

Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council  
Education and Employment Committee  
January 12, 2022

HYACINTH MCKEE: Greetings, everyone. Good day. The time is 1:00 p.m. I want to check to see if we have a quorum.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Good morning, Dr. McKee. I see three members. A quorum is five.

HYACINTH MCKEE: We will give people a little more time to join on. So let's give them maybe a couple more minutes. I believe one of our council members was asking for the link. And I'm not sure if he was able to get that. I just saw in my email. Council member Mitch Iddins.

MARILEE ANDREWS: So I just emailed Mitch the link.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you.

MARILEE ANDREWS: And I believe you should have a quorum now if you want to call roll.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you so much. First of all, we're going to start off by acknowledging everyone and thanking everyone for their time today. We will call this meeting to order. The education and employment meeting for Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council. Called to order at 1:03 p.m. We will start off with the roll call. You can call the names, Ms. Andrews.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Okay. Nicole Banks. Melissa Bayham.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Here.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Brenda Cosse.

BRENDA COSSE: Good afternoon.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Bambi Polotzola

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Here.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Mitch Iddins. Mary Tarver. Dr. Phil Wilson.

PHIL WILSON: Here.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Dr. Hyacinth McKee.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Present.

MARILEE ANDREWS: So that's five members present and a quorum for this committee is five.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. Well, thank you all for your time today. We are going to get started with the virtual meeting protocols. And I can read them or if you want to put them on the screen. But I don't have a problem with reading them. So the virtual meeting protocols. Council meetings shall be 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 microphones 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 shall be recorded and may be made available on the council's YouTube channel as determined appropriate by the chairperson. Public comment submitted during the meeting via any format 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 live stream of the meeting on the council's YouTube channel. 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. Now we're going to move to review the minutes from the approval of the October 20, 2021, committee summary. We'll just take a

moment to take a look at the summary. And then I will ask for a motion to approve.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: This is Bambi. I make a motion to approve.

HYACINTH MCKEE: A motion on the floor by Ms. Polotzola to approve the committee summary from October 20th, 2121. Do I have a second? There's a motion on the floor by Ms. Polotzola. I do that wrong, Bambi. I apologize for that. To approve October 20th, 2021, education employment committee summary. Is there a second?

MELISSA BAYHAM: This is Melissa Bayham. I'll second.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. It's been motioned by Ms. Bambi Polotzola. Seconded by Ms. Melissa Bayham to approve the minutes. Any objections?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I see that Marilee said the date is wrong. I wouldn't know if that's right or not.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Oh, okay. Marilee, could you check and verify that?

MARILEE ANDREWS: Yes. So this is the summary from October 20th, and I see that the date is July 20th.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Oh, on the actual document itself.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Correct.

HYACINTH MCKEE: So let's make that note that the document has July, but the actual minutes is from the October 20th meeting. And so we can make that note with that correction. So, Ms. Polotzola, is it okay if you mention that, you want to motion to accept it with that correction?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Yes.

HYACINTH MCKEE: So it's been moved by Ms. Bambi Polotzola to accept the minutes with that amendment to the date and make sure that it reflects October 20th, 2021. Do we have a second?

MELISSA BAYHAM: This is Melissa Bayham. I'll second.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you, Ms. Bayham, for that second. Any objections? Any abstentions? Hearing none, motion carries. Any public comment about the

minutes? Okay. Motion carried. Now we'll have the update from Ms. Meredith Jordan from Louisiana Department of Education. Before Ms. Jordan starts, I do want to say to the committee that we have not just yet received a permanent appointment representative from the Louisiana Department of Education to serve on our DD Council as of yet. So Ms. Meredith is actually, Ms. Meredith Jordan is actually serving in the capacity because she works at the Department of Education, and she is the executive director of diverse learners. So keep in mind we have yet to get that permanent appointment. If Ms. Meredith Jordan is on the line, she can start giving us an update from LDOE.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Absolutely. Good afternoon, Dr. McKee, council members, stakeholders, members of the public. Happy New Year. It's wonderful to be here with you all and provide some updates from the department. So I wanted to come with some general updates. I know previously we've talked about, of course, nationwide teacher shortages. And, of course, across Louisiana as well. So I wanted to come back and give sort of an educator recruitment and retention update. During the last legislative session the recruitment, recovery and retention task force was created that is intended to create recommendations for the Department of Education as well as the Board of Regents to implement that will improve recruitment and retention across Louisiana. A preliminary report was given at the last Board of Regents meeting and some of the recommendations that I wanted to give to this group included creating a campaign to elevate the teaching profession across Louisiana. Developing a plan for incentive-based compensation. Developing support for aspiring and current principals. Studying the impact of the praxis on educator preparation program enrollment. And then providing research and guidance for teacher and staff wellbeing. And so this task force has spent the previous five to six months reviewing a lot of data. What is the current landscape in our state look like. Where do we have teacher

shortages. We know that we have fewer teacher candidates entering post-secondary programs. And then we even have less who enter who are actually completing those programs. So we know we have a lot of work to do around this. We have started some of this work based on these recommendations this year at the department. And I wanted to bring a couple of current opportunities that we have to this group so that that knowledge is out there. So this year we started a para educator to teacher opportunity to try to incentivize para educators who are in our school systems to enter teacher preparation program and get a bachelor's degree at no cost to them. So we have our first cohort that is starting this month. And we'll do a fall cohort as well.

And then we also have some optional funding that school systems can request through our school system planning process that where they can request money for add-on certifications. And so, for example, one of those would be they can request funding to pay for teachers to get their mild to moderate add-on certification. Also, English learner certification. And so we're trying to really target some of those areas where we have shortages and provide additional funding to school systems to support and to grow this field and individuals with the expertise that we know is needed to help support our students with disabilities across the state.

So I wanted to come back and kind of talk about some of the recruitment and retention work that is happening and that will continue to happen both at the department and alongside the Board of Regents. And I believe this work that task force will continue throughout this year. They will continue to meet, provide recommendations. And I believe there will be another report provided in December at the end for 2022. And I believe that report has to go to the legislature as well on the current state and what are we doing. What are the practices that we're doing to try to improve teacher recruitment and retention in our

state. So I wanted to come with that update and, of course, you all know that I'm here to receive feedback and to have a two-way communication process around some of these ideas.

Also, I wanted to let you all know that we have a couple of our big professional development opportunities coming up for administrators and educators across our state. We have our annual jump start convention coming up this month in January that's going to be held in person in Baton Rouge. It's currently sold out so we're expecting a large crowd of educators from across our state. And I will be actually working with several folks on this call and moderating a panel that will include a session and a discussion around ensuring inclusive and accessible access for students with disabilities to career and technical education. And then successful transition to post-secondary as well. So I'm very excited about that. And jumped on requesting that session so that I can bring to light the inclusive nature that we need to have within our CTE programs.

So and the other one, of course, is our annual teacher leader summit. That is on target and scheduled for May. And so it will be held the week of May 31st in New Orleans at the convention center. And this is an annual conference that's going to bring together all of our birth through grade 12 administrators, educators, superintendents across the state. We're excited about these opportunities and, of course, planning for our special education tracks and professional development that we want to provide for our educators across our state.

The other general update that I wanted to give and for the full council meeting I'll be providing some links for all of you as stakeholders and asking for some feedback around our state performance plan. So IDEA requires each state to have in place a state performance plan. That plan describes and evaluates our efforts to implement IDEA requirements. We also have started this discussion and shared this

information and our current targets with our SEAP advisory panel as well and we'll continue to have that conversation with them. And so we are entering a process, our next six-year cycle of setting new targets. And so that is the feedback that we will be asking from our stakeholders. And, of course, this group here is key to me to get that information to you. So by our full council meeting we will have links posted that I will share in that full report where you can see some slides that have an overview of our targets. And then we will be asking stakeholders will provide a link to a fillable PDF survey where we can get input from all of our stakeholders. And we will be exhausting all of our communication outlets to ensure we get those targets that our current data, our current level of performance and that survey link to all of our stakeholders to be able to get input on what our stakeholders think those targets and where we should go looks like. But I wanted to kind of give a preview to this group that that's coming. And that I'll be asking for your input.

