others? Any other public comment? Do our guests today from the agencies, do y'all have anything else to add having heard those comments from the public.

JACKIE BLANEY: I would like to comment on a couple things. And this is a really good conversation, beginning of a conversation that I think, as people

have said before, unfortunately we are just starting it now. Wish we had these conversations prior to you having a complete legislative agenda. So I look forward to more of these kinds of fruitful conversations. The hope would be that the legislative ask would be based on more accurate and in-depth information. I have heard antidotal information regarding rates. I think the LDH cost reports would be one way to access some information having to do with the general average rates across the state. Also the shout out to the social workers, thank you for that. As a social worker for the past 40 years, you're right, we are often overlooked. But we need, and the notion of including direct support professionals in the conversation I think that is a great idea also. But because we have some history with unintended consequences with previous passthroughs, I feel very strongly that a passthrough is not the appropriate method. As a matter of fact, it could do more harm than good. And that is why we would oppose it. We need to have information as it relates to the differences that exist regionally, the differences that exist based on size, the differences that exist, I have been around 35 years. The differences that exist between providers who have been around as long as I have and providers that have been around ten years. There is a lot of information that needs to be considered that obviously families don't know, you're not in that part of the world to know. But it's important to pull that kind of information into a collaborative. If we are going to be collaborative, a partnership to work on this issue.

RANDALL BROWN: Absolutely. Let me say it's wonderful to hear that everyone is on board and we are looking at ways to collaborate. I think that is how good policy happens. I know it's how good policy happens. It's a wonderful thing for us to be able to come together today and get commitments to begin the hard conversations to hopefully get something we can all agree to and all get behind and fully support.

Because one of the things that concerns me deeply is that the way we have it on our legislative agenda you guys can't or won't support. And I understand your positions. But that's just where we are right now in terms of our legislative agenda. You will have to be in opposition. That I think is something that a regrettable and we will take our responsibility there. But I certainly, you know, you hear the passion of our community and the need. And you are a part of it every day. And so we are sensitive to it because obviously this is why we are here. So you are why we are here. You are all why we are here. We are sensitive to it. We understand as much as we can the need and how much we have to be out there in advocating for what is needed. But I think it's very important and much more effective if and when we do it together as opposed to when we are doing it separately. It always, you have to stand by conviction even if you have to do it alone. And that's understandable. But I think we are stronger together and I certainly encourage that we want to come together and look at ways to make the policy stronger and better for all of us and we are committed to doing that.

But in terms of this legislative agenda item, what the executive committee now has to take into account is do we modify our ask as Bambi proposed, or do we table the ask with the understanding and commitment we have received today from all three partners to spend this next year or better part of it actually coming up with real solutions to the problem we can all three agree with and get behind at the next legislative session with, surely, at that point, all the data we would need to get behind the push together. And be in agreement for it. And all working together in unison towards it. Or do we proceed as the council has already directed us to do. So that is the question before the executive committee today is given what we've heard, given all we've heard and seen how do we proceed at his point. And that is a question directly to my council, my executive committee.

HANNAH JENKINS: Dr. McKee and Michael Billings have their hands raised.

RANDALL BROWN: Dr. McKee since you spoke before I will let Mike go and then you will have the next. Mike, you have the floor, sir.

MICHAEL BILLINGS: Thank you. Since I am all sides here and I keep, one voice keeps popping in my head and that is April Dunn. We have to march forward. I think we go to the table this year and let them know if we don't do it this year, we are coming back next year. That's just my thoughts.

RANDALL BROWN: Okay. And madam vice chair, you have the floor.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Like I said earlier, sometimes when you hear things previously you know from a personal standpoint you say to yourself, I think I already have my mind made up. But when you start hearing different perspectives and recognizing that we are here to serve the public's interests then it becomes a situation where you know you need to support and vote your conscience. And at our last DD Council meeting, although we may not always agree on issues personally the public, the public re-soundly requested that we put forth their interests first. And so my position as it stands right here is a position of the public. And the public position that was directed by the DD Council was to move forward with the request. And so although it may not be something that we all may agree with personally, the public who we serve requested that we move forward with the legislative agenda.

