

Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council
Education and Employment Committee
July 20, 2022

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. The time is now 3:00. Do we have a quorum?

EBONY HAVEN: I'm counting right now, Dr. McKee.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you.

EBONY HAVEN: I just muted. I apologize for that. Dr. McKee, we have seven members present and you do have a quorum.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you so much. Greetings to you. Good afternoon. The time is now 3:00. The Education and Employment Committee meeting for the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council is now coming to order for Wednesday, July 20th, 2022. At this time I'm going to ask for a roll call.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Nicole Banks.

NICOLE BANKS: Present.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Melissa Bayham. Ms. Brenda Cosse. Ms. Christi Gonzales.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Mr. Mitch Iddins. Ms. Meredith Jordan.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Dr. Hyacinth McKee.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Present.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Bambi Polotzola

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Mary Tarver. Ms. Vivienne Webb.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Dr. Phil Wilson.

PHIL WILSON: Present.

EBONY HAVEN: And Ms. Melissa Bayham just walked into the room, Dr. McKee.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you so much and greetings to everyone who's in attendance. At this time I'm going to ask for the staff to read the protocols. Ms. Marilee Andrews, can you read the protocols for the meeting?

EBONY HAVEN: I'm not sure if she's on, Dr. McKee.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. So then may I get a staff

member to read the protocols if she's not present?

EBONY HAVEN: Yes. Let me see if I can share them. Okay. Council meetings shall be accessible via Zoom and live streamed on YouTube. Council and committee members will participate via Zoom and shall be considered present when they display a live feed of their face with their first and last name. Have their microphones muted unless called upon by the chairperson. Electronically raise their hand to request the chair recognize them to speak. And once recognized to speak by the chair their microphone will be turned on. And after speaking the microphone shall be returned to mute. Guests may participate via Zoom and observe meetings live on YouTube and all public meetings shall be recorded and made available on the council's YouTube channel as deemed appropriate by the chairperson. Public comments submitted during the meeting via any format shall be considered. During Zoom meeting guests may electronically raise their hand to request to comment. Upon being recognized by to speak by the chair their microphone should be turned on and after speaking the microphone shall be returned to mute. Post comments that are relevant to the item under consideration in the chat box. And you can also post comments during the live stream of the meeting on the council's YouTube channel. Public comments of a person's character will not be heard. And if the comment continues after being asked to stop by the chairperson, council staff may be instructed to end the meeting. The chairperson would notify the executive committee of this occurrence and the chair will seek guidance to determine if it's legally appropriate to redact or share the video of the meeting on the council's social media. And those are the virtual protocols.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you, Ms. Haven. In addition to that, for those who are present in-person and wish to make public comment, please have, please line up at the end of the table near the microphone. And for those wishing to speak the order should be first council members, then in-person, public, then Zoom public. Thank you. And then with that being said, we're going to move onto the approval of the April 20,

2022, employment education committee meeting summary. I'm assuming that all committee members got an opportunity to review this document. But what we'll do is we'll pause and give a quick minute or two, an opportunity to review it again. And then call for a motion to approve.

MARY TARVER: This is Mary. I make a motion to approve.

NICOLE BANKS: I second.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you. There's a motion by Mary Tarver. Is that you, Mary?

MARY TARVER: Yes. Can you see me?

HYACINTH MCKEE: Hey, Mary. There's a motion on the floor from Mary Tarver and a second by Ms. Banks to approve the committee minutes. Are there any objections to the motion? Any abstentions? None being heard. Any discussion? Any public comment? Motion carries. We'll move right onto the next item on the agenda which is the post-secondary inclusive education programs update from our executive director, Amy Deaville.

AMY DEAVILLE: Thank you, Dr. McKee. Yes, so the legislation, which was Senate Bill 192, passed and became act number 682. And what the act does is it created a Louisiana post-secondary inclusive education fund. And we received a million dollars for that fund to start it off. And it also created an advisory council for these programs made up of a number of different people. And the advisory council will work on putting some structure to applications for these different programs. And approving funding requests and things like that. So they are actually appointing people to the advisory council, people that weren't already named in the bill. They're working on appointments right now and the first meeting is scheduled for August 18th, I believe. Of the advisory council. And Dr. McKee, if it's okay with you, I've also given, later in the agenda, an update on the progress from the alliance for this quarter. And so it kind of ties into this, if you wouldn't mind, I could give that now too.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Yes. Please proceed with giving that now.

AMY DEAVILLE: Thank you. So the alliance, obviously, a lot of their time over the last quarter has been working on that legislation, getting and giving testimony and making sure that it moved through. Which they were successful. The other very exciting thing that they have been working on is their ongoing technical assistance. LSUA, so LSU in Alexandria, their special program for the enhancement of resources and opportunities has selected their first cohort of students. And the program will begin in the fall of 22. And they also hired a new director, Ms. Brittany Soden. So they are, you know, they're starting very soon with their first ever cohort. It's very exciting. And they have also been working with Dr. Betty Washington with the Calcasieu Parish School Board in collaborating with McNeese State University and the technical community college in Lake Charles. And this initiative, the phase one initiative will begin on both campuses for fall of 2022. Focusing on 18- to 21-year-old students using IDEA funding. And then phase two will be to develop post-secondary inclusive education programs on each campus. So those are some very exciting things happening within the alliance over the last year.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you, Ms. Deaville. Would this conclude your report?

AMY DEAVILLE: It does conclude my report. Thank you.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Great. Thank you so much. Now we're going to move onto the next item on the agenda, cameras in the classroom update from Ms. Ebony Haven.

EBONY HAVEN: Okay. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm going to just give a brief update from the council's advocacy efforts during the legislative session. And I know Ms. Meredith Jordan will give her updates for the Louisiana Department of Education. SB45 of the 2022 legislative session passed and it was signed by the governor on July 5th. And I want to thank the LaCAN leaders and the LaCAN members who were there to participate in the bill signing. And, of course, our council members who were there with us on July 5th. SB45 amends the current state law which is currently Act 456 of 2021. It states that policies must be

adopted by December 31st, 2022, or within 60 days of receipt of funding. Whichever comes first. So the exciting news is that we did receive the funding. The 8 million-dollars was appropriated for the FY23 budget. Which actually started on July 1st. So they created the special education classroom monitoring fund and the 8 million-dollars was appropriated to that fund. Other amendments to the current law are that copies of the adopted policy are to be permitted to the Louisiana Department of Education by January 15th, 2023, or within 10 days of any revisions to their policy. And their policies must include provisions on how a parent, or a legal guardian can request the cameras be installed in the classrooms.

Of course, whenever the council did add this to their agenda last October, they also wanted to see a little bit more monitoring and oversight from the Louisiana Department of Education. And when I say monitoring and oversight, I mean they wanted to know about which districts had policies created. And then capturing data on things like how many districts-- oh, I just said that. How many parents had requested cameras. How many cameras were installed. How many requests had been denied and the reason for that denial. However, we don't have that type of oversight. But we do have that the districts have to submit their policies to the Louisiana Department of Education by January 15th. So an LADDC news was shared on June 7th which highlighted all of the successes for the cameras as well as all of the successes that the disability community received in the 2022 legislative session. And again, I just want to say job well done to all of our LaCAN leaders. All of our council members. All of our LaCAN members who participated in the legislative session, who showed up to the committee meetings, who provided testimony, who was there just to support and provide advocacy for this important issue. And I just wanted to say job well done to them. And also, of course, to Senator Foil who was our champion on this bill. So that's all I have. Does anybody have any questions?

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you, Ms. Haven, for your report. And now we're going to move right onto the

next item of the agenda, Louisiana Department of Education.

EBONY HAVEN: I'm sorry. Ms. Corhonda Corley has her hand raised.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Oh, I didn't see that. Okay. So I should have asked were there any public comments on there. So do we have any public comments for Ms. Haven's report? Is it Ms. Corley that has her hand raised?

EBONY HAVEN: Yes.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. I'm going to ask staff to kind of help me do that. Sometimes I can't see it. Okay. So Ms. Corley, you're recognized.