And then the last piece for me that I know was a topic of discussion and I was requested to talk about Act 456 and kind of give an overview and update. So Act 456 requires the governing authority of each public school district and our charters to develop and adopt policies to install, operate and maintain video cameras in certain special education classrooms. This legislation does not give BESE or LDOE any authority to draft regulations, provide policy templates, any technical guidance to school systems as it is currently written. And, of course, I know you all are well aware that during the session legislature did not designate or provide any specific funding to support that act. So we have also given that overview to our SPED leaders. We are fielding questions around it the best that we can. But for now that guidance to them is to work with our local council to draft policy in alignment with the law. So I did want to just kind of give that general overview. And, of course, listen and

hear any feedback and anything that I can bring back and share with our legislative and policy team that is working closely with legislators as well with this. And that concludes my general updates, Dr. McKee.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you, Ms. Jordan, for your report. At this time I have a question, but I will also ask that the council, the committee if they have any questions as well to ask their questions. But I do have a question about the state performance plan. I noticed that you mentioned that you will be bringing forth that state performance plan for the full council. Were you anticipating trying to do that next week at the council meeting, well, week after next at our council meeting for January?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am. We will have the overview slides posted to our website as well as that PDF. We'll have it posted to our site by then. Because we want an easy data collection with the electronic submission of that input. And I'll have it by that. Yes, ma'am.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. Well, typically best practice is because we are the education and employment committee, that information would typically come to us prior to the council meeting just so that the committee could read it, digest it, offer any type of recommendation or have any questions. And then we would also, you know, bring back before the council as well. And, you know, it would go in your report. But I think that, you know, the education and employment committee would have liked to have been privileged to that information prior to just, you know, giving it to the full council. So just, you know, sharing that with you for that because we would have liked to look at it too, right, before it goes to the full council. I think that our council would say did this come before the education committee before it got to us.

MEREDITH JORDAN: So you are going to get the slide deck and just a PDF copy of that survey. You will get it prior to the meeting with my report. So you can kind of look at it and kind of see that overview.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Yeah. So it would have been on this committee agenda so that the committee could take a look at it during your report this time. And that's okay. We know now, but technically the committee would need, would have needed to get that information before it would be brought to the full council. So, you know, I will also defer to the committee. And, of course, they will share their concerns or whatever issues related to that, Ms. Jordan.

And then the second question was around the Act 456 as well. And what exactly does that mean that you are working with the local education authorities about drafting policy. What would that look like since I'm understanding you're saying that LDOE is not in the position as the act is written to develop guidelines. So what would that look like, you know, assisting those LEAs with drafting with their policy.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yeah. And so I apologize for not being clear. So what we informed our SPED leaders to do is for them to work with their local legal counsel to develop and draft policies in alignment with the law. Because you're right, as the law is written LDOE, and BESE have no regulatory authority. So we would not be working with their council or helping them draft policy at all. But when we field questions or when, you know, when they ask for assistance that is the answer that we give them is that we encourage them to work with their local legal counsel to develop those policies.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. So now I would defer to the committee members if they have any questions at this time for Ms. Jordan. I cannot see whose hands are raised for some reason. Do we have any committee members that have any questions for Ms. Jordan's report?

EBONY HAVEN: There are no hands raised. Well, we just had one. Ms. Bambi Polotzola has her hand raised.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I have a question. Thank you, Dr. McKee. I just have a question, but it kind of is for Meredith and for Melissa. And before maybe

Meredith gets off, I'm not sure if she's getting off or not, I would just like to hear is there any work being done between Department of Education and with LRS in regards to transitional services for our students with disabilities. And that could be done after Melissa's report or however you deem appropriate.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yeah. Well, I'll go ahead and add that Melissa and I are connecting. She's actually on my panel. So I wanted to definitely bring her and this to light at our Jump Start convention as well. So I think that's a first step. Certainly looking forward to more collaboration with her. And, you know, like I said before too, you know, at every monthly meeting with my SPED leaders I am making sure that I emphasize their LRS regional contacts and those phone numbers, so they constantly have that place to go find how do I get in touch with LRS. So I'm definitely looking forward to additional collaboration and work with Melissa as well.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Do we have anyone else on the committee that has any questions for Ms. Jordan's report?

EBONY HAVEN: No other committee members have their hand raised, but we do have a hand raised in the public and questions in the chat.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. So we will allow questions from the public. If they are comfortable with unmuting themselves and ask the questions directly. I don't see it, but we can go in that order.

EBONY HAVEN: Okay. Dr. Michel has his hand raised and then Ms. Kathleen Cannino has her hand raised.

HYACINTH MCKEE: You have the floor, Dr. Michel. You're going in and out. It's okay. We can't hear you a good bit. So let's give you a moment to see. We can't hear you.

CHARLIE MICHEL: Okay. How's that?

HYACINTH MCKEE: That's better.

CHARLIE MICHEL: Okay. Good. Thank you.

Meredith, this is just a couple of suggestions and thoughts maybe and may be one question. You said that

LDOE is looking at creating opportunities for parent and teacher training to help alleviate the shortage which is wonderful because I know there's some really strong paras out there. And also that y'all were looking at possibly some kind of funding mechanism for teachers to get significant disabilities add-ons. Both great ideas. I also realize that funding is limited for everybody. And in these two things it seems like the need is infinite. I was wondering if y'all had looked into the situation different districts have different needs and different fiscal resources available. Maybe y'all could look at it in a vantage point where districts in the highest financial need would get first consideration. I know in doing some research recently a lot of districts are rolling over a huge percentage of their IDEA funds. Instead of rolling that over, you know, hundreds of thousands of dollars, in excess of a million dollars for one or two of them, perhaps they could use some of those rollover funds for these scholarship purposes. Especially if they have a need. Just for within their own districts. It doesn't have to be Robin Hood where they give their money back to the state. But for their own districts, use that. It helps to deplete some of that rollover money which is supposed to be used annually for the needs of those students that year. And having that large of a rollover really is antithetical to that. But it helps to use that money in a way that helps to meet the needs of the students. I'm just hoping that maybe y'all are going to look at that and consider it as a possible funding source for those districts that can sustain it on their own. Some smaller districts that don't have the big rollovers and they have a high need, especially rural areas, that way the state then could use their funds to supplement them to get the same need. It provides some equity across the state even though to the untrained eye it doesn't look equal. So that's one thing.

The other thing is Jump Start. I registered for that program many, many weeks ago. I have to say

though that with Covid like it is, I'm very hesitant to go into a large group setting. Is there going to be any capability of receiving the benefits of that program in a virtual manner?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yes. We've gotten several questions about that. And I know there will be some sessions that will have a virtual option. I know not all of them. So there will be some that you will be able to take advantage of virtually.

CHARLIE MICHEL: Great. And my last question is I understand that Act 456 did not include anything about oversight by the state department of ed or anything like that so that y'all are very limited in that. But I was wondering, can it not be considered part of the purview of your ability to monitor which districts at least have developed a policy? That you may not be able to help them create it, but there's a state law that says that each school district must do it. Can you not at least help them to understand what the consequences are, if there are any, for not developing a policy. Each district is going to do their own policy based on the state law composition, but they're supposed to have one. And even though you don't have authority to oversee the writing of that policy, is there nothing that can be done to show them the importance of doing that and requiring that they comply with the state law? Cause I always thought that the LDOE was able to monitor to ensure that all state and federal regulations and laws were being followed. And I might be wrong on that. But is there something that y'all can do to help? And even something as simple as offering a template. You can't mandate it, but if you could offer a template to those who are lost.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Right. And you're echoing very much discussions that we've had. And currently the answer is no. That we don't have any oversight ability. But I do expect that this possibly may be opened back up this session. Especially there's a lot of concern we know and discussion around it. So right now that answer is no. That we can't even provide a

template.

CHARLIE MICHEL: Okay. Thanks, Meredith. I appreciate it.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Thank you.

HYACINTH MCKEE: I believe we had Ms. Cannino that had her hand raised.

KATHLEEN CANNINO: Yes. Thank you.

HYACINTH MCKEE: You're recognized.

KATHLEEN CANNINO: Thank you. Hi, Ms. Jordan. I was just wondering some of the same concerns that were just said. But as far as the policies and schools that may not have them or districts that may not have them, if they don't have the policy then they can't even start to apply for a grant or funding was one concern. But the other, I was going to ask is if I know LDOE it says in the law that they shall help find the funding source. I was just wondering if y'all had any like leads to possible funding sources?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yeah. Those are discussions that are ongoing and have been ongoing. And I know, you know, when I came into this position, right, school systems were kind of asking and inquiring okay, what, you know, what about this. And I do communicate with our SPED directors around legislation that impacts them. And so you're right, there is a lot of ambiguity. The last line in the act talks about, you know, the law shall be implemented when funding becomes available. So that is exactly the discussion right now is where is the funding, you know, who is responsible. Because right now local school districts are having to support and find that funding. So I think this will be certainly ongoing and additional consideration, especially with this session approaching.

KATHLEEN CANNINO: Okay. Thank you very much.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Thank you, Ms. Cannino.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Do we have anyone else that needs to be acknowledged?