Maybe this conversation is a little bit too late. From what I'm understanding from public similar conversations have taken places for the past four years. And so my concern is do we have another conversation and delay it another two years. So where we are right now is the public is asking us to move forward. And thank you, Mike. You're hearing April's voice, sometimes I hear her voice too. But again, our position that the DD council has charged us to do is to

move forward. That is the will of the public from the last DD Council meeting.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you. And obviously that's something we wanted to make sure everyone was heard. We thank everybody for coming out today and giving us your prospective given the information we did not know the reason having today's meeting about it again is we did not have the number, the 209 million cut. We did not have that number in October. So the fact that we now have a number and make it easier to discuss and wanted to get on the record as far as everyone's position. And so that is why today's meeting. We are aware this is constantly an issue of deep concern. So that's why today's meeting was important.

And let me say, conversation is a great thing. Never a bad thing. In terms of this legislative agenda item we have to agree, this is about to be set. We are about to roll out for this legislative session what is being said and done for the legislative session. So in terms of the future as we roll forward if the partners who came forth today still want to work with us for the future, we are open. We are open to that. We are open to however that begins to look as far as an ad hoc committee or anything that we may choose to do to collaborate. But, you know, the consensus seems to be to move forward as we have written it. Let me ask the question though about collaborative costs. Do we anticipate the costs of that? Courtney, do you have anything to add?

COURTNEY RYLAND: I am not sure what you are referring to about costs for our ask?

RANDALL BROWN: Yes.

COURTNEY RYLAND: If we make any changes today then it might affect the cost for our ask. But if there is no changes made today then it will not affect the cost in our ask. But also just to bring up another, I guess I should have had another bullet point, but the other provider agencies and the ladies attending today also have an advocacy agenda and they have no cost items on their agenda. And I don't know if you guys would be

willing to entertain collaborating with those agenda items as well.

RANDALL BROWN: Any of our agencies attending today would you like to address Courtney's point?

CAROLINE MEEHAN: Do you just want us to outline what the agenda is, Courtney?

RANDALL BROWN: There you go. For everyone to see. So Kelly, do y'all have anything to add to Courtney's point?

KELLY MONROE: Caroline, do you want to go through it or however you want to do it.

CAROLINE MEEHAN: I can just generally what we're asking for you can see on the one pager. We are just asking legislators to prioritize funding for disability services so that would be no cuts to these services in the state budget. And then best-case scenario if we get another federal covid package that the legislature directs the department to prioritize those funds for our services. You know, I think what we've seen with the first couple of federal covid packages is that some of that money was siphoned off into other areas and we want to be sure that we get our fair share.

The other thing we're pushing for is that second kind of bucket is permanently continuing some of the covid 19 program flexibilities that providers and families have found really helpful. And this includes incorporating in a person-centered way for what individuals with disabilities and their families want, allowing for some virtual visitation and electronic signatures to cut down on people in and out of the home as people want. Allowing DSPs to exceed their 16 hour per day service limitation and allowing for legally responsible relatives to work as DSPs. These are things that were put in place for the public health emergency that our members and the people they serve have found helpful. So we are just looking for ways to keep those in place. So yeah, we of course would welcome the support of the council and families where there is alignment.

RANDALL BROWN: Kelly, do you have anything to add?

KELLY MONROE: No. Just that when we were looking at the appendix K exceptions and flexibilities, we kind of reached out, we reached out to families, we reached out to providers, we reached out to support coordinators and then also the families who are being served by the providers. Which collectively together is like a little over 30,000 families that we support. So we reached out to all of these groups and these were the top three that they felt were most helpful to them. So none of them cost any money. We've had this on for about eight months, I guess. Maybe a little less. And it's proven that we didn't have extra incident reports because of it. And no one was hurt because of it. And it was very helpful to everybody. We would love for you guys to support this. If you do and you want to support quietly, we understand. But if you want to fully support, we can also like add you on here as a collaborator on our one pager. Totally up to you guys.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you for that. Jackie, do you have anything to add in terms of this discussion for independent living.

JACKIE BLANEY: No. We also surveyed our members and the family supported and it was very interesting the suggestions were mirror image to the other associations.

RANDALL BROWN: Okay. Thank you for those suggestions. Do we have any comments from the public?

HANNAH JENKINS: You have Ms. Corhonda Corley with her hand raised and a few comments in the chat box.

RANDALL BROWN: Ms. Corhonda, you have the floor and then we will get to the chat box.