CORHONDA CORLEY: Thank you, chair of the education committee and the Education Employment Committee for allowing me the opportunity to speak. I have several questions in regards to it. 8 million-dollars is not a lot of money when you think about it because the 8 million-dollars have to be split between 64 parishes. I'm going to use East Baton Rouge Parish school system as an example because East Baton Rouge Parish school system has 83 schools. Now 8 million-dollars split, divided between 64 parishes is a quarter of a million dollars. That's 125,000-dollars approximately to be divided to be given to each of the parishes. But in East Baton Rouge Parish in itself there is East Baton Rouge Parish school system, Zachary school system, Central school system and Baker school system that would all have to split 125,000-dollars.

So my first question would be, number one, is the DD Council going to advocate for more funding considering that 8 million-dollars is not going to be enough with me pointing out the situation with just this one parish. But number two, East Baton Rouge Parish school system, it has been reported in the newspaper that they will have a 52 million-dollar deficit. 52 million-dollar deficit. Which means the 8 million-dollars for cameras may not end up-- well, the 8 million-dollars divided by the 64 parishes to give them the 125,000 and after they split it with the other three school systems that they have it's not going to be anything for them to actually do one camera in a classroom for a child with a disability. So have we

actually taken the time out to look at if we are faced with a situation like this one where the school system is now in a deficit after receiving all of the Covid and American Rescue Act moneys, what will we then be able to do considering that there is not going to be any money for a camera to go in a classroom of a child with a disability that is in a self-contained class.

So I'm asking these questions because I think that is something that we actually, that was not considered or thought of when LDOE stated that they were going to just find, miraculously find some money and we allowed them to just throw us nibbles and bits. Cause that's exactly what they did. They give us scrap money. They could have given us more and it has been reported in newspaper as well about the federal misappropriations of funds that LDOE has been doing in the millions. So I'm just asking what will the DD Council do as it relates to asking for more money and for situations like the one with East Baton Rouge Parish that has more than 4,000 children with disabilities in small number classrooms. But in addition to that, will we ever ask for LDOE to make our individuals with disabilities in a school arena a real true focus. Because right now that is not at the forefront of their mind or on their table. And so that is my questions that I would actually like to ask for this committee to consider. Thank you so much, madam chair.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you, Ms. Corley, for your public comment. And I think we will hear from Ms. Meredith Jordan shortly and I believe that there is a topic of cameras in the classrooms in her area so maybe she could also add some credence to some of the concerns that have just been mentioned. And then I think there will be some space for the DD Council to consider public's concerns and circle back and see if-- I think your question really is safeguards in what are we doing and that. So again, thank you for your public comment. So now we're going to turn it over to Ms. Meredith Jordan from Louisiana Department of Education with her updates.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yes. And I hope, Ms. Corley, to answer some of those questions. So I'll start with an update on the department's actions happening right now

around the camera legislation. So first, one of our first steps that we're taking, hopefully as soon as August BESE, we're working very frantically to, in order to signal the importance of this legislation, the requirements because we hear feedback around this is there, but maybe some school systems weren't doing it. And while some maybe were waiting for the funding. One of the things that we want to do is take that legislation and codify that into BESE policy. So we are working to do that and to put that into BESE policy for the August BESE. Basically signaling again to all of our school systems that yes, this is the law, and we are also codifying that and taking that and putting that into BESE policy. We are trying, working as frantically as possible to get that done for August BESE.

To give an update to Ms. Corley's point around the funding, we are also working expeditiously as possible to take that 8 million-dollars that was a legislative line item and there are specific uses for these funds. These are not funds that school systems are going to be able to use for anything else. That that money is dedicated, and it is very clear that it is to be used for the purchase of these cameras in self-contained classes and the installation. So in order to get those funds out as expeditiously as possible, y'all, we're working very, very on a tight deadline. What we've got to do is take those funds, Ms. Corley, we are going to, we have pulled our numbers of students, we have that data in serve, our number of students who spend less than 40 percent of their day in the regular education classroom. So these are the numbers of students who are in those self-contained classes. Because remember, the legislation is specifically around cameras for self-contained classrooms. And so the way, Ms. Corley, we're going to take those funds and equitably allocate those to school systems. And it's not our intent, our position that we would deny any school system. So if they run out, we need, you know, we will have a process in place. You know, if for some reason our estimate is not there, it's not right and we give an initial allocation that we have a process in place to where okay, I've used it all, but I have another request, is

there any money remaining. We have no, even at the department, like this money is for these purposes. So we will reallocate and work with school systems to make sure they have what they need until this 8 million-dollars is expended. So we'll take those counts, and we will, this is the most expeditious way that we can come up with right now, rather than-- so typically when we get federal, our federal funds, but federal funds we would take, we would bring allocations to BESE, we have an electronic grants process that school systems create a budget, they apply for. We are not, we are going to try not to expect a whole lot of steps that is going to make this process very lengthy for school systems and for them to say you haven't given us the money yet. So we will give them an allocation.

Now, we are going to make them come back. So number one, we know we've got to collect their policy. So we are going to make them do some work in (inaudible) provide and upload their policies, sign off some assurances that this is how I'm spending this money. So we're creating that, that piece to collect some documentation. And we are discussing how will we, you know, will we require them also after the fact to upload some invoices to us. Show us where you spent this money, that kind of thing. So Ms. Corley, I don't know if that answered all your questions. I'm happy to take more at the end of my report. But we're working through the funding process. That is not set in stone yet. If we do have to bring allocations of this money to BESE, we are trying to do that for August. Because we know BESE won't meet again until October. And again, that timeline keeps getting pushed back and we want to get this money out as quickly as possible. But Ms. Corley, to your point, also as responsibly as possible. And having the school systems to provide some documentation. We know we got to collect their policy. So that's kind of where we're at. I know that's not a whole lot of specifics or hard in stone, but we plan to take policy to BESE to codify the law and we are planning to bring those initial allocations based on those student numbers. So for example, if a school system or a charter has no significant

disabilities, they may get no money or we may say, I think that's a discussion we're going to have to have with finance is do we give them some. Because what if they get a student who enrolls. Or will we require them to reach out to us and say hey, now I have a student. I didn't have an initial allegation. Can you allocate us some. So we're working on that. I know those aren't a lot of hard, you know, fast. This is what we're doing. This is what we're working on a timeline trying to get a process that makes sense together and a process that will be accountable. So I'll kind of move on and talk about my other updates. Would y'all like for me to answer questions about that hot topic first or move on?

HYACINTH MCKEE: I would much rather you move on and then we'll entertain public comment.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Certainly. So it's been an extremely busy summer. Our division has been providing a lot of support to school systems this summer. I will give just briefly an update. I know, you know, when I started meeting with you all, I think I'm almost at my year anniversary in this position, I had quite a few vacancies. Seven, eight vacancies. We are, I am down to three vacancies. I have one coming shortly so it should be two vacancies very shortly. And so that is exciting. It means more support and more focus on improving outcomes for our students with disabilities in the state. This summer I've worked with, we've presented at, we had a foundational charter day where we did presentations and did some professional development with some of our new charter leaders around supporting students with disabilities, both compliance as well as best practice. Because I can imagine coming in as a new leader, or new organization, a new CMO, there's a lot to kind of take in and learn if that's not your expertise. So we've provided a lot of support there at our foundational charter day.

We are also supporting several school districts this summer. Which I think, you know, we've had several school systems reach out to our division and say hey, will you come and present, provide some professional development at our local district, sort of back-to-school event whether it's for all educators.

I'm going to one Monday that is specific to their special education department and special educators. So we have been very excited to do that. It has led to a very busy summer.

We also have our early childhood conference that starts this weekend. We are also presenting there on Saturday to childcare centers, families on inclusive practices for childcare centers and PreK classrooms. What does it mean to have that inclusive setting to where we have students with disabilities enrolling in these childcare centers. And, you know, they'll say I'm not, I don't have the capacity, or I'm not staffed. So how do we make sure you're prepared. How do we kind of help them. So we're going to give them on Saturday a self-assessment checklist. How do I create communitive environments. How do I create inclusive programming to where they are ready. And this, y'all, directly connects to and impacts our federal indicators around inclusive settings even in that early childhood space. Because we know kindergarten ready for many students with disabilities means I've had access to high quality early childcare in an inclusive environment to where I can be ready for K12. And I can be ready to start a successful kindergarten journey as well. So we'll be at the early childhood conference. We have several sessions for diverse learners and students with disabilities. Particularly excited about our session is called Make Magic Happen. Because I think about those early childcare classrooms that are inclusive and it's just magical when you walk in. And so that was, you know, and we have almost 600, we're doing it three or four times and we have upwards of 200 individuals registered for each session. So I am very excited about the number of childcare providers that we are about to reach this weekend. I think it's only a drop in the bucket. But I think it's a really good jumping off point. And my experience is often times that message and that excitement starts to permeate in other places. So we're really excited about that. So very, very busy summer.