EBONY HAVEN: Dr. Michel still has his hand raised. Not sure if that's from earlier or has another question. He put it down. There are questions in the

chat though, Dr. McKee.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Yeah. That's fine. Absolutely, we can read those. But I do want to just kind of, I guess, kind of go along with what we just talked about the last line in the act about funding. It's been brought to our attention that there are some IDEA funds that districts can possibly use to work to install these cameras. But I am hearing that you do not have oversight and authority, but it is our understanding there are some IDEA funds that can be made available to utilize. So yes, we can move ahead with the comments in the chat.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Do you want me to answer those, Dr. McKee or how do you want to?

HYACINTH MCKEE: What did you say? I'm sorry.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Would you like for me to kind of go through these and answer each one?

HYACINTH MCKEE: No. Our staff will read them. Yes. Thank you.

EBONY HAVEN: Okay. So the first question is where is the report from those groups and when will it be posted for the public to read?

MEREDITH JORDAN: I'm not sure which report that refers to.

EBONY HAVEN: The task force. I think it was referring to the task force that was created and they had a preliminary report on recruitment, recovery and retention.

MEREDITH JORDAN: I'm not sure where they post those reports. I know they gave a verbal report at the last task force. I'll find out if those are posted and I can email that to staff if there is a posted or written report.

EBONY HAVEN: Okay. The next question is when will LDOE hire the SPED director and create the SPED department?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yeah. So we are actually in the process right now of recruiting a director of special education policy reporting and data. That position just recently closed. So we will be hiring that

position and then we will have additional positions that post. And so we are in the process of hiring and building out a full team.

EBONY HAVEN: Okay. The next question is considering the current Covid 19 numbers in Louisiana, will the SPED meetings return to 100 percent virtual?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yes. We've been getting several questions regarding our commission meetings and our SEAP and our advisory meetings. So the current emergency order, I believe, is through the next couple of weeks. So most of our meetings at the department that are happening in the next couple of weeks will be virtual. Our next SEAP meeting will be in February. We had a January meeting scheduled for the 25th, but I'll be at Jump Start with our panelists. So for February right now we're going to plan for it to be in person and then we will make that adjustment to a virtual meeting if the governor's emergency, health emergency order gets extended.

EBONY HAVEN: Okay. The next question is can you explain how LDOE is currently using the IDEA funds?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yes. So I can also post our funding page link and our document in the chat. And so our current special education funding is used in many different ways to support our students with disabilities and our educators across the state. Of course, we have some of that money flows straight through to IDEA allocations to our school systems. And then we support many different state level activities, for example, in our funding opportunities for school systems. So we would help to fund, for example, the add-on certification funding that school systems request. So even in some of our state level funding we are funding activities that those funds go back and impact our school systems. So I think the best thing for me to do is to post that link to our funding page and then our overview document. And we will also be, I will also engage this group as well as we begin to plan for our next fiscal year IDEA budget and get additional input and feedback from this group. I believe as has

happened in the past as well. So I plan to also include this group in those funding feedback conversations. But I'll post those links in a bit.

EBONY HAVEN: Okay. And the last question is where can teachers and paras obtain information on certification, add-on certification stipends? Will that be in the link that you're going to post as well?

MEREDITH JORDAN: I'm posting that as well. There's a specific email that they can email and ask about those opportunities. Of course, if they email me at Meredith.Jordan@la.gov I'll get them the information. But I just added in an email they can email directly and ask and inquire about those stipends. And then I'm going to post links to our funding information as well.

EBONY HAVEN: And then Dr. McKee, Ms. Corhonda Corley has her hand raised.

HYACINTH MCKEE: And we don't have any more comments in the chat so I will allow Ms. Corley to be recognized. Ms. Corley, you're recognized. You can unmute.

CORHONDA CORLEY: Thank you so much, vice chair. And thank you, Meredith Johnson, for actually being present. I'm curious as to exactly what the IDEA funding is really being utilized for? Because as we know right now currently our school systems are supposed to have autonomy per our state superintendent. And those funds right now are not being utilized appropriate to help our children with disabilities. In addition to that, the CARES Act and the American rescue money stated that those funds could be utilized to actually fully fund IDEA which has never been fully funded. And I'm just wondering if LDOE is looking forward to fully funding IDEA and using IDEA funds to actually help our children with disabilities? As you know we have over 200,000 children with disabilities in our state and they are not, I repeat, not receiving free, appropriate public education as it is spelled out in the law.

Additionally, will we have a moratorium on charter

school expansion? Because we are aware that charter schools are being approved by LDOE after they are not being approved by their respective school districts. And those charter schools are not able to provide free, appropriate public education for our children with disabilities. It is very much represented by the federal decrees that are happening in New Orleans every single day. So I'm just inquiring from you what is LDOE and what are you and your respective position doing in regards to that? As well as what are you doing to prevent abuse and neglect to our children with disabilities in the classroom setting? And that is not just in the regular traditional public schools and charter schools, but also in the special school district. Thank you.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yes. So I shared a description of our funding activities. I'm glad that you mentioned all of the IDEA incentive dollars that have been awarded. Our school systems are in the process of applying and putting in their budgets for those dollars. And they do have, any IDEA allowable expense, they can use that IDEA incentive dollars on. So we were very happy to send 100 percent of those IDEA, the additional incentive dollars, to our school systems. Because you're right. They need it to supplement. They need it to provide the appropriate supports and services for students with disabilities. We gave them some guidance on, you know, think about inclusive summer programming for these students. Think about additional services that may be needed due to school closures. Or students who may still be learning remotely from home due to medical concerns. But ultimately, you're right. They have the ultimate freedom as long as it's an allowable IDEA expense, those incentive dollars can be used to support their special education programming in whatever unique and individual ways that each school system needs. So they do have some additional IDEA incentive dollars that have been awarded and that they are budgeting for.

I will also get with our charter team and talk

through some of your concerns, Ms. Corhonda, about some of these charter schools. And I would also be happy, you know, if there's any additional specific details that you can share with me, I'll be happy to bring that to our charter team and take a look at. We are also, our SPED team is now also being involved in some of those application reviews so that we can give some really good feedback on special education programming at our charter schools when they're applying. So I will say, hopefully, that will help to support is having a special education representative reviewing those applications as well.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. Well, thank you, Ms. Jordan, for your report. Do we have any other public comments at this time? We are a little over time, but I do want to make space for if there is any other pressing comments or questions from the public that we can address briefly. Then we need to move onto the next part of our agenda.

EBONY HAVEN: Yes, ma'am. Dr. Michel has his hand raised.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Dr. Michel, we'll take your comment briefly.

CHARLIE MICHEL: Thank you. Can you hear me?

HYACINTH MCKEE: Yes.

CHARLIE MICHEL: Okay. Good. And this is very brief. Meredith, I just wanted to know if with these additional funds that they're working on right now, if the issues of supplement and supplant are still in place? And hopefully they are. But also, are y'all doing anything to assist the new special ed directors who some of them have absolutely no experience in special ed? And the new superintendent, some of them have very limited experience with the financial aspect of running a district about the impact that these funds, if used improperly, will have on their maintenance of effort. That's a huge issue in many districts. And I think with a little active intervention the LDOE can help some districts from getting in some very deep financial issues. And that's

all I wanted to say. You don't have to comment on it. But just, please, if you could bring that to the powers that be and offer the support that districts need before they get into trouble, I think that would be greatly appreciated.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you, Dr. Michel, for your comment. It's noted. And at this time-- oh, Ms. Jordan, could you please put your contact information in the chat. You know, your email, so that it can be public. So at this time we are going to move right on into our report from Louisiana Rehabilitation Services, Ms. Melissa Bayham. You have the floor, Ms. Bayham.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Melissa Bayham. I'm the director of Louisiana Rehabilitation Services. I'm actually coming to you from the Shreveport office. I've been here all week. Our regional manager Mr. Chuck Vaughn has retired. And we have a new regional manager in Shreveport, Ms. Theresa Hefner. We have a team here providing some needed support and some training here.

I have a couple updates for you all. First on customized employment, the last update that I had received we are waiting on a training proposal from LSU HDC to continue our work with them to provide customized employment training to our providers here in Louisiana for the new service of customized employment. LSU has been working with the University of South Florida to be certified and trained to certify individuals as customized employment training providers. So we're looking forward to our continued work with LSU on that.

Our highest priority right now in LRS, and I think I spoke at the last meeting about this, is definitely hiring in our counselor position. We currently have anywhere between 20 to 25 vacant counselor positions. We have a continuous posting on the civil service website. So if you have any individuals who would like to apply for those positions, please encourage them to do so. We are constantly pulling that continuous posting so that we can fill these positions. I can say

the region with the most need right now is the Shreveport region. I'm down to four full-time counselors in this region. So in addition to the civil service posting, we are working on a contract for counselors to do some of the counseling activities. We're starting this process in Shreveport because of our great need for counselors here. So we are working on that contract and hopefully that will be approved soon so that we can get much needed help to this particular region.