CORHONDA CORLEY: Thank you so much Mr. Chairman and executive committee. It really and truly pains me today to actually see that we are actually having this meeting when we had an outcry and an outpour from the community at large. We have more numbers of individuals with disabilities that will be impacted by direct support workers than we are actually reflecting in the data that you provided today. I did not hear that data reflect how many will be impacted that are

using waivers to have their actual direct support worker, whether it is children's choice NOW waiver or the ROW waiver. That information wasn't disseminated. I also heard them mention they actually did surveys. But we do know that from previous surveys that we have missed a large group of population of our people in this disability community. I definitely would like to know what groups did you survey. Cause I didn't even hear about the survey and I make it my business to know about everything that y'all do. So if I didn't know about this survey, plenty other people didn't either. I mean after all we just had a focus group with LDOE and y'all only reached 101 people. Just saying. So we know the survey and the outreach to the unserved and underserved is very much lacking.

But we are obligated as a DD Council, federally obligated to do systems change. And too many times y'all continue to drop the ball as it relates to doing systems change. Is there a conflict of interest that nobody actually know about that we need to know. Because who is hurting is the people in which each and every last one of you are governmentally appointed to represent. We need that representation. And right now is not the time for us to back pedal when our community has constantly been forgotten about in the midst of a global pandemic. We need our direct support workers. Every single person in this community that has one, they need them. And right now they can't keep them because the people are not getting paid livable wages. Each and every last one of you work a job and get paid livable wages. We need that same for them. That's why it took more than two hours on that debate in regards to putting forth that legislation. Also let's be mindful that LaCAN has already been meeting with some of the legislators, we have the round tables coming up--

RANDALL BROWN: We are mindful. And I hate to cut you off Corhonda. And your points are excellently made. The DD Council does support this item and we are continuing to as you can see by today's conversation.

I have no motions on my floor to entertain changes to what we talked about at the October meeting. So there are none. So we will be proceeding. We had to have today's meeting to get everyone collaborating, get everyone's prospective given the numbers we now have for costs and what's expected to be having to be absorbed. That's mainly why we are talking today. There is no move or no effort by this council to change that legislative agenda, which you were part of in discussions in October, excuse me, in January and October. We've been discussing this at our last two quarterly meetings. This is late in our discussion, but it was also imperative that we get all of these opinions and all of these perspectives on the record. That's why today was important and necessary. And thank you for your prospective.

CORHONDA CORLEY: With all due respect Mr. Chairman, I greatly appreciate you. And the only ask that I have today is that if we change anything that we increase the ask amount. Increase it. Don't decrease it since we got the numbers. Let's increase the amount. And these other people, the other organizations can come to the table, absolutely. But we increase the ask amount. That's my ask and I thank you kindly.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you. Now next, who do we have next.

HANNAH JENKINS: We have some chats in the chat box.

RANDALL BROWN: Could you please read those for us.

HANNAH JENKINS: Some are from a little while ago, but I will read them anyway. Ms. Kathy Dwyer said how would a passthrough do more harm than good. Ms. Melinda Elliot said we have been having a conversation about the amount DSWs make for the past four years. If we don't work on it now, we are putting it off another year. Ms. Kathy Dwyer said I completely agree Melinda, we can't delay it any further. Ms. Susan Reems said has the revenue estimating committee met yet and is the number final for the cuts. Ms. Corhonda Corley said

currently the legislators have forgotten this community exist. They will not remember us unless we force them. Let's not put this issue off. And she also asked what is the impact for individuals under self-direction via waivers.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you. Thank you all for your points. Are there any other comments from committee. Or questions. No comments.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Steven has his hand raised.

RANDALL BROWN: You have the floor, sir.

STEVEN NGUYEN: I just wanted to ask if those couple of questions could be answered while we're on.

RANDALL BROWN: That was going to be my next thing so thank you, sir. So let's take the revenue estimating committee. Have they officially met and produced the number?

KELLY MONROE: Yes. But that can change.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you. Bambi, would you like to speak. I can give you the floor.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Sure. I was going to say offline, but some of the things that I just know from my experience with the passthrough often times, just an example of a situation, you may have a client let's say that has fifty hours of service and they have a great worker who likes to work those fifty hours. And they want consistency, and the family feels comfortable and safe with having that worker. You set a floor of 9.25 an hour you may be, often times providers of businesses have to figure out their overall costs. And so they may gauge that hourly rate to be able to include that time and half to pay for that extra ten hours. So if you set a floor of 9.25 an hour and then you have to pay whatever it comes out to, almost 14-dollars for those other ten hours, it may cause a provider to have to make the decision we can't pay time and half anymore. So you have to get another person into your home. And so that's the type of business decision they have to make. So that's just one example. There are many more, but I don't want to take up anymore of your time.