We did release several new April Dunn Act resources at Teacher Leader Summit that we are going to be making a pivot and a shift this year to support

those even more with our school systems. So we usually use Teacher Leader each May as kind of a jumping off point. We release new resources there and then we continue that support. So we created a parent resource there and we also created a resource aligned to April Dunn Act and sort of an implementation tool for school systems to say-- I'm really big on self-assessments. Am I implementing this act to the fullest extent, giving the students the access that they need to this opportunity. So we started that. We'll do lots of sessions around that this year. We are doing a lot of capacity building sessions as well and working with our Families Helping Families centers on these resources because we also know that they're out there in our communities helping parents navigate these opportunities. And so helping them, you know, we've also got to include them in that process and in all of these tools to make sure they understand them as well. They're such a huge part of us helping families.

We are going to be releasing from, really as an initiative from our department, some foundational-- so you all know last year legislation created a requirement for reading training for K through three educators. Any K through three educator, principal had to go through specific professional development on how to support reading and how to teach reading. You all know what we hear, and especially with a lot of students who struggle to read, are students with disabilities. And so we hear a lot that well, my middle school interventionists, my middle school special education teachers, they need that training too. And so we are going to use some of our SPUG grant funds to fund free access to foundational literacy reading modules for grades four through eight. From my division we are really targeting special educators in those grades as well as reading interventionists, literary specialists, anyone providing those reading interventions to students with disabilities in those grades. We want to make sure they are in this training. And really understanding how to support reading struggles. So we have that going on. We'll be releasing those. We already have over 500 educators just this summer that are interested and have said yes.

We know that once school starts back and teachers kind of get back in and are back in those communication modes hearing about these opportunities, we're hoping to get thousands of educators signed up to access these free modules.

Lastly, I did want to really thank everyone here, really all of our stakeholders who gave us input on IDEA grant application for our set aside dollars. That application has been approved by OSED. I have here our final statewide set aside. Now this is the money that we as a state department use to fund initiatives and to fund things coming. We also use it for some competitive grant, some competitive opportunities through our grant process where we also give some of this money out to school systems as well. But we received over 24 million-dollars. I have that amount there in the report. You can see that application. You can see the project descriptions and how, what are those activities and initiatives that we plan to use that money from that we connected with a lot of stakeholders with our SEAP. We brought all that information to you as well to get to a place where we said we now have an approved application. So we're really excited, but I did want to just kind of give you all that final amount and those final project descriptors as well. It is an increase from last year. So we're seeing the feds kind of really say okay, we want to move towards additional funding for students with disabilities. So that was exciting.

And that concludes-- oh, let me talk really briefly about legislative updates. I know we talked a lot about the SPED camera one, so I won't go into that. We are going to be, we started reaching out, Senate Resolution 31 requires the department to start a related services commission. So we will have, we're reaching out to the individuals listed in legislation to get those appointed members in place for August 15th. And we will set an organizational START meeting shortly after that. So we're excited to be partnering and getting that work underway and looking at related service provision in our schools. How can we better that. What policy can we put forward to improve those services. So we're working on that.

We're also working Senate Bill 98. We are working with the Commission for the Deaf and working through part of that legislation was around supporting educational interpreters which is a need across our state. Especially in some rural parish where they may have one or two and how do we develop them, who's supporting them. So we're working with the Commission for the Deaf, following up with that bill to get a plan in place for supporting our educational interpreters, certifying them, recruiting, retaining, professionally developing those individuals that are so very much needed. And also working with our VI Coalition, possible updates that align to the Blind Persons Literacy Rights and Education Act and some of those assessment requirements for vision impairments. So those are kind of some of the responses that will come out of a very successful legislative session this year. And that concludes my report.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you, Ms. Jordan. Do we have any comments or questions from any council, committee members or council members regarding Ms. Jordan's report?

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Christi Gonzales has her hand raised.

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

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes. Hello. I wanted to ask, once the school system applies for the money for the cameras and everything, is there going to be an allotted time once the parent asks for the camera that they're going to be installed? Because I know some school systems will prolong the process. Not saying all of them will. But, you know, we do have some that that has to be installed in a timely allocated fashion.

MEREDITH JORDAN: I understand completely. So that process, Christi, would depend on that local policy and that chain of approval. That could look different for different school systems based on their policy.

CHRISTI GONZALES: So if the policy has no dates or anything when it's turned in, will it be, you know, looked at and discussed and maybe send back to revise or will they just submit it and that's it?

MEREDITH JORDAN: So right now the legislation says they submit them to us. So we would not review their

policy. So that would fall on their local governing board. So when local school systems create policy their local school board essentially, and their superintendent, and their school board president are the ones who will adopt that local policy.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Okay. So it will be up to the school board?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Correct.

REKEESHA BRANCH: Dr. McKee, Charles has a question.

HYACINTH MCKEE: That's not a council member. Any other council members? And then I have a question myself and then I'll refer to the public.

EBONY HAVEN: Vice Chair Banks has her hand raised.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Vice Chair Banks, you're being recognized.

NICOLE BANKS: As far as 8 million, you said they had 60 days, correct, to like put in policies and to adapt it and to make a solid plan, right? So since we got the funds this month, right, they don't have a lot of time. They have until like September, right?

EBONY HAVEN: August 29th. I counted the days.

NICOLE BANKS: Okay. That was my question. Okay. August 29th.

EBONY HAVEN: Now they still have till January 15th to turn in their policies to Louisiana Department of Education. But they have to have created them by the 29th. I don't know why they would prolong sending them.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: But all of their minutes have to be public, made public. So if they haven't done it by the 29th, the public can go and look and see if they've done it or not. So that should all be for public, even though it's not to the Department of Education.

CHRISTI GONZALES: It should be on their website.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: It should be whenever they publicly post the minutes to their meetings.

NICOLE BANKS: Okay.

EBONY HAVEN: Dr. Wilson has his hand raised, Dr. McKee.

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

PHIL WILSON: Thank you. I just wanted

clarification. So does the law require-- I heard two different things. One is if you have a child, I think the exact word you used was the child moves into the school district that didn't previously have a kid or a child with a significant or severe disability or significant support needs. And then another thought I thought I heard was is really based on self-contained classroom. So the question then is, you know, I guess that's my question. I can formulate my own thought after that. Does somebody know the answer if it's based on individual child or self-contained classrooms?

EBONY HAVEN: Yes. So they have to spend less than 40 percent, and Meredith, please correct me if I'm wrong. They have to spend less than 40 percent of their time in a regular education classroom.

MEREDITH JORDAN: I think the law says. So that's what placement looks like in the IEP. That's how I'm estimating those numbers is a student spending less than 40 percent in a regular ed classroom. I think the legislation reads you spend 50 percent or more of your day in a self-contained setting then a parent could request that a camera be placed in there. Now it's per child request. But the law also says once, you know, if a school system puts a camera in there, they have to alert every adult, other students' parents. Like they have to make sure that everyone else in that classroom and parents and families know that they're placing that camera in there.

PHIL WILSON: Just that they're aware of it. Not like they can say no, I don't want that.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Right.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: You have a self-contained class, and you can have ten kids that go through that classroom all day long.

PHIL WILSON: Right.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: And if one of those children who stay in there for 50 percent or more, one of their parents request it, then it's in there for anybody whenever they go in there.

PHIL WILSON: And only in that self-contained classroom is what I'm hearing. So that does cut the number of cameras down significantly. If we think about kids with the most severe disabilities probably

less than 2 percent of the overall population. In terms of if you have 4,000 students you would really not have like a large number of classrooms in a district, theoretically.