I also wanted to just give an update on a project we're doing called STEMUP which has not started yet, but we are in the contracting process with Southern University in Baton Rouge. I think I reported on this particular project before. We are going to be assisting individuals and minority populations to either enter into or to advance in STEM occupations. So we're really excited about working with Southern University. We will be using social cognitive career theory to assist individuals in exploring and advancing in occupations in STEM. So we're very excited about the work that will be starting soon on that. That's all of my prepared updates. But Ms. McKee, Dr. McKee, happy to take any questions.

HYACINTH MCKEE: At this time do we have any questions from, well, we did have one earlier. I'm not sure if it was fully answered. I believe our council person, Ms. Polotzola, did ask about any collaboration or efforts between LRS and LDOE in assisting with transition services for our students. So, I mean, I'm not sure if Ms. Jordan is still on the call, but do you want to share with us what's been happening on that end?

MELISSA BAYHAM: And I think Ms. Jordan did share earlier pretty much what's going on at the state level. Primarily the majority of our work with preemployment transition services is done on the local level because every school district is so different. But I am very excited about, you know, I will be at the Jump Start convention and very excited about the work that we're

starting with Ms. Jordan. So that maybe, obviously the more support we get from the top, the more it will trickle down to the school districts. But I don't know, Meredith, if you had anything you wanted to add to that?

MEREDITH JORDAN: No. I think that summarized it perfectly.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Do we have any questions from other committee members for Ms. Bayham and her report from LRS?

EBONY HAVEN: There are no hands raised at this time.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Do we have any comments or questions from the public for Ms. Bayham and her report?

EBONY HAVEN: Actually, Mitch just raised his hand, Dr. McKee.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Greetings, Mitch. You have the floor. I know. I know. Yeah. Your voice doesn't sound like your voice, Mitch. It did bring a little light to this environment. But no, we can't understand. So if you want to hold onto it and we can circle back and you can ask it, that will be fine. Okay. Thank you, Mitch. Any questions or comments in the public, from the public for Ms. Bayham's report?

EBONY HAVEN: There are no hands raised and no comments in the chat at this time.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Great. So I think with that we are catching up pretty good on time. I don't know how that happened. But much gratitude for that. So we are just going to keep it moving along and move to the update on our contractual activities and our FY22 action plan. Is Ms. Rao on the call right now to discuss seminars and hiring individuals with developmental disabilities activity 3.2.2?

EBONY HAVEN: She's not here at this time.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. That's all right. I believe that we can circle back and give a brief update to the public if Ms. Rao doesn't come on, just to let the public know what's been going on with that

activity. But I will move right along to Dr. Beckers, if she's on the call to talk about LAPie. Activity 3.1.1.

GERELDINE BECKERS: Hi. I'm here and, of course, as soon as I say something my dogs are going to bark. I want to report on what we've done basically since the October meeting. We met with Temeshia Victorian and Mike Gray and the faculty, including the president at McNeese State University. And they are very much looking forward to starting a program at McNeese. So that's a positive. I met Roxanne West at the SEAP meeting and she is very motivated to start a program in that area. So we reached out to Northwestern State University with the dean and the director of the school of education and we have a meeting set up for February 17th to go to their campus to help them start a program, which is great. And then finally, Nicole Banks and I, I don't know if she's on this meeting, but she and I have been working diligently with Grambling and we kind of keep hitting roadblocks. So the next step is my dean's going to reach out to the dean at Grambling to hopefully get amenable to go to Grambling to have a conversation. I know Nicole is very enthusiastic about having this program or helping start. I see her, she just popped up. Having start this program at Grambling. So hopefully this next step will get some more movement in the Grambling area.

I have a meeting actually after this meeting with Karen Artus, which you guys probably know is the region nine LaCAN person. And we're setting up the movement for the legislative proposal that was written and submitted that I talked about previously. We are desperately seeking an author or legislative person to author this proposal. I've reached out to all of the LAPie alliance members, and I've sent the respective contact people in their areas for this university's trying to get someone to help us author this proposal moving forward for the legislative session.

And then actually just recently, which is probably somebody from the DD Council, it is someone, Katie

Crows I think is how you pronounce her last name. She reached out to me, and I'll be calling her after this meeting's over. So basically that's the update on where we are with LApie since our October meeting.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you, Dr. Beckers. Do we have any questions from the committee members from Dr. Beckers' report on LApie?

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Nicole Banks and Ms. Bambi Polotzola have their hands raised.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Ms. Banks, you are recognized.

NICOLE BANKS: Thank you, chair, for the recognition. Like Dr. Beckers has been saying, we really have been working diligently with Grambling and I was able to speak with someone in the education department, but they're not the head. They're like the second person in line. And she is like all on board with getting everything set up at Grambling. It's just us getting in contact with the dean of education. And that's kind of been our little roadblock right there just trying to get in touch with her or see the best way of getting in touch with her. So we're going to be working on that. We should have something within this next, you know, the end of this month.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you, Ms. banks. I believe is it Ms. Polotzola that had her hand raised next? If so, you're recognized.

EBONY HAVEN: Yes, ma'am.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Hi. Yes. Dr. Beckers, since last we talked, I heard back from Senator Boudreaux. I had already sent the information to the senate, and he has communicated with the senate staff to start looking into the information that we've compiled. So he is interested in carrying the bill. But I don't think that stops our advocacy to get other people, like really other legislators really engaged and buying in to really push this legislation. So that's just the update that I have.

GERELDINE BECKERS: That's awesome. We have actually reached, I'm in the middle of composing kind of generic letter to send to the alliance members so

we'll be consistent when we reach out. And once I meet with Karen and then this Katie or Brenton who helps me a lot too with direction on where we need to go next. But I'm trying to compose kind of a generic letter so we're real consistent with what we are saying and asking for. So we'll talk, Bambi. We talked yesterday, I'm sure we'll talk later. Thank you.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Any other committee members at this time have any questions for Dr. Beckers and her report?

EBONY HAVEN: There are no hands raised at this time.

HYACINTH MCKEE: No comments or questions for the public?

EBONY HAVEN: There is a question in the chat, is Senator Boudreaux interested in carrying this legislation? But I think Bambi just answered that question. And there is a comment from Ms. Alicia Vallian, I think that's her last name. Says wow, that's awesome. It is great to see this program expanding. You guys are fantastic and making a lot of progress. And that's it for comments and hands raised.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. Well, thank you so much, Dr. Beckers. This initiative, dream turned vision has come such a long way since 2019 and working on this. And so it's always good to hear how successful this program has been and the opportunities that it provides. So, thank you, again. Hats off. I will offline see if I can talk to you about a senator that might be interested in helping with authoring this. So we are going to move right along in the agenda to customized employment training from Kelly Monroe. Activity 3.2.1. Is she on the call?

KELLY MONROE: I'm here. I'm kind of sick so I'm not going to put my video on, if that's okay with you guys. Just wanted to jump on and give y'all a quick update. So this class is moving a little slow. I think there are eight people currently in this class. Four of them still have not been able to identify a learning partner. The learning partners in the

discovery process is very, very important. You can't actually move on in the class until you're able to get that. We've reached out to LRS a couple of times and they're having some trouble too, you know, helping them find these learning partners. A couple of the people in the class now have some very significant medical issues. And then, and so I reached out to Amy and then also talked with MGNA. Covid is also becoming a huge problem with this class as well. And so I reached out to MGNA and asked them what could we do to kind of salvage this class. Like would we be able to kind of put things on hold for a couple of months and let's let Covid kind of settle back down. Hopefully we'll be able to get some learning partners to resume the class. And then those two individuals who had the medical issues going on felt like if they had a couple of months to kind of take care of their issues, they would be able to resume back. And so I don't really have a lot of good news to say about customized employment, but that we're kind of like in a holding pattern right now and hoping that what we'll do is at the end of March offer them, like let the class jump on a conference call. Get like a little refresher from the MGNA staff. And then start the class back up and hope that they would, you know, are going to be finished by the end of the contract year. And that's basically all I have to say. I don't know if you have any questions.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Do we have anyone from the committee that has any questions for Ms. Monroe?

EBONY HAVEN: There are no hands raised at this time.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. Anything from the public at this time for Ms. Monroe?

EBONY HAVEN: Yes, ma'am. Ms. Karen Artus has her hand raised.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Ms. Artus, you're recognized.

EBONY HAVEN: I think she might have raised her hand by mistake because she just dropped it.

HYACINTH MCKEE: That's completely okay, Ms. Artus. I do it all the time. All right. So with no questions

for Ms. Monroe we are going to move right onto this next part of our agenda. Which is discussion of ideas for our FY2023 action plan. So at this time I'm going to ask if we can get staff to share the screen for that so everyone can see that action plan. Okay. So I'm sure you all are going to scroll to our area. All right. So can we-- are we there? Are we at our activities? Our section starts at three.