RANDALL BROWN: Okay. Let me ask this question of the three agencies who requested to meet with us today. Is there any way that we could modify our ask that you could support it this year? Hearing all that you have heard today, seeing all you saw, is there any way we could modify today that ask for the DSW or DSPs that if we modified it you could support it?

KELLY MONROE: I think allowing each provider to decide how the money is dispersed would be fair. The expenses that people in New Orleans have are not the same as the people at the Arc of St. Mary. They are very different. Insurance is more expensive. Groceries are more expensive. The costs are just so different to run a business in both areas. I think that setting an expectation that everybody get a certain amount of money or 2-dollar raise is just very difficult and will be very difficult for the providers. We already lost one chapter of the arc during covid and we got two more on the way. This will just shut the doors of those two. It's just not something we can support. We serve right under 10,000 families. Those families are relying on us. And so I hate to say we just can't support that. But if it was to where maybe the funds were not completely directed, then I think maybe we could talk to the arcs and see. But directing the funds to a particular amount is just not going to work.

RANDALL BROWN: Understood. Thank you.

JACKIE BLANEY: I would just add, if I could, thinking back to the last time there was this kind of passthrough, and our association includes mainly small minority agencies that many of them in rural areas who are operating on a shoestring because they are committed to the people. Because they are committed to supporting the people in the best possible way. So the motivation, the mission, the vision of these organizations is to support the people in the best quality way. And they don't have the money often to pay for insurance and the various expenses that are coming down.

And many of our agencies support some people with developmental disabilities and then they might have majority of participants who receive services through Office of Aging. So that mix has to be, it might be the same staff person sometimes supporting across departments like that. That has to be in the consideration. So one of the things that I'm hearing is yes, this is important. The agencies know better than anybody else the difficulty in recruiting and retaining, trust me. Particularly as a small agency when you don't have money to put into that kind of an effort. But we need to understand and recognize that there is a lot of variation in terms of who is supporting the rates that go along with that person. And everybody is important whether the state sees fit to pay 16-dollars an hour or 12. Everybody is important. The agency works very hard to provide quality supports to everybody. But we saw agencies going out of business because they couldn't afford to pay those insurances, the 16, 17,000-dollars of health insurance that goes up every year. Those are costs, the expenses such as nursing that's unfunded and other unfunded mandates, these are things that need to be included in any discussion. I'm sorry you had discussions that perhaps did not include accurate information. But in order for this to be supported by our members we need to look at the big picture. The whole picture, which includes expenses that may not be known to the folks who put this together.

RANDALL BROWN: Do you have any suggestions as to how we might be able to change our language or wording so we could garner your support today on this item as we currently have it.

JACKIE BLANEY: I think the biggest problem with this is the methodology of a 2-dollar of a passthrough. Because there's too much variation in what I can do as a provider here and my agency verses what some agency who have a different kind of organizational case mix from what I have. It's unfair, in my opinion, it's unfair to have a general passthrough without

considering all the variations among providers and how to do the best job. You can get something done but is it the best way. And I don't believe this is the best way. So why not try and have something that is going to address this problem in the best way. We know recruitment and retention of staff is a problem. I worked as a direct support professional.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you for the input. So now we are pressed for time. So I have to ask Caroline, do you have anything to add to my question. Is there anything we could do to change our language or our wording in the current ask that would give you cause to support us.

CAROLINE MEEHAN: I think just based on my conversations with my members it would have to be just a straight 2-dollar an hour rate increase. Removing the language about the 70 percent passthrough just based on providers experiences from the last one. And getting the sense that's not the direct the council wants to go because of your obligations to the public and your members. Going forward I would say what we would love to see and work on is really systemic reform for the system. Having a meaningful rate methodology. I think that is the direction we all want to go.

RANDALL BROWN: Let me say we agree. And so that will be something I hope that we can continue to agree to work towards doing. Not just in this legislative session, which is obviously already upon us, but in the future, I think today was a very productive conversation. I welcome y'all's input. All of you. And we need to look at ways to collaborate early and often so that hopefully we are not in a position where another legislative session goes by and we're not in agreement on an item this important. But thank you all for your prospective. It was important to hear. And having said all that and having heard from everyone, do I have anything that my council has to add? My committee members, is there anything y'all want to add or talk about? So everyone is good leaving our agenda item as written. Okay. Thank you all for your input