{committee speaking simultaneously}

PHIL WILSON: You would have a lot of kids in self-contained classrooms. I just was trying to get a handle on how far 8 million does stretch. And cameras are not expensive nowadays either. Feels like, I know Ms. Corley, I'm not arguing your point, Ms. Corley, but I think it may stretch a lot further than what we might think. But anyhow. But I'm glad there's a process to reappropriate money when that money runs out. I don't feel like it's not a good starting point anyhow. That's all. I'm done.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you, Dr. Wilson. I do have a quick question for Meredith. I think it pertains to the school district sending their policies for review in January 2023. Will the Department of Education be providing guidance for guidelines surrounding what the content of those policies should entail and how? I think it speaks a lot to Ms. Gonzales' concern when we start talking about using the language for compliance. Because you can pretty much draft anything and just send it up. The question is are there any guidelines or standards surrounding the content that needs to go into these policies that need to be submitted to LDOE for review. And then the second part of that question is that process involving whether or not it will be approved, and then will it be sent back for corrective action, and then will the districts have an opportunity to send it again for review and approval?

MEREDITH JORDAN: So really good questions. I'm really glad we're clarifying. So just to clarify, the department will not review, send feedback. I did last, beginning of last year in response to the initial act that was passed discussed, you know, can we provide guidance. Based on legislation our legal team said no, we have no authority. The legislation gives all the authority to the local school system. So we are literally-- and I'm going to try to collect, we're going to collect these way in advance of January. I want them as soon as possible when we send that money

out. And we know that a lot of them, I do believe, have gone to their boards and have adopted. They're waiting on the funding. So we're not going to, you know, we wouldn't send them back. We're going to collect them and basically track. And if you have it, send it to me. Then I'm reaching out saying hey, where's your policy. You're running up on this deadline. So that was a really, really good clarifying question just to be clear. The department's not going to review or-- now there is in legislation, Dr. McKee, there are specific points that it tells school systems must be addressed in their policy. It tells them, you know, that the equipment has to record video and audio. It tells them their policy has to address storing that information for 30 days, I believe. So there are some specifics from the legislation that school systems, and what we've told them back last August was start working with your local legal counsel to make sure your policy aligns to the legislation. So that has been our guidance as far as, you know, drafting and then writing those policies that are in alignment with the law. And it does have some specifics, Dr. McKee, to what you must have in your policy.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. Thank you. That's what I was hoping to hear. So that it does sound like LDOE is giving some guidance, but it's not mandated that you do. That's what I'm hearing.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Correct. We were not able to like provide a template even, you know. Because it really will, like that legislation gives those local authorities, you know, all of the authority on, you know, what does that approval process look like. You know, to Christi's point about the timelines. You know, those types of things will be determined by the local, that local policy and local board.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Of course, that raises concern of how can, you know, how can this be enforced. That is a dialogue and I think that there's some concerns from council members. But thank you for letting us know what your issues are and, you know, how far you can reach. But I think that really is a concern, compliance, enforcement and making sure it's done. So thank you so much. I believe that, do we have any other comments

from council members before I defer to the public? Okay. If there's no other comments from committee members and council members, I believe we had some questions from public members.

REKEESHA BRANCH: Yes. We have Charles. He have a question. He has his hand raised.

HYACINTH MCKEE: You're being recognized.

CHARLES MICHEL: Thank you. Just a few comments, if I could. Meredith, one of the things that you said was that y'all hadn't worked out yet how y'all were going to give the money out if a school district did not have any kids or self-contained classrooms at the time. Personally, from experience, I think giving them money when they don't have a use for it is a bad idea because then they have to keep track of that money. And what will end up happening, especially if it's the following year, they won't keep track of that money. And then what's going to happen is the following year IDEA funds are going to be used, which is not inappropriate, but it's going to be a duplication of effort. So I think let them come to you to get that money. That's my own opinion.

The other thing is I don't know who the lady was that was talking about the timelines and all that stuff. This is going to be one of those things that's going to be like everything was when IDEA was first came into our realm. When 94142 was first passed. If there's a problem, it's going to have to be worked out through the grievance process so that parents can find out what it is they can expect and how they can expect it in the future. Immediately it's not going to be real helpful, but you can go through that grievance process for each school district and one of the first things that I would do is go to the board members. Because if you express concern that the school district is dragging its feet on doing something that is legislatively required, then you go to the board member, they will put pressure on the superintendent, the superintendent will put pressure on those that are there in that particular issue and that will take care of it because they will want it to go away. So just keep that in mind. It's not going to be real easy in the beginning, but we've all blazed paths in the past

that have benefited people now. So this is going to be the path that you'll blaze to help people in the future.

And one other thing, I will be interested to see, Meredith, as we're doing this if there's a sudden decrease in the number of students who are self-contained. There are way too many students self-contained right now. And so if a school district truly wants to get out of getting a camera, that's the easiest way. Look at the needs of the students and make the IEP match their needs. Just interesting to find out if that's going to happen.

And the very last one, I promise, is most school districts, and by most I don't know the percentage, but it's probably in excess of 70 percent, use the same company to create their policies. So if one school district has a problem with a policy, it will probably be recurring in many of them. The only way that it would be different-- and Forthright I think is the name of the company. I can't quite remember. But the only way it would be different is if a school district looked at it and says no, we don't want to do it this way and they might make a little change here and there. But if you read board policies most of them are identical. So that's going to be something to be on the lookout for. If there's a problem in one, there will be problem in multiples. Okay. And I thank y'all for giving me the time.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Anyone else in the public that wants to comment about this area?

REKEESHA BRANCH: Ms. Corhonda has her hand raised.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Ms. Corley, you're being recognized.

CORHONDA CORLEY: Thank you so much, madam chair and madam vice chair for being in attendance. And thank you, Dr. Michel, for your comments because they were right on point. The only thing I would say is right now a lot of the parents of children with disabilities we're having problems in the school system arena because there is no formal complaint process in a lot of these school systems throughout the state. And I'm sure everyone is aware that our state superintendent always like to say that LDOE does not

have the power to mandate and enforce. Which is extremely problematic as it relates to our parents of children with disabilities. So like Dr. Michel stated, yes, a lot of the school systems do use the same company to create their policies. Just like the state Department of Education and 90 percent of the school systems in our state use Hammonds, Sills, Adkins, Guice, Jonas & Perkins to be their attorney to actually go against our parents. So when we look at these processes, I think one and foremost, and I think Dr. Michel will agree with me on this, we have a lot of children with disabilities that are wrongly placed in self-contained classes. Their parents get advocates like myself and any attorneys that are available to actually attend those meetings to try to get them placed into regular ed class or allow them the opportunity to mainstream and they are met with great opposition. The cameras in the classroom is going to be a way to get them back into a regular ed class. But will those children be provided accommodations and modifications as needed. That is going to be the next problem that we're going to run into.

Secondly, one of the points that Dr. Michel brought up is the ability for parents to actually speak with school board members. A lot of school board members are actually resigning on Facebook, Instagram and any other outlet, media outlet right now just because of the problems that they are facing. They are using their ability to have immunity to the extreme. And it is hurting our children with disabilities. Being a parent of a child with disabilities and advocating for parents of children with disabilities I am seeing a lot of school systems that do not have accommodations, modifications. That do not provide safe settings for our children, including as it relates to Covid 19. So you have to think about that they do still fall up under that immunity law that was passed at the beginning of Covid, and they are using that.