MARILEE ANDREWS: Right. So we're goal three and it spans a couple different pages. So just let me know.

HYACINTH MCKEE: So, yeah. So, well, ahead of time we asked the committee to take a look at our goals and see if, you know, if there's anything in our goals that we need to revisit or look at. I will read the goal and read each objective so everyone can hear. But then we'll circle back and see if we have any ideas from the committee and as well as the public, you know, to see if there's some ideas that we can do for our goal.

So goal three, education and employment. Individuals with developmental disabilities will have access to quality education in inclusive and safe environments throughout all stages of life. And access to self-determined, individualized, equal and gainful employment opportunities that provide competitive wages and integrated work environments.

Objective 3.1. Parents of students with developmental disabilities will have increased access to early diagnosis, identification of needs, early intervention services, childcare and information and opportunities to collaborate with educators regarding individualized educational planning or programming to meet the needs of their students.

Activity 3.1.1. Provide financial support to establish a post-secondary inclusive education alliance to provide mentoring and technical assistance, host training events and develop resources designed to build capacity of Louisiana post-secondary institutions in providing inclusive post-secondary education opportunities for individuals with intellectual and

developmental disabilities throughout Louisiana.  
Approximate cost FY22 40,000.

Activity 3.1.2. Advocate for increased focus and capacity within Louisiana Department of Education to address special education, including specific areas, issues disability, topical, etc.

Activity 3.1.3. Advocate for support structure in school systems that assures adequate understanding and skill to develop and implement IEPs and increase infrastructure of training and technical assistance provided to parents and schools simultaneously.

Activity 3.1.4. Provide information and promote inclusion and acceptance of effective models of school climate and culture.

Activity 3.1.5 advocate for type two and type five charter schools to be required to meet 85 percent rule of enrolling students with disabilities at rates similar to those found in traditional public schools within the same community and advocate for and monitor equitable funding based on minimum foundation program. Specifically regarding the charter compacts.

Activity 3.1.6. Advocate for educational systems change based on emergent education issues.

Activity 3.1.7. Advocate for increased meaningful opportunities for stakeholder input, improve practices to facilitate stakeholder input and consideration of stakeholder recommendations.

Activity 3.1.8. Conduct outreach with appropriate entities on current services and training opportunities for traditional and special education teachers including ongoing support, high quality ongoing teacher education which may lead to capacity building efforts to increase high quality educators.

Objective 3.2. Individuals with developmental disabilities will have increased employment outcomes upon transitioning from secondary educational settings, access to employment opportunities inclusive of services from highly qualified employment support providers and increase competitive and integrated opportunities for employers who are educated on how to

support people with developmental disabilities.

Activity 3.2.1. Provide funding to build capacity of employment providers in customized employment in a manner which will lead to certification or a competency-based certification program. Approximate cost FY22 25,000.

Activity 3.2.2. Provide financial support to conduct seminar with chambers of commerce throughout the state on the benefits of hiring people with developmental disabilities. Approximate cost FY22 32,000.

Activity 3.2.3. Advocate for employment support professionals to complete high quality professional development for the improvement of service provisions and employment outcomes.

Activity 3.2.4. Advocate for employment providers to have access to financial incentives to support unserved and underserved populations including people with the most substantial employment support needs and competitive integrated individualized employment.

Activity 3.2.5. Share the benefits planning services to a variety of agencies and stakeholders.

Activity 3.2.6. Advocate for systems change based on emergent employment issues.

Activity 3.2.7. Advocate for information on post-secondary opportunities and access to LRS preemployment transition services within school districts for all students with disabilities.

Activity 3.2.8. Advocate for increased Louisiana Rehabilitation Services counselor positions including administrative, legislative and funding efforts.

Activity 3.2.9. Conduct research to examine the effectiveness and advocate to support efforts of the Louisiana Medicaid buy-in program. So I just read the objectives and activities. The goal for our education and employment part of our FY22 action plan. At this time I will open the floor to committee members with any ideas that they may have as it relates to our action plan for FY23. I'm thinking Ms. Polotzola has a question in the chat. I'm able to see some things.

But it's crazy so. Ms. Polotzola you can have the floor. We did not discuss. I just was reading. So if you want the floor at this time to unmute yourself and ask your question or make your comment you can.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I was just asking in regards to 3.2.2 that is the contract. It was on our agenda, but I think Ms. Rao wasn't on at the time so we skipped over it. Did we go back and get a report from her?

HYACINTH MCKEE: No. She's not on at this time. Is she on there?

MARILEE ANDREWS: Yes, ma'am. She's here.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. So we could, at this time, not go back. We will cause we moved in the agenda, and I wasn't aware she had jumped on. And then allow her to circle back. I will circle back and get her report since we already moved on. We will allow her before we leave. Any ideas from the committee on any of the activities and objectives for our FY23 plan?

EBONY HAVEN: Dr. Wilson has his hand raised.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Dr. Wilson, you're recognized.

PHIL WILSON: Hi, everybody. So this is not a comment about the objective or the goals or anything, but it's about the fact that we have two entities working on customized employment. As some people may not be aware, but we connected with LRS. I don't remember exactly when this all started, but it was a good while back. So we went through this process Melissa just mentioned with University of South Florida to have some of our staff trained to go through slightly different, but pretty similar training as what Kelly and the group that's doing the subcontract or award or whatever for the DD Council. My concern is not that we, I'm not saying somebody should or shouldn't get that contact. That's really not our interest. But my concern is we have, goodness, for years done supported employment training and other types of trainings that have limited audiences. And so what ends up happening when we get like several entities that are doing something. We're not asking for funds from the council. We have asked for Melissa,

but she's totally tapped out. The only way we can do this work is through charging a registration fee, if you will, for the training. There's like one hand doesn't know what the other hand's doing here. And at some point, we will probably not be able to continue to provide this service if I can't pay my staff. So it sounds like I'm complaining or trying to jump on Kelly's program or something. I'm not. But I am very concerned when we open this up to actually beginning to register people, which we're about to do, that we'll have a limited pool of people and multiple sort of providers within our state. So I think if we could-- I don't want to change the activity. And again, I'm not really looking for funding from the council. Cause I think the council has very limited number of dollars to spend. But maybe there's some way we get with Kelly with the understanding that the council's behind it or whatever. And say how can we kind of do this in concert so we don't end up, you know, competing for the same customers, basically. So that's it. That's my comment.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you, Dr. Wilson, for your comment. I do not have the answer to that. Except I'm not sure if there could be space that can be made allowed to engage in that dialogue and have that conversation on how to better, you know, not duplicate efforts, but then work in concert, right. And so I'm wondering, and I don't know, I might be speaking out or overreaching, but I'm wondering if there's some kind of way that the council can support or encourage that dialogue to happen, but not necessarily impose it, you know what I mean. But yeah. You know, I'm thinking there needs to be some consideration to allow such a space to happen. Particularly because you said you're looking at a shortage soon. Of course, we won't change the activity, but I don't see, you know, maybe we can allow for some space for that to happen. I don't see that that's a bad recommendation. I don't know if the committee wants to make any comments about what Dr. Phil has proposed or said, but they are welcome. And,

thank you, Dr. Wilson for bringing that up. So we need to have that, but, you know, that's something that we can have more dialogue about. And we can help support by having a space. Ms. Monroe, I don't know if you're still on the call if you want to add a comment, that's fine.

KELLY MONROE: Okay. I am on the phone. So MGNA is someone that the council actually contracted with. We are simply just the fiscal agent and kind of overseeing the contract. So and kind of like maybe coordinating it. But this was something way back. I mean, we've been doing this with MGNA I want to say may be four years back when Derek was here. So Derek started this contract, and it was something the council felt very strongly for. And then, I guess, in the past two years LRS was like okay, yeah, let's make this is a service. And then but let's make sure that we have people in state. And so that's when LRS reached out to HDC. So, you know, I don't think we'll be competing for people, you know. Whatever the council chooses to do, I'm okay with. The goal is to make sure that providers have the ability to receive this training and at a reasonable rate that they can afford. And we've been lucky that the council has chosen to help pay for some of these people to become certified over the past couple of years. And so that's, you know, this was something that the council actually they reached out to MGNA and that's the company they wanted to go with.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you, Ms. Monroe, for adding a historical context to the discussion. Again, not certain if we have the exact answer at this time, right, regarding that. But perhaps having more dialogue about allowing space for more discussion on this topic.

EBONY HAVEN: Dr. McKee, Melissa Bayham has her hand raised. And we do have a hand in the public. Ms. Kimona Hogan has her hand raised as well.