today. It is important. And again, we hope to be able to collaborate in the future. And I believe that will be the end of this issues on today's discussion. We have a matter with OCDD that needs discussion. So Ms. Julie Foster Hagan, you have the floor.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: Hi everybody. I'm feeling a little under the weather so excuse me if my comments seem a little foggy. Just an opportunity to share a thought that I had had during the last DD Council and an offer from OCDD. It seems like sometimes, there was a couple times during the last few council meetings where we might have tried to dive into an issue but didn't really have time to fully explore it or fully explain the background related to the issue. And there is a whole lot in our system that is really confusing and difficult to navigate. I think you guys all know that. And so one of the things that I was thinking in after effort to try to be transparent and give people the information they need I reached out to Courtney and to Randall and made the offer that if there are things that come up during council, or if there are things the executive committee is aware of where we think it might be helpful for OCDD to do sort of a presentation to try to help make, help provide information on the system or provide information on the process or how things work. That we would be happy to do that.

And I think some examples that come to mind during our last meeting there was some discussion about eligibility and questions about eligibility. That is very, very complicated and would be very difficult to answer within sort of that three-minute question and answer period time. It's really something that's more like a two-hour conversation on all things, what the definition of developmental disability is, how we enact our processes and policies for eligibility that are considered, where DSM5 plays a part and where it does not, which is not directly related to our eligibility. And so those are just a lot of factors there and it occurred to me it might be good to have an opportunity to do a presentation where we would offer to anybody on

the council or any members of the public who would want to attend to be able to listen in on that topic or another, any topic that you guys feel like it would be good for us to share with you what our processes are and then have an opportunity for like an open forum with questions and answers.

And again, my reason behind this is really just to be transparent. Because during council meetings sometimes I feel like it's coming across that we are not trying to be transparent and it's never that I'm not trying to do that. It's just sometimes really hard to describe a process in a three-to-five-minute window of time in a way that everybody can understand it. And so to me that was just my outreach and my offer. Eligibility was just one example. We had some questions about the budget process itself. And the NOW fund. That might be an opportunity for a presentation so that we can better understand. That's a two-hour conversation with questions and answers for an hour.

Again, just putting it out there to the executive committee if that was something you guys wanted to pursue. It occurred to me it might be something that would help the council, council members as well as the public better understand the process. And if you guys were interested in doing that, you tell us what topic we're happy, I'm happy to pull in my subject matter experts on those topics and make sure that we are providing as much information as we can about our processes.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you. I preemptively agree and accept your offer. And I thank you very much for making it, Julie. Because I happen to concur that I think something like this would be very beneficial to not only the council members, but to the community at large on questions that are vitally important with regard to your services. And so this is mainly just informational. I wanted to let the executive committee know the offer was made and what it entailed. I see no reason why we can't collaborate together and do something of this nature. I think it would do nothing

but be helpful for you and for us. Having said that, I will move the floor to questions from the executive committee.

HANNAH JENKINS: Dr. McKee has her hand raised.

RANDALL BROWN: Yes. You have the floor.

HYACINTH MCKEE: I'll be really brief cause I know we are short on time. So are you proposing that maybe a presentation of some sort would be given during the DD Council meeting on a particular topic, is that what I'm understanding what the idea is?

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: Actually, I was thinking outside of the DD Council meeting because I didn't want to use the whole time.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Yeah, that's what I was going to say. Probably be better outside. I was trying to understand what the request was. So yeah, outside of the DD Council I think is the best venue.

RANDALL BROWN: I didn't make that clear and I apologize.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you.

RANDALL BROWN: Are there any other questions from the executive committee?

MARY TARVER: I know there has been a couple times, like you said, the last couple meetings where people asked questions and like you said, you have lots of information to share. Is there anything that you kind of feel you would want to share with so that we would kind of have a plan. If you offer it, that's great, but if we don't ever plan anything that's probably not going to happen. So just wonder if there's something we need to put, you know, you don't have to decide today. But if there's something that we know that we need to do, maybe it's good to get that on the calendar and know that's going to happen.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: I'm happy to send my thoughts or suggestions. But I'm also happy to do presentations on whatever the will of the council is that they feel might be helpful for folks as well.

RANDALL BROWN: We definitely want to do this. We definitely are going to collaborate. Whether or not we

have actual suggestions today is great, but if we don't then we certainly, the door is open, the communication is there, and I think Julie and her team will definitely be doing that. We'll collaborate and figure out some things that are important and get those things scheduled and started as soon as we can. But if there is any suggestions and feedback from anyone now is the time.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Bambi has her hand raised.