Last, but definitely not least, I did not hear Ms. Meredith Jordan speak about the changes that SEAP is recommending for Bulletin 1530. I know that Dr. Michel, amongst other individuals in our disability community, has spoken up in opposition to the changes

where these bullets, where the changes there recommended would actually be discriminatory against children depending on what their exceptionality is. And I would greatly appreciate if Ms. Meredith Jordan could actually give us a report on that and actually let the public and the rest of the DD Council know how they can actually submit the changes of the problems that they see with those recommended changes so we can actually act accordingly. Thank you so much.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Ms. Jordan, I would allow a response to that comment. And I would allow it to be under other LDOE updates because SEAP falls under that category. Are you prepared to respond to Ms. Corley's question?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yes. Sure. And I believe she's referring to our upcoming 1530 updates that will go to August BESE. These updates, as some of you may know, we have an alternate assessment, one of our first alternate assessments that will be given this upcoming winter in the K2 space. It will be for our English learners who also have significant disabilities. And so you all know for federal requirements states that anytime a state gives statewide assessment they have to provide that opportunity for a student with a significant disability to take an alternate version of that assessment. So we've never had statewide assessments in our K2 spaces, so we didn't have a need for alternate assessment criteria for K2. So when that assessment came about, we started in January kind of getting ahead of that. And we formed a workgroup with various expertise on there. Pupil appraisal expertise, school psychologists. All those individuals in a school system who have that knowledge about assessment, about data, evaluating students and understanding those cognitive abilities. So we created that workgroup back in January. Started keeping SEAP and bringing them regular updates on that work. And that workgroup started thinking about this about how we would operationalize that for IEP teams. How would we want IEP teams in our K2, which are very delicate, very developmental grades, right. And so we've just been talking about making sure we're making the right decisions for students and making sure placement

decisions are correct in that K2 space. It is very important.

And so the workgroup had some very key things that they kept in the forefront when they were developing that process which is ending in a policy. But started with a process of how we would help K2 educators make those decisions. And so one of those were that all of these students, even if they should participate in screeners. Like we want all of the data, we want the screening data. So we wouldn't exempt any students from participating in any sort of screeners. We also wanted to keep in mind that we don't want to go out and suggest that we start giving IQ tests to students in K2. We know that a lot of times in grades three through eleven that's how we're making, one of those requirements is that you score a certain number of standard deviations below the mean that will qualify you. So with K2 we had to approach this a little bit differently and really look at a child as a whole to make these decisions. Not going out and giving IQ tests, which are not going to be extremely reliable for students that young. So we started with that workgroup. So we started drafting a tool, a decision-making tool that Ms. Corley is referring to. That's how we started the process. How do we operationalize this. How would we help IEP teams make the best decisions for these kids in K2. Because we know once we put them on an alternate assessment what that means. Okay. And so that tool, what I'll do, Ms. Corley, and everyone here is I'll send an email and share the tool. I'll even share our draft policy language. If you have anything that you want me to consider, I would ask that you please do it quickly because we're bringing this to August BESE. And so we have that draft tool. We have piloted, we've pooled students, we've looked at IEPs and we looked at evals and thought through how IEP teams use this. We brought it to Teacher Leader and shared it with quite a few teachers. Those folks who serve on IEP teams, how do we make these decisions, got some feedback. So we've had over six months of looking at the tool, making decisions.

Now, this is going to impact about 100 students in this first year, our English learners with significant

disabilities. We don't have a K2 literacy assessment. We know that could come depending on BESE decisions about literacy assessments. And we know there's legislation that says that we should be providing statewide assessments in literacy. So it will prepare us for that. But we will have time to, you know, we can make revisions, we can take-- this is new territory for us, right. Like K2 assessments will be new territory. And so now we are at that place where we're ready to take-- and in our policy language we refer IEP teams to the tool that the workgroup and that we've had so much feedback on and no objection at BESE-- not at BESE. At SEAP. And with that group we point school systems to that tool specifically to use. And that, I think, puts us in a space where we can update that tool as needed. But so the policy language will refer them to that tool. And will kind of say this is for students with the most significant disabilities and refer school systems to that tool to use. So I think, Ms. Corley, that is the bulletin update that you're talking about that we're bringing to BESE. So I don't know if that clarified for everyone. But I'm also happy to share that tool as well as that draft policy language that we're going to be bringing to update. I'll do that now if I can. Should I send that to you, Ebony, to share with members?

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. So we're at the stage now, I don't believe we have any other public comments, but I'm hearing that Ms. Jordan will share that tool, the information about that tool. Post these as drafted, attach that tool to Ms. Ebony Haven for us to review. I'm sure that's going to be in the minutes. I do have a question, just a quick question about the tool. Did you say LDOE created the tool or who created the tool?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Our workgroup. So we had eight work group members and then I had, I attended all those workgroup meetings as well as I had someone from assessment attend in case there were questions there. But our workgroup really, like I said, you know, those pupil appraisal specialists, and diagnosticians, school psychologists, those individuals were very instrumental in creating that tool. And looking at what other states did in that K2 assessment space for alternate

criteria.

HYACINTH MCKEE: That was going to be my next question about it came from, you know, a review of other states and what they're doing. And also looking at that tool to make sure we are understanding culture and diversity and all of that when we develop tools as well. Because we know that we have to be mindful that sometimes these tools we develop can lead to also other biases and concerns and all that as it relates to culture. So yes, please send that information over to Ms. Haven so that we can have an opportunity to take a look at that.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Sure.

HYACINTH MCKEE: And then if you can provide a report at our next DD Council meeting. I hate that this is such short turnaround because we have August BESE coming up. But we're going to also ask for a report on that as well for our next council meeting.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Sure.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you so much. All right, folks. Looks like we're right on time. If there is no more comments for Department of Education, I am going to move right onto Ms. Melissa Bayham's report from LRS.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Thank you, Dr. McKee. So at LRS we have lots of things going on. So I wanted to give y'all some updates and then obviously take any questions. Right now we are working on, we have a new grant called the Disability Innovation Fund Grant. The project is called Project STEM Up. And I think I discussed this at a couple of meetings. It's a collaboration between us, Southern University of Baton Rouge, Michigan State University and Michigan Rehabilitation Services. So at this point we've had focus groups with staff and also on June 28th we had our first community based advisory group. So they're just getting started with their work. But just to kind of give a quick brief update. That particular grant, the purpose is to improve outcomes in STEM occupations for individuals in marginalized populations. So we're just beginning there. We're developing a recruitment plan to determine how to recruit the correct consumers for this grant. And then also just to kind of be

clear, the goal is to train all of our counselors on how to use social cognitive career theory to be able to assist these individuals with disabilities going into these occupations in a better way.

Also, one major priority that we have at LRS right now is rate setting. At this point we are in the process, we're working with RSA, which is the Rehabilitation Service Administration, which is our federal partner, on getting our rate setting procedures updated and approved by the federal government. And once we're able to do that, which we've gone through a couple of different drafts with them, then we'll be able to do some additional rate setting as our rates, a lot of our rates haven't been updated in quite some time. Actually, today I reached out to a consulting group about possibly assisting us with updating our rates.

For customized employment, we are still in the process of working with LSU HSC and also the University of South Florida. They are training us on, or training staff at LSU on customized employment training. And in the fall, we will begin recruiting or we'll be recruiting vendors for the fall and learning partners to begin the next phase of that training.

And last, but not least, I'm excited to report that we will, LRS will be in conjunction with Healthy Blue. Healthy Blue will be sponsoring a virtual disability job fair on October the 12th. So we're really excited about that. And I will have more details about that forthcoming. But it will be on October the 12th. That concludes my report, Dr. McKee. But be happy to take any questions.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you, Ms. Bayham. Are there any questions from committee members or council members for Ms. Bayham's report?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I have a question. This is Bambi.