HYACINTH MCKEE: So, Ms. Bayham, you are being recognized.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Thank you so much. I just wanted to say I do understand Dr. Phil's concern. Because

unfortunately we do have a limited amount of clients who are interested in pursuing customized employment right now. Customized employment was added to the menu of services that vocational rehabilitation could provide as part of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act. So we were trying to find a way to provide the customized employment training when it was enacted. And the DD Council generously agreed to fund some training. But when it became apparent that the training was not going to be able to continue and also, we knew we needed to have a method to be able to continue even after DD Council funding ended to be able to train vendors on customized employment. That is when we reached out to LSU. So it is very important that we have a sustainable model to be able to train providers. So I just wanted to add that to what Dr. Wilson said.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you, Ms. Bayham, for that. We do have Ms. Hogan. And Ms. Hogan you are recognized. And greetings on your appointment to the council. You're being recognized.

KIMONA HOGAN: Thank you. And I just, because I'm a new member, just trying to get understanding of exactly how this works. So on objective 3.1 when we talk about early diagnosis and identifying the needs. Let's see here. Identification of needs. So my question is is that would funding be available to parents, for instance, if they needed to get an independent education evaluation? And if so, what does that look like? Do you need some context of where that question is coming from?

HYACINTH MCKEE: Yeah. Please give some context.

KIMONA HOGAN: I'm an attorney and I practice special education law. And so sometimes what happens is the school systems will provide an evaluation that a parent may not necessarily agree with. And as a procedural right they may be entitled to an independent education evaluation. And so in that case parents would have to pay or sometimes would have to pay for an evaluation upfront. And then the school district may

reimburse the parent for that. But if the parent didn't have the funding to pay for an independent evaluation upfront, is that something that we could advocate for? And if so, how would that look?

HYACINTH MCKEE: And, of course, please any committee member feel like if they want to add, or staff want to add a comment to that. So no, we are not providing from the DD Council's budget money to parents so they can pay for an outside evaluation of their child to fulfill the multidisciplinary evaluation requirement. Is that your question, Ms. Hogan?

KIMONA HOGAN: Sort of. Kind of. Or would funding be available to private practitioners, for instance, to provide these evaluations? Maybe if the funding isn't being provided to the parents, could the funding be available to the practitioners to perform the evaluations?

HYACINTH MCKEE: Typically the funding is provided to contactors based on what was written in the goals as well as what was agreed upon and request of the public, right. So we can't just say we have 20,000-dollars to give to this private contractor to pay for family or parent evaluation. So it typically doesn't work like that, Ms. Hogan. Even though you've identified a need. We work to change systems. And then hopefully in the systems change it would help and support our individuals. And so that would not be something that we would say oh, here's 20,000-dollars for this family to utilize to pay for an evaluation. With that being said, what my understanding is is that schools, they do the evaluation, but I'm not quite certain-- well, you did say the parents would need to come up with the money upfront and the school would reimburse. So there it is, right. So it's not like the school is saying that the parent, you know, the parent can't go get another evaluation. The school is saying you're welcome to do so, but you would pay for it and be reimbursed. I hope I was able to answer your question.

KIMONA HOGAN: It does.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Any other committee members want

to jump in, you can chime in. And then certainly we can dial out more on that. But again, welcome to the council and congratulations on your appointment, Ms. Hogan.

KIMONA HOGAN: Thank you.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Any other questions from the committee?

KIMONA HOGAN: I had two more questions. Under activity 3.1.7 when it talks about stakeholders. Who are the stakeholders?

HYACINTH MCKEE: Yes. So I would say that families are stakeholders. Public entities are stakeholders. School districts are stakeholders. Advocates are stakeholders. Any entity, individual or person that is connected to our community. And it's in the role of wanting what's best for our community would be considered a stakeholder. So that would be the stakeholder.

KIMONA HOGAN: Thank you. And then I have one last question. On activity 3.1.8. When it talks about doing outreach and training with traditional special education teachers. Can you kind of give me an example of what that looks like.

HYACINTH MCKEE: So in terms of outreach for-- can you scroll it up a little bit, please, staff. So I can read it clearly. Conduct outreach with appropriate entities on current services and training opportunities special education teachers including ongoing support. So earlier today Ms. Jordan did make or engaged in some dialogue with us about different programs that they're trying to get in terms of retention as well as, you know, getting more individuals interested in becoming certified in special education. More qualified individuals. And so it seems as though, Ms. Hogan, that this 3.1.8 may be aligned with some of the work that Ms. Jordan and her team is doing. When you did bring that one up, that is one that I wanted to talk more with the committee, more about as well to see how we can ensure, cause I also think Dr. Michel brought up some information too. How do we ensure that's, you

know, actually happening and taking place. And is there something we want to do to expand that and help support what's going on with that. So good one to bring up cause that's one I was hoping we could get more input from the committee on. With that, I will open up the floor for any comments on 3.1.8 as it relates to what Ms. Jordan presented to us earlier today and how we see ourselves as the DD Council enforcing supporting that activity.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Bambi Polotzola has her hand raised. I'm not sure if it's in regards to 3.1.8. And then Dr. Michel has his hand raised as well.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. Ms. Polotzola and then Dr. Michel.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I had my hand raised before we got to this point. But also whoever is showing the screen, can you make it bigger. I'm having difficulty seeing it on my screen. Thank you very much.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Do you have a comment about 3.1.8, Ms. Polotzola, or it was just you needed the screen to be expanded?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: No. I had a comment about previous discussion.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Oh, so we kind of got to you late. I apologize for that. Let's see if we can, I think Dr. Michel has his hand up about 3.1.8. So is it okay, Ms. Polotzola, if we take his comment and then bring back. Okay. Dr. Michel, you're being recognized. I think you have a comment about 3.1.8. I'm getting that feeling.

CHARLIE MICHEL: I do. And I have one other comment. Before I make the comment on 3.1.8 if I could address Ms. Hogan's question about independent education evaluations. Under no circumstances can a school system force a parent to come up with the money upfront. Even if they have the money. The federal law indicates that you're entitled to that free of charge. It's completely free of charge. School systems can put some limitations on the costs. So but they have to give you that. It needs to be in form of policy or

procedure. And give you that at the time you request the independent education evaluation. If it goes over the amount, if it's a reasonable amount and you go over that you may be having to pay for the overage. But as a rule you can certainly find some options that would keep you within the budget and still get a quality independent education evaluation. That is only true for students with disabilities under IDEA. If your child has a disability but is classified as such under section 504 then the independent evaluation option is not available. You would then be free to get your own evaluation at your own cost provided to the school system. And then they are mandated by federal law to consider that evaluation. They are not mandated, however, to accept it. So I just wanted to let you know that no one has to come up with the money upfront if you have a child with a disability under IDEA. And for a school system to require that is a violation of your rights and federal law.

Okay. And 3.1.8. I was thinking maybe it went in 3.1.2 or 3.1.3. But one of the things that I would like to see somewhere in application, I don't know if it's going to be in print or whatever, but for the last 11 years the state Department of Education has been whittling away at the expertise within the state department to provide such outreach and services for special ed teachers for LEAs. It is imperative that as these positions are being filled in the state Department of Education that people with experience, practical experience in special education, not just book learning, not just watching at some place, but practical experience dealing with the day-to-day operations of a special education department, classroom, whatever. So that they can then parlay that knowledge into something that will benefit the students and the employees of the school systems. What we have had going on for years is the amount of employees that have any knowledge of any part of special education has gone down from well over 100 to, I think, right now it's about 6, 7 or 8. Somewhere in that range. When

there was such a large number it might look like it's top heavy, but the reality of it was there's so many aspects of special ed. There's instruction, there's behavioral, there's funding. There's all these other issues. So there was expertise in all of those areas. Right now, try as they might, that expertise is gone. So this one right here, there are no appropriate entities, there are no outreach people who can go to appropriate entities to get anything because they don't even know, in many instances, what the services are supposed to look like. So even if their intentions are wonderful, the reality of it is they sometimes could not recognize quality verses just basic textbook. And anybody that knows special ed, whether you have a child in special ed, whether you teach in special ed, the reality of it is the students don't read the books. They don't know how they're supposed to respond. So those of us who are charged with educating them and helping them, whether we're a parent or a teacher, our responsibility is to be able to monitor and adjust. We have to adapt to the child. Where right now almost looks like we're wanting the child to adapt to us. It is a virtual and a pedagogical impossibility. So as we're filling those positions, and my understanding is after all the positions in the LDOE are filled in the state department of ed we may still only have a dozen or so. Not enough to deal with the hundreds of thousands of special ed students in the school system. Especially since we have LEA superintendents, charter school directors or whatever they're going to be, and special ed directors who have virtually no experience in special ed. So we've got a lack of experience at the state level and a lack of experience at the LEA level. That is an equation. A mathematical equation for failure on students. So we're limiting the opportunities of all students with disabilities in our state because there is no expertise to guide and maneuver the system in an adaptative way that will help all children. I just think we need to adapt. Not adapt. We need to consider that throughout all of this

plan. I don't see it in writing. I know that that's part of the intent, but the state department of ed for the last, like I said, 11 or 12 years has not viewed that as important and it is definitely showing in our outcomes.