RANDALL BROWN: Yes, Bambi. You have the floor.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: First off, I think that's a great idea. But one of the issues is why we get into these the time constraints is that we have been having an issue for several months, maybe over a year of our council members participating in attending the meetings in which they are members. We repeatedly have to wait to establish a quorum for our meeting. I hope the executive committee addresses that because if Julie provides this information, but if our council members aren't attending then it's not going to be beneficial for us to make progress during our meeting. We had someone from national come down, a technical assistance and do training and only half of our council attended. That was last year, might have been before covid. But like this has been an ongoing thing.

RANDALL BROWN: It was before covid, yes.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Our council needs to make a commitment. It's an honor to serve on this council, which I believe has changed the life of my family. And so I hope the council members take that into, just be present. And also if there could possibly be leadership, you know, maybe there's something that could be done. Cause people are dealing with a lot right now. We need to figure out what's going on with the council and why we are having this issue. I just want to encourage the executive committee to address that. So thank you.

RANDALL BROWN: We are. That's noted Bambi. And thank you. And we are working on it. It has been an ongoing issue for, I would say, at least two years. The

issues with covid and remote connections have not made it any easier. It's something I am painfully aware of as the person who is charged with having to try to ensure we have quorums to conduct business and it's getting increasingly harder to make things like even today happen. It's something we are working on and sensitive to. I encourage everyone, and this goes for executive committee as well, please every chance you get encourage our members to be active, engaged and involved. One, we all said we would do it. Two, we have to have the input to be able to function. This is critical to our work. But thank you, Bambi, very much for bringing that to the attention of the public. Are there any other questions or comments?

HANNAH JENKINS: Ms. Melinda Elliot asked if these presentations can be open to the public. And Ms. Corhonda Corley said she strongly agrees with Ms. Polotzola. Thank you for those statements. And Ms. Melinda Elliot said yes, it's disappointing when there isn't a quorum.

RANDALL BROWN: Understood. Thank you. Julie, to Melinda's question about making the public, do you have in mind how we could do that already?

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: I don't have any concern with making them public. Some of the things we have done recently is like recorded a webinar and then put it on our website so that if we have trouble getting a Zoom account for over 300 people. We can do like a 300-person limit and then we can record it and put it on our website. So if there were people who weren't able to get in, they would be able to do that.

RANDALL BROWN: That sounds like a good solution.

BRENTON ANDRUS: If I may, just something to think about when doing the webinars. Just for sake of time if there is going to be that many people maybe if the topic could be published ahead of time and allow people to submit questions and be able to address those during the actual webinar. I think something that large it might be difficult to take questions at the time of. I know OCDD has done that in that past where they ask

people to send in questions and that's probably something to keep doing.

RANDALL BROWN: Okay. Thank you, sir. And like I said, this is an ongoing process. We will continue to collaborate, the council and Julie and her team on this and we will do everything we can to get this in a way that is open to everyone who wants the data and information. And, of course, who wants to participate. Okay, is there any other questions or comments?

COURTNEY RYLAND: This is Courtney again. So I just need for documentation purposes, I need to have there was a unanimous consensus for the council staff to help facilitate these efforts with OCDD.

RANDALL BROWN: Okay. We'll ask, does anyone, and this is directly a question for the executive committee, does anyone object to the council staff being directed to coordinate with OCDD on the effort to come up with topics and present information for informational purposes for the community we serve? Anybody object to that? Any objections? Yes, Courtney. Does anyone abstain? I have to ask if anyone abstains. Hearing no abstention, it has unanimously passed that the staff of the council will hereby be directed to work with OCDD to develop topics for public discussion and for those topics to be recorded and posted to our website and social media where appropriate. Okay. Are there any other questions or comments? First from the committee? Any other questions or comments from the public today?

HANNAH JENKINS: Just letting you know there were not any.

RANDALL BROWN: Thank you, Hannah. Thank you for your work today and always. Want to thank all the staff for all the work you do. I know you are doing a lot and we are all working hard through very difficult conditions. So I thank you all. I don't do that enough publicly. So I want to take this moment to thank y'all. And I want to thank the executive committee for taking the time out of your day to do this important work. And I also want to thank all of

our guests today. I look forward to collaborating anywhere and everywhere we can with the agreements with the agencies that were present today. We are all in this boat together and we know and understand it. Thank y'all very much for your addressing concerns, expressing yourselves and being willing to be a part of a collaborative effort. We accept that invitation very much and look forward to doing so in the future. All right. Hearing no objections, we unanimously agree to adjourn today's meeting. If I hear no objections. No objections heard. We are here by adjourned, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for your time.