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

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: So Melissa, whenever you say rate setting procedures, can you explain that? You change the rates, like you increase rates. This sounds like it's more than just an increase of rates or adjustments of rates.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Right. And I'm glad you're asking this because I know sometimes people get frustrated, you know, with our rates. But the federal government just doesn't allow us to change rates. We have to have rate setting procedures that have to be approved by RSA. Which we do have rate setting procedures, but we were monitored in 2018 and as part of that monitoring one of the things that resulted from that is they wanted us to update those. So we have gone through a couple of iterations with them. And I'm trying to give you an example. I mean, obviously we have to look at rates from other states. We have to have a methodical way of how we determine what our rates are. So we want to get those, make sure we get those approved by RSA before we move forward. But we are definitely, that's definitely on our radar. I think I had discussed with you recently I don't, I only have one fiscal person which is why I'm trying to identify a consultant group or some type of group to assist with rate setting. Because, I mean, we have all kinds of rates. I mean, we have a medical fee schedule because we send people for medical assessments. We have community rehab programs. We have supported employment, customized employment, job development and placement. We have a lot of services. So there's a lot of work to be done and it's important work. We just have to make sure it's done correctly.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: And so when you say that there's-- okay, so you go through this methodology. So does that mean if something triggers and something changes then you have this methodology that then, say a year or two years, you can adjust your rates because some things have changed, and you have this method of making changes?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Correct. I believe so. I believe I understand what you're saying. I mean, we can look at our rates at any point. But like I said, we're kind of in the middle of getting it revised from RSA. It's just, it's staffing. And then it's also getting the information. Sometimes some of our rates, for example, I was just looking at some information on our dental restoration. We basically use the (inaudible) rates. But obviously, in services like supported employment,

that gets a lot more complicated. Because it's on a milestone system. And when you start looking at other states, they do it 50 different types of ways. So it's looking at the information and then (inaudible) it. And then, obviously, one thing that we try to do is we look at similar states. Like, you know, if I look at Texas they get like, I can't remember off the top of my head, but maybe 200 something million dollars a year. We get 29 million-dollars a year. So we have to make sure that we're comparing ourselves and looking at states that have the same funding as we do.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: And then to go to your rates, I know like Medicaid you can go and find their fee schedule. Is that available for LRS services?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Yes, we do.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I mean, your fee schedule for voc rehab services?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Right. So any service-- I call them the regulars. For assessments it's called the medical fee schedule. That's why I called it that. But that is not going to be something that you encounter on a regular basis. That's like for psychological evaluations. Typically services, typically assessments that we need to determine eligibility. But all of our services are available on the website. If you go to laworks.net and go to Louisiana Rehabilitation Services' tab there's an LRS policy, there's LRS procedures. And you can go through every procedure and our rates are in each section.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Okay. And then lastly, while I'm still being recognized, one thing that I've noticed, and this ties into our post-secondary programs, is that I've had just in the past week a couple of parents of students who are in those programs reach out to me saying, hey, does this legislation, will it help pay for tuition. The new legislation that just passed. Which it doesn't. But the families, it seems many of them do not know about vocational rehabilitation services. So what I want to recommend is that perhaps we get with Dr. Beckers and maybe get something together where, a meeting like with the directors of those programs so that they can provide good information to the families to know how to access those

services. So like you or someone at the state level to give that type of information. Cause I think these students can't access like TOPS. So these families are having to pay full tuition and sometimes-- and that's a lot. And these students qualify, and the programs are really, have a good employment outcome so.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Yeah. I'm hoping, and I don't know if y'all are aware of this, but we cannot advertise with federal funds. They say we're the best kept secret and we don't mean to be. But we can't advertise. But one thing that I'm kind of excited about the disability job fair is because we receive a sponsorship it's not government funds. So we may be able to advertise that. So then that will help get the word out about what LRS is that way.

PHIL WILSON: Can the DD network, if we have, I don't know that we post things on our website or send it through our social media, et cetera, et cetera. We have, you know, a good reach. I'm sure DD Council has a great reach. And (inaudible) probably has a reach too. If you can funnel that stuff to us, we can for free get it out.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Okay. And like the Louisiana Workforce Commission has social media and they will post things for us, but usually when people see Louisiana Workforce Commission...

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: We have targeted audiences, those different organizations. So even just like a little blurb put in our newsletter letting people know.

CHRISTI GONZALES: When is the job fair?

MELISSA BAYHAM: It's October the 12th.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Where?

MELISSA BAYHAM: It's virtual.

CHRISTI GONZALES: It's virtual?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Yes. And we'll have more information. I know they're working on it.

EBONY HAVEN: We can share too. If you guys create a flier, we can put it on our social media pages.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Thank you. We can definitely do that.

SPEAKER: Just send it to all of us.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Do we have any more questions from any council members or committee members for Ms.

Bayham's report?

EBONY HAVEN: Dr. McKee, Vice Chair Banks has her hand raised.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Yes. You're recognized, Ms. Banks.

NICOLE BANKS: Thank you, Dr. McKee. You were saying that, do y'all still have those vacancies that you were saying that you had the previous time?

MELISSA BAYHAM: I have 40 vacancies. And 20 something of those are counselor positions. And that's another thing that creates anxiety. Like I want people to know about us. I want people to come. But I have to have the counselors. I am happy to report that my worst region as far as staffing was the Shreveport region. And we have hired, we actually went to-- getting my weeks mixed up. Last week I went and actually did training myself there because we have five new counselors there and at one point, I only had four. Which so now I think I have nine or ten. But then one left. It's just a never ending.

NICOLE BANKS: Cycle.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Yes. So one thing that's a priority of mine is to continue to figure out civil service and how I can somehow increase the pay for my counselors.

NICOLE BANKS: I thought we just did a whole like a pay increase for the counselors. Like didn't that happen like a couple years ago?

MELISSA BAYHAM: So we use civil service. We're civil service employees. So the pay ranges and the pay rules are established by civil service. We can do what we call a 6.5G which basically is where we can hire people at a higher rate with extraordinary qualifications. But when you have a staff of 160 you also have to be careful with pay compression. So you can't start your new counselors higher than the counselors you already have. So there's a big issue that needs to be resolved. You know, some of my staff have mentioned that DCFS did a 10 percent increase. I'm trying to figure out how they did that. And then also something that I'm noticing in some of the civil service, the agenda is premium pay. So I'm going to look into premium pay. I'm looking at anything I

possibly can because most of the people who-- sometimes we get to the point where we have a job offer and then they will decline because of the salary.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: So this is Bambi. Can I be recognized?

HYACINTH MCKEE: Yes. Go ahead, Ms. Polotzola

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: This continues to be an issue and I don't know if it's something the council can address. But Melissa's been saying this for a year, two years. Is this something that the council can address in regards to making a connection, writing a letter to civil service and saying that due to these policies that it's causing an issue in getting these necessary service providers for our people with disabilities. And I'll just add on to that. That it's not just LRS, it's also our disability determination unit which determines people for social security disability which is in DCFS. We send many of our cases to Arkansas. Those positions are 115 percent funded by the federal government. And we are sending the cases to Arkansas when our people could be paid because of the civil service rules and not being able to attract people because of the pay scale that they're in. And so it's ridiculous that we're not taking care of our people here with our state workforce. So I just am bringing that up to say is this something that, even if the council could write a letter and express the concerns about how these policies are impacting people with disabilities.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Can I say something? Even if it was-- I'm sorry.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Who is saying that? Is that Ms. Gonzales?

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes. I'm sorry.

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

CHRISTI GONZALES: Is there any way to go through civil service and maybe change the qualifications to where it's not a civil service or it has to be that?

MELISSA BAYHAM: We have to be civil service employees. We're state government employees. And to Bambi's point, this is not an exclusively LRS issue. I can tell you that. I met with civil service before and I think they recognize it, but the people who I'm

talking to it's below their paygrade. I think this is something that's going to have to be done legislatively. Meaning like for the rehab counselor entry position, the starting pay is 14.25. So I can pay people above that if they have extraordinary qualifications, but if they come up with a bachelor's degree, which is perfectly fine, but that's the minimum qualification. I can't justify extraordinary qualifications. So you start at 14.25 and we all know you can get a job at Costco making more than that.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Paras make that.

MELISSA BAYHAM: But when we talk to civil service, they basically say well, for the qualifications that is what their pay scale is. So I think it's a civil service, it's a large civil service.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: But I feel that often times the way we change things, even for people outside of disabilities is that we have, we do have power within the disability community to make that argument about people with disabilities want to go to work. So you make that argument, and it may have some type of impact even beyond the scope of people with disabilities. But actually, state employees should be providing services more so, even outside of the two issues I talked about. It will benefit all people. I think that's just something the DD Council could just like raise the issue that it's not just Melissa going over there saying please let me pay my staff more. That our whole community sees that it's impacting. So that's my recommendation.

HYACINTH MCKEE: So is that something that we want to put into words as a motion? I would want to tag on that, if we do decide to put it in a motion, that we make it very specific on what we would like to happen. I believe that we should also make sure that whatever we decide that it is smart and that we have the data to support what we're trying to do. Because again, it is more than just LRS. And that we also consider our action plan and finding out what activity that we would tie it to so that we make sure the decisions that we're making are grounded in what we are intending to do in terms of our action. So if you all want to make that as a motion, I will entertain that at this time. We

just got to make sure that that wording is specific and tied to our action.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Dr. McKee, before a motion is made, I see that Dr. Michel and maybe others have comments. Maybe they would have input that would impact the type of motion or the language of the motion. Can we hear from them?