HYACINTH MCKEE: And you're speaking to 3.1.8, Dr. Michel? I just want to get clarity cause you mentioned.

CHARLIE MICHEL: Well, I thought originally it would be 3.1.2 or 3.1.3. But I had written my comments down before 3.1.8 was read. It could certainly go there as well. I just think it needs to permeate throughout this document because it is a missing concept and has been for a decade.

HYACINTH MCKEE: I'm sure that staff is taking note of that so that we can circle back and see what we can do. Thank you for your comments on that. Any other committee comments, recommendations about our goal three?

EBONY HAVEN: No committee members have their hand raised, but Ms. Corhonda Corley has her hand raised.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. Ms. Corley, I will let you take the floor once I make a comment. Could you scroll down. I don't know who's controlling the screen. All the way down to activity three, all the way down to the last one on employment. I think it would be activity. No. Go some more. There it is. Share the benefits planning services to a variety of agencies and stakeholders. I think it might be activity 3.2.6 which typically we write them in such a broad way that when an emergent issue comes up, we can try to find a way to insert it. But I do, I have received some questions from individuals about what do we have in place for individuals with disabilities who are approaching retirement age. Particularly the whole idea okay, they're just going to go live off of social security. There are individuals with disabilities that are actually working, have jobs and they are, in the next couple of years, maybe facing retirement and what that would look like for them. And I know we typically

always talk about the education side, and we do a lot of K12 things. And then we talk a little bit about employment. But we really don't have a whole lot of discussion about individuals that are approaching retirement age. And I do know, we know about the ABLE account, but I'm wondering is there something that we can do to involve and have more discussion about helping support those individuals that are approaching retirement. Particularly as it relates to maybe having conversations or advocating with employers to consider offering the ABLE account as an option to retirement as well. Not just saying okay, you have to do this 401K. You have to do this particular program. But having more discussion with employers about maybe an ABLE account as an option for individuals with disabilities. And what are we doing in that area to help support individuals with disabilities approaching retirement. And I know we don't really talk a lot about that. And I'm wondering if that is something we can do more research on as it relates to maybe tie it to activity 3.2.6 and, you know, hoping we can have some dialogue about that from the committee. Any committee comment about discussion with helping individuals with developmental disabilities who are going to prepare for retirement?

EBONY HAVEN: Bambi Polotzola has her hand raised. And then Ms. Corhonda Corley still has her hand raised.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Ms. Polotzola, you're recognized.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Dr. McKee, were you referring to activity 3.2.5?

HYACINTH MCKEE: Listen, it could be. It could. We write it broad. The 3.2.5 could be one too, right. So wherever we can kind of look at supporting those individuals that are moving to retirement age. Like we don't even talk about that. Like how to plan and advocate and support them. So it could be 3.2.5, Bambi.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: So just a couple things in regards to that. The reason why I was asking because when I think about the benefits planning, I know that

Human Development Center and Disability Rights each have benefit planning that they get funding, as I understand, some federal funding and they cover, basically each of them cover like half of the state. And what I think I've understood over the years that there is some limitation to that funding. And so particularly they'll be able to assist people who are going to work. You know, not just necessarily somebody just kind of considering and thinking about it. Like their funds are limited so it has to be a person with a disability who really maybe has a job offer so they're able to look at all their benefits. Make sure that they're, you know, not going to lose any benefits because they didn't plan appropriately. That type of thing. So I definitely can see a need for more expanded services. Just for people to just get an idea of what's possible. To do more hypothetical type scenarios cause I think people don't even get to that final stage because they just stop before then. But also, I'd say in regards to planning across a lifespan and for retirement, this is not directly, maybe not directly what's needed, but I know that the arc has been working with families in regards to doing the supported decision making. And so that could be a component of that as well. And I think we're funding it through the DD Council, but I may be wrong about that.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thanks for sharing that. Yeah, I'm just concerned that not everyone knows what we might know, you know. You know. And so what can we do to make sure that people know. You know, that they know that. They don't have to be feeling like they're experiencing this alone when they get to that stage in their life. I'm not sure if we can ask for staff to do a little bit more research for us on that. You know, see what other states are doing. There are some states that have retirement plans that are offered. Like when someone is hired, you know, they say this is your retirement plan. You can have this one or whatever. And they support individuals with disabilities. So

looks like Ms. Polotzola is still back up. I'll let you have the floor since we're still dialoguing about this activity.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Just one point I want to make. And it's more, I guess, an advocacy point. In our students who have graduated from the post-secondary institutions, they have a 75 percent employment rate. And so I'm really glad that you brought this up, Dr. McKee, because we need to really start forward thinking. I know we often kind of get stuck in where we can't get employment, or can't find employers, can't find the supported employment resources for people with disabilities. But on the other hand, we do have a lot of people with developmental disabilities that are getting employed. And so we could be prepared to have, not put them in a bad financial, where they're in a bad financial situation because we maybe didn't advocate on something we can advocate today to make their lives better across their lifespan. So thank you for bringing this up.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. So any other ideas? We're a little bit over the time. We do still have to have Ms. Rao give her update. My intention is to have us done by three. I think we can get that accomplished. But I do want to leave space because we will need to bring this back to our council to let them know any ideas that we have. And so we did hear one from Dr. Michel from the public. Thank you so much for that and chiming in. Ms. Hogan also, you know, made some comments about another activity. So we want to bring back to the council that we spoke about some activities and that we have some ideas, right. And so it just seems like we still, you know, the one about the special education and making sure those teachers and retention. That one comes up a lot. So we want to stand behind that one and ask staff to do some more research and support and see what we can do as a council to advocate for that activity. I don't know which one it was. I hope staff was writing it down. Sometimes at this time of day I see all kinds of

numbers and I don't know what the words are. For that particular activity. And then also the last ones that Ms. Polotzola and I just had dialogue on. We definitely have those three that we can go to the council with some ideas about. And so I'm going to ask if staff could do some research on those three and then we can put that in our education employment committee report to the council so that they're aware that we did have some dialogue. And then so thank you so much to the committee and the public for chiming in and giving any ideas for our FY23 plan as well. So moving right along. I do see the chat is like on fire. We have a lot of questions in there. I do want to allow space for Ms. Rao to give her report just briefly and then we'll circle back to any comments that we have in the chat and then we'll closeout. So Ms. Rao, if you're on right now, could you please give your report to the committee.

DEVIKA RAO: Hi. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm so sorry I was late to the call. I think my times got a little messed up. So can you hear me?

HYACINTH MCKEE: We can hear you and see you, yes.

DEVIKA RAO: Great. Thank you. Just a quick update on the 3.2.2. We are under planning phases, and we have met with the council staff and also just kind of gotten all the direction we need based on the statement of work. With this time looking at the success of last year's, but also rooms for improvement and the feedback we got from the council on the last report out. This year we are working on building the webinars, but we're also taking it from a curriculum approach which is, again, the statement of work. But we are focusing on the webinars to have one topic per the curriculum so we can have a deeper dive on those specific spaces. Such as recruitment, accommodation, benefits and retention so we can have subject matter experts who can really speak to those topics. And we really want to make this call to action. Give people curriculum that they can also have takeaways in a network to be able to make some decisions on how to

improve their employment practices and hiring decisions. Which include people with disabilities. I was listening to all the other reporting and I'm already writing down notes of how I may be able to work with some of you all.

So this year we're wanting to do it from a different, we want to reach the whole state. Focus it still on regions, make sure we collect good data for the council and expand its reach on the mandate of the statement of work. But also be able to provide very specific takeaways and, like I said, subject matter expertise on how employers can build inclusive employment practices and what they can do to hire people with disabilities. Connecting them with resources, organizations, as well as individuals who are job seeking and looking for employment. So that is our plan of action. We will be submitting a calendar shortly to the staff just to kind of show the plan of action and how we've laid it out. And now we will start going forward to find, capture the speakers and the chambers of commerce we spoke to last year. But from the last meeting we had I know Ms. Polotzola is on this call as well as we had another-- I apologize their name slipped my mind. But there was we would like to work with GODA a little bit more and closely on this effort and see how this maybe align with some of their mission statement and the state as a model employer. And then also and work with different companies. One of the mentions was like the bigger fortune 500 big companies as well to get them to adopt hiring practices and procedures to include people with disabilities in their search. So we want to be inclusive of big businesses and small businesses. Utilize the great resources of the council. And as well as its partners. And some of the initiatives just like some of you all were talking about today. The post-secondary opportunities are part of our curriculum. We want to talk about how to find talent. If you hear from me and you're on this call, please know that we are going to be really trying to make our curriculum and webinars

this time, like I said, improving the foundation that was set. And now taking it a little deeper dives onto these curriculum topics and the benefits of hiring people with disabilities and how to do that. So that's our plan of action. Right now we're finalizing kind of the curriculum, we're finalizing the scope. And how we're going to start rolling these out. Our hope is to get the first one off the ground in March. Which is developmental disabilities awareness month. And yeah, we really want to take it from a storytelling approach as well as call to action approach. So providing everyone who is involved takeaways that they may be able to incorporate into their general practice.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Yeah. That storytelling approach and that call of action is really good, especially. And then you want people to leave with something, right. They don't want to just kind of sit through like a dusty book on a shelf. Like what do I do with this book.