HYACINTH MCKEE: Yeah. I'll entertain and hear from them. But at the same time I'm hoping that the committee will, you know, start crafting a motion if that is the direction they want to go. So I'm not sure who's on first or who had their hand raised.

REKEESHA BRANCH: It was Kelly Monroe. She had her hand raised first.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Ms. Monroe, you're being recognized. Maybe that was an accident possibly. Sometimes I touch buttons too. Ms. Monroe, if you're not wanting to be recognized at this time, I will go to the next person whose hand is raised.

KELLY MONROE: Can you hear me?

EBONY HAVEN: Yeah. We can hear you, Kelly.

KELLY MONROE: So sorry. So Melissa, will the SR and the HR that was recently passed last session, won't that address some of the concerns about not only the rate methodology, but also the staffing salaries and issues?

MELISSA BAYHAM: I don't have those in front of me, but I do not think the staffing issues were a part of that. It was all about the rates.

KELLY MONROE: Okay. I'll have to go back and look. Because I want to say that for the HR it was addressed about the salaries of the staff. But either way the consultant that you're reaching out to, was that going to support, is that to help support the SR and the HR that was passed?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Correct.

KELLY MONROE: Okay. Thanks. That's all I had.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Thank you, Ms. Monroe. Who is next, Ms. Haven?

REKEESHA BRANCH: All right. The next person was Mr. Charles Michel.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. Dr. Michel, you're being recognized.

CHARLES MICHEL: Thank you. Real quickly. Melissa, I said this before and I'll say it again, but Louisiana Rehab Services and Texas Rehab Services in our instance, the services y'all provide literally changed my family's life. Y'all have been wonderful with what y'all have done. And because I'm such an advocate it's really exciting for me that in our region the LRS representative has created a relationship with many of the school systems and Bayou Land Families Helping Families, LRS, OCDD we're all there at meetings with parents and students. So while you can't advertise because of the federal dollar limitation, we're able to give that information out word of mouth and that's for students that are going to college. That's for students that are going to trade school. That's for students that are going to the ARC. That's for students who want to work after school. So your services are being brought out, even though you have limited personnel, it is getting out. I know education is just a small portion of what y'all do, but it is so very important. And the staff that you do have in our region are making it very available, as available as they can be to the residents of our community. So given the fact that y'all are shorthanded, y'all need to be applauded for doing what you're doing with that staff. Thank you very much.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Thank you. I really appreciate those comments. And I would actually like to add, actually the school districts and Department of Education is going to be a major way that we get our name out there because we are required to be in all school districts now. But I do appreciate your thoughts and your words.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Anymore comments from the public at this time?

REKEESHA BRANCH: We have one comment in the chat from Susan Reim. FHS centers will post information in newsletters and send out mass emails and et cetera. You just have to send us the info.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Thank you.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Sounds like that concludes the public comments. And absolutely, Ms. Bayham, you know, your counselors are out there doing a lot of the work.

Thank you, Dr. Michel, for giving, we call that kudos. And that's what's happening in your region, and I can say that that's happening in some of the areas of what I know. But there are many regions still in this state, unfortunately, that are not, not due to any issues, concerns with LRS per say, because I do see a lot of that on the ground, boots kind of working with LRS.

I am concerned that every time we do engage in a dialogue, and we talk about transition services we still are not talking about having that bridge from students that are graduating from high school and going off to post-secondary opportunities. Now the DD Council has done a lot of work with stakeholders in terms of passing this LAPIE initiative and has done a lot of work. But we still have yet to hear a full report from the bridge, the liaison between the Department of Education and LRS as it relates to what happens to our students when they get to that transition age. All I'm hearing pretty much from parents is that they'll get a flier or they're saying oh, just call LRS. And I'm not pointing any fingers, it's just that we do come across this every time we meet. And so again, I want to press upon encouraging, developing a liaison, a formalized liaison, a process or something that our scholars, our students could have that would ensure that they do have access these post-secondary opportunities. Particularly when it comes to transition and planning during that IEP process. And again, this is a constant, constant conversation. So I would like to know what the status is on that bridge, that liaison and what's happening between Department of Education and it's alignment with LRS.

MELISSA BAYHAM: I'm taking some notes, Dr. McKee. I certainly can do that. And I will say although things are not, definitely not perfect and where they need to be, they have improved. Actually, at our budget meeting today I found out that actually at this time this year compared to last year our preemployment transition service is up over 200 percent our expenditures. Which means we're heading in the right direction. But we don't have all school districts on board, but we are headed in the direction. I do have

staff dedicated to preemployment transition services. But I will try to work on getting some numbers or some kind of specific information for you for the next report.

HYACINTH MCKEE: So Ms. Bayham, it's really not on the end of LRS. And I want to be very candid and have a candid conversation and echo what Dr. Michel is saying. I have seen a lot of work on LRS's end as far as improving with the preempt services. I do see that. I see that. I have parents telling me. It's more on the end of Department of Education and what their plans are to make that connection and that liaison. I have seen the work of LRS. And I'm very concerned that I'm still getting emails and concerns from parents about what happens to their child when that child gets to that transition age and why there isn't like this clear liaison and linking to LRS. I do see LRS reaching down, I'm not using down as a metaphor way, but I see LRS reaching down. What I don't see is education systems, school systems reaching up to make that connection to LRS in a way in which our parents are informed. And so I'm asking, again, at another meeting to develop a way, to devise a way that there is a liaison. There's a bridge for our kids when they get to that age when they're trying to decide what's best for their future. I'm still not seeing that and I'm asking that both agencies work together and make this happen as a reality. With that being said, I believe we were talking about creating a motion to what Ms. Polotzola was saying about us writing a letter and showing strong support about addressing the issues of salary and wages for our counselors. Because this is another issue that keeps coming up that we're unable to fill those positions for our people. So are we at this time available and ready to put forth a motion?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I can try. So my motion would be that the council write a letter to civil service expressing the concerns in regards to, let's see, starting pay. Is it just starting pay?

MELISSA BAYHAM: I think that would be the easiest thing for them to address.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: That wouldn't create the compression you talked about?

MELISSA BAYHAM: If they increase the starting pay, I think that they would have to let us do some type of--

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Increase the range.

MELISSA BAYHAM: I would hope so.

NICOLE BANKS: Put it in there.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Starting pay and range for the LRS staff.

PHIL WILSON: Just counselors or everybody?

MELISSA BAYHAM: I mean, obviously, my counselor position is my most critical position. And so that's the one that we have the most positions in this issue with.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: And disability determination staff. Because I think that ties into people's eligibility. It could.

PHIL WILSON: DCFS?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: That's DCFS. And I have a contact person that could give you guys, Ebony, with DDS, that could give all the information you need.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Yeah. Thank you so much, Ms. Polotzola, for that. Because I think if we go like we usually do with some strong data points, I think that the letter would have some weight to it. And we're saying LRS, we're saying disability determination, but there may be other civil service positions that we're not aware of right now. So maybe, I can't help you create the motion cause a chair can't do that, but just consider making it in such a way that it would encompass any positions that are interacting with people with disabilities, right. Or engaging with services. So we're not just constrained to those two positions.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I hear what you're saying. I totally agree. I would just say I don't know how you would have data on the other positions. And then, you know, if you make it too broad it might make it more difficult to get a really concrete response.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Like considering other positions that-- I can't help you word the motion.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Is that a rule?

HYACINTH MCKEE: Yes. I can't help you word the motion. I'm sorry. I'll stay out of it. The chair

can't do that. So I'm going to move out of that, and you guys figure out. But that's as far as I can go. I'm sorry.

EBONY HAVEN: You want me to read it back to you?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Asking if you can share it.

EBONY HAVEN: I lost my Wi-Fi connection. I can't get it back, so I got kicked off the Zoom. I apologize. I am asking Hannah to share. She's trying to help me share the motion with you all right now. But, Dr. McKee, we don't have a second to the motion.

HYACINTH MCKEE: They're still trying to craft it, right. So you guys-- is it crafted already?