DEVIKA RAO: Absolutely. And we also know this is not something that can change overnight. Changing employment policies, especially if you're internal HR. But we really just want them to have enough things in their book whether it's state resources, individual resources on how to develop those. So we really want to create it as a really go-to resource. And we were just discussing of how to make sure they're always available, always available for anyone who joins the webinar. And I do want to add what we wanted to do was host a curriculum by two. I know there are ten sessions. But we wanted to give two times five, if that makes sense, from the storytelling. We want to open it with a big launch. We want to tell the story. Like what does it mean to hire people with disabilities. We want lived experience. And we want an employer. We want an employee. We want someone from the state. We want someone from big business, small business. Because everyone has a different method. And then we want to dive into the curriculum, and we want to give two options. If you missed one, you can

come to the next one. Or if you want to get reinforcement on some of the information. So we really want to create it as the go-to place to get the information we need. I did want to specify that cause I know that was part of a big statement of work of how we're approaching the ten webinars.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Any questions for Ms. Rao on her report from the committee? Any questions from the public for Ms. Rao on her report? Thank you, Ms. Rao, for your report.

DEVIKA RAO: Thank you so much.

HYACINTH MCKEE: You're welcome. We will be moving right into just basically summarizing our activities. And then if we have some space and time we'll allow for some public comment, then adjourn. We actually should have three activities. 3.2.5 and 3.2.6 because we were trying to determine where it would go. So that's what I left off. Where would it go. And so it would be three, 1st activity we discussed and then also 3. We were trying to figure out where would that whole idea go about across the lifespan. If that is okay with the committee, we would like to provide that information to the full council about our ideas for FY23. So we will have that in our report to the full council. So I'm not sure if I need to entertain a motion on that. I'm wondering if I should introduce a motion to everyone or ask for a motion off the floor to bring those activities to the full council to put in our report. I'm asking Ebony. Are you on? Do we need to, should that be a motion so that we can bring that to the full council?

EBONY HAVEN: Yes. I'm here. Yes. I think it does need to be a motion.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. So right at this time I will entertain a motion from the floor to bring to the full council the activities that we discussed in our plans for FY23. Typically we have this on the screen, and it's usually typed out so that everyone would know what actual three activities. If we're running out of time to do that. We want to make sure the public is

aware of the three activities that we're bringing to the full council so that they would know. And so I'll entertain a motion for that. For activity 3.1.8, 3.2.5 and 3.2.6 to be brought to the full council. And the staff can do research on those. I'm going to need that from y'all. Mitch, I know. I see your motion in the chat, but I think it might need to be vocal, Mitch. I think you have to unmute yourself for it. So I'm not sure if we can get someone else to motion that. I think we have to hear your voice.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I'll make the motion. This is Bambi.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Polotzola, for making that motion. So it's been moved by Ms. Polotzola to bring activities 3.1.8, 3.2.5 and 3.2.6 to the full council and staff to conduct research on this issue as it relates to emerging issues, employment issues and benefits planning services to a variety of agencies as well as conducting outreach and appropriate entities on current services and training opportunities for special education teachers. So do I have a second? We have a second from anyone on the committee? I think we probably need to make sure we conduct research on these specifically to what. Specific to what we discussed about benefits and services across the lifespan for individuals with disabilities in terms of advocacy, you know. Well, I mean, I guess we can leave it at that. I'm just trying to see how we can word it. I can't tell y'all how to make the motion. We do have a motion on the floor. If we can leave it as it stands that way. Do I have a second? I need a second from the committee in order to move forward. Okay. It sounds like Mitch is trying to make a second. I will accept that. So a second by Mitch Iddins. Any objections? Any abstentions. Any public comment about this motion? I see none in the chat. So moved. Motion carries. All right, folks. We are overtime. And I do recognize that there are individuals in the public that want to make comments. We are overtime. I apologize for that. I do see

there's comment in the chat. But I don't know where we can start, where we can begin. I will allow for the public who made a comment in the chat to unmute themselves and give them one minute to, you know, like summarize their comment so we can. I believe Ms. Corley had her hand raised. So I'm going to ask to allow her to speak. Give her like one minute to make her comment. It would help us summarize what her questions are in the chat. Ms. Corley, you are recognized.

CORHONDA CORLEY: Thank you so much, madam chair. I actually had comments in regards to all of the points that you actually just put in the motion. That I actually would have allowed the opportunity to speak on when we were discussing them. Because I really did agree with what Dr. Michel actually stated, but I wanted to elaborate on something that he stated. Our LDOE department always state that they do not have the power to mandate and to provide oversight. And that is extremely problematic. In addition to that, our DD Council is currently under federal regulations in regards to our diversity not being addressed. And that is also a problem within our school systems. English language learners and children that are indigenous black and brown are absolutely being put into the school to prison pipeline on a daily basis. Right now we have an extreme situation that is happening in Lafayette Parish school system as well as East Baton Rouge Parish school system where these children are not even having a due process rights. Those are being violated. And Ms. Meredith Jordan and her department are not equipped to actually deal with everything in our special ed education population because they do not have the knowledge. That is an extreme problem.

In addition to that, we have as it relates to employment and the actual addressing or informing more people about our people with disabilities, we need to allow people with disabilities to actually be able to work in the mayor's office, EMS, ADA departments, etc. Because our people with disabilities are actually being

overlooked when it comes to the actual city council meetings. They are being overlooked when it comes to receiving actual help from EMS and DCFS. In addition to that, we also need to look at employment opportunities with people with disabilities to actually work directly in the medical marijuana department. Because our children and people with disabilities can benefit from medical marijuana, but they are not consulted. And due to them not being consulted, they are actually missed. And a lot of this information is not being disseminated out to our people with disabilities across this entire state. And that was my question that I did have for the speaker that was before the motion was actually presented, the last presenter. Because I wanted to know exactly how do they plan to advertise and promote this actual information to be disseminated out? Because it is plenty of people in Baton Rouge, Lafayette and Orleans Parishes that are not, I repeat, are not receiving information about any of this. Including they don't know about the DD Council even being in existence. So I actually ask those questions. And I ask that in the efforts of our DD council staff getting the research for this information to be presented back to the public in a timely manner before the legislative session actually begin so people can actually know what we will be doing. Thank you so much.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you, Ms. Corley, for your comment. I believe we don't have anyone public hand raises. And for the purposes of time we need to make sure that we have scanned this chat to make sure we have covered what was in there. I don't know where we started. I believe, and I'm going to go through it. Ms. Cannino is there any way to advocate for oversight for LEAs for special education spending. Mr. Iddins, long-term benefits planning is the key for anyone with a disability who is working and works over a lifetime. Knowing how and where to get engaged with a certified benefits planner is vitally important. Increasing access to planning and training for everyone

interested. Becoming a certified BP is very important. And very much needed more conversation about how we can make sure people can access a certified planner. Yes, council member Mr. Iddins, that is what the intention is to have the staff do research and bring that back so that we can put together a plan to present to the full council for consideration. And then Dr. Michel, the process allows for input which is typically viewed as suggestions and can be included at LDOE appropriate for the specifics of the application of the LDOE to the feds is constructed in a way that (inaudible) as much flexibility to LDOE. Which is how, in my opinion, they have been able to avoid providing professional development. And for the most part, support of any kind to LEAs. It has been a few years since I have actually seen this application, so it may have changed, but we have even spoken with state legislators attempting to get an audit to determine issues of these funds. I'm not sure the audit was ever conducted. But I'm pretty sure that because of the vague nature of the application such an audit wouldn't yield any violations even though (inaudible). So thank you, Dr. Michel. Thank you, Ms. Corley. We covered that. All right. So I believe that we have covered all of the public comments. I want to take this time to thank everyone for their time. We went over today. We are working to not do that as much in the future. But, you know, we are a passionate group of individuals, so we do like to allow space for people to share their experiences. So at this time since there are no other announcements, we are going, I am going to move to adjourn the meeting. So I don't believe I need to get a motion to adjourn. I was told that I can say we can adjourn and if I don't get any objections then we can adjourn the meeting. So I will be adjourning this meeting at 3:12 p.m. if there's no objections. It was a pleasure seeing you guys today. Have a great one.