EBONY HAVEN: Yes. I can read what I have so far. I have a motion that the Developmental Disabilities Council write a letter to civil service expressing concerns regarding the starting pay and range for the Louisiana Rehabilitation Services staff and disability determination staff with the Department of Children and Family Services.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: So expressing concerns, but I think we need to interject and request an increase. I think that needs to be in there as well.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Because it's impacting our providing services to the community.

NICOLE BANKS: Competitive compared to other people in these positions.

CHRISTI GONZALES: A para makes that at the school board level roughly. And that's with nothing.

EBONY HAVEN: Okay. I added that at the end. Okay. So I'll read it one more time. Motion that the Developmental Disabilities Council write a letter to civil service expressing concerns regarding the starting pay and range for the Louisiana Rehabilitation Services staff and disability determination staff with the Department of Children and Family Services and request an increase in the starting pay and range.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: That's fine.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Do we have to say why we're asking for that?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: (Inaudible) letter.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Okay.

HYACINTH MCKEE: So there's a motion on the floor made by Ms. Bambi Polotzola. Is that your motion,

Bambi?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Yes, ma'am.

HYACINTH MCKEE: All right. So there's a motion on the floor. We are entertaining a second at this time.

PHIL WILSON: I'll second.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Sounds like Dr. Wilson. Is that a second from you?

PHIL WILSON: Yes, ma'am.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. Any objections to the motion?

EBONY HAVEN: Vice Chair Banks has a question, Dr. McKee.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. Ms. Banks, you're being recognized.

NICOLE BANKS: Okay. Thank you. I know that we said we're asking for it to be increased, for the pay to be increased, correct? But as we know in sitting on this council, we know that when we're not specific it gets kicked back and then we have to start all over and ask for something else again. So can we at least put in there that it's competitive in regards to other positions, you know? Around, not around the state because, but around the rest of the United States, you know, as far as the counselor position so that we are in the right, you know, raising it in the correct way. Comparing to everybody else.

MELISSA BAYHAM: The only thing, and I haven't looked at the rates of the other states, what they're paying. But I can tell you this has been addressed nationally with vocational rehabilitation. So I don't know how you would craft it to say with the labor market right now. Because if you look at other states, they're having some of the same problems. If that makes sense.

NICOLE BANKS: So just increase. Okay. I just wanted to, you know. Cause I know they try to get very specific.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Because civil service did look at some other states and I know, I think it's Mississippi. I think they're the only state worse than us.

NICOLE BANKS: Okay. I have no objections. I yield the floor.

HYACINTH MCKEE: So we were at a motion made by Ms.

Polotzola. Second by Dr. Wilson. We were at any objections. We had a comment. Any abstentions? Any public comment about the motion on the floor?

REKEESHA BRANCH: Dr. Charles had his hand raised. I'm not sure if you still needed to speak?

HYACINTH MCKEE: Dr. Michel, do you want to speak? You're being recognized.

CHARLES MICHEL: Yeah. Y'all pretty much addressed the issue. I'm always concerned when words like competitive are used because that's one of the national controversies because whether it's cost of living or whatever, it just doesn't have a definition. It's like in special ed. Reasonable, appropriate. This way y'all are working it, it tells specifically what you want to do and let someone else do it. Y'all had addressed that concern, but I just wanted to bring that up. I think it's a good decision not to use that word. Thank you.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. Hearing none, motion carried. Okay. We're going to move right along to our contractual updates for our FY22 action plan. And I believe seminars on hiring individuals with developmental disabilities is up.

EBONY HAVEN: So I'll be giving the update for the seminars. Marilee had to leave. So if you guys have access to the status of planned activities, this is activity 3.2.2. Again, our contract for this particular initiative was O'Neill Communications. And they created a series entitled Discovering Abilities. And the last five webinars of that series took place during this quarter. All of the webinars were advertised on the council's social media. And the ones that took place this quarter were April 12th and 14th. There was a seminar entitled Developing the Inclusive Workplace: Company Culture and Hiring Practices, Training Employees From Top Down. And they did have a DEI expert, Mr. Jermaine Townsend who discussed how to move beyond just checking boxes and how to create a work culture where everyone wins.

Also, on April 26th and 28th there was a series called Building a Good Recruitment Plan: Building Partnerships, Recruiting and Messaging. On May 17th and 19th there was a series called How Can We Say Yes:

Accommodations for Successful Employment, Assistive Technology, LRS and on the Job Training. And then on June 7th and 9th the series was called Making it Stick: Benefits and Retention Plan, Tax Incentives, Benefits Planning, ABLE accounts and financial benefits. And then on June 21st the last one was conducted and the title of that one was Where Do We Go From Here. And it was just the reflection of all the webinar series and then action steps for the future resources. And then a networking event occurred at that webinar series. So they are done with the webinar series. It was very successful. They had great turnout at the webinars and O'Neill did a great job. Are there any questions?

HYACINTH MCKEE: Are there any questions from the committee or council members regarding this report? I do want to say, Ms. Haven, I got an opportunity to attend the last seminar and it was really good. Like it was, you know, I missed some of the beginning, you know, some of the earlier seminars because I was on medical leave, but I will say that I was impressed on the work that was done. So again, you know, thanks for your report. Does anyone else have any other comments or questions about the report? All right. I believe that Ms. Deaville did give the report on LAPIE. And so we are going to go ahead and move right onto customized employment training for Ms. Kelly Monroe if she's still on the call.

KELLY MONROE: Hey. I'm available.

EBONY HAVEN: Were you going to give the report, Kelly, or did you want me to give it, or are you available to give it?

HYACINTH MCKEE: Are you available, Ms. Monroe, to give the report?

KELLY MONROE: Hey. Ebony was supposed to give the report and I'll be available for questions. I'm driving and I don't have it with me.

HYACINTH MCKEE: No. She can go ahead and give it. Go ahead.

KELLY MONROE: Okay. But I am available for any questions you may have.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. Great.

EBONY HAVEN: Okay. So as was stated at the last council meeting, they were having issues getting

learning partners for those, for the people that were in the program to complete. So the council decided to just do the gateway training on discovery. So right now there are six half day gateway trainings on discovery, and they are all scheduled this month in July. July 19th through the 22nd. And then the 25th and 26th. And those will be held via Zoom. Registration went out and they have 35 people registered so far. They were only supposed to accept the first 25 so they've now closed registration. They had a great turnout. So they closed it. And after this training they will reach out to those who attended and completed the training to attend the next gateway training to maximum the number of people that are certified. And I'll just say it's a certificate of achievement in employment services. That's the certification that they'll receive. So that's the update for now. If anybody has any questions, I know Kelly's on to answer any questions.

KELLY MONROE: Yeah. I would like to just add also that the April certification, not only will those people be able to get it, but there was some who took the discovery class last year who we've already reached out to, to see if they're interested in taking the job development one so they can also get the ACRE certification. So probably more than the 35. And the only thing we're really waiting on is I've talked with Melissa to see if I know that the ACRE certification for other groups have been, because they were university-based ACRE certification, that those counted as the 40 hour. And so she's checking to see if we can also count this as the 40 hour so we can have all of those people certified and able to account for the 40-hour certification for supported employment as well.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. Are there any other questions from the council members or committee members on Ms. Monroe or Ms. Haven's report on customized employment training? Okay. Any public comment on the report?

REKEESHA BRANCH: No, ma'am.

HYACINTH MCKEE: Okay. Well, it seems as though if we don't have any other comments, we will end the reports at this time. So now we're moving onto any

announcements and adjournment. Do we have any announcements from any council members, committee members at this time? Or any staff, any announcements from staff at this time?

EBONY HAVEN: The only announcement I have is the council meeting on tomorrow at 8:30.

HYACINTH MCKEE: All right. Yeah, that's the only announcement I do have as well, Ms. Haven. All right. Well, everyone, listen, I cannot believe that we actually are ending ten minutes early. We will brag to other committees how we were able to get everything done and get everything finished. So again, you guys, thank you so much for today's meeting. I am going to call for adjournment and what I understand if no one objects, then the meeting goes to straight adjournment. And I will be seeing everyone tomorrow at 8:30. You guys enjoy the rest of your day. Bye, bye.