



## Action Alert #7 Two Big Issues Being Heard April 18<sup>th</sup>: FY24 Budget & Remote Participation in Public Meetings

April 13, 2023

Two important issues on the Council and LaCAN's Legislative Agenda will be discussed next **Tuesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>**. It's time to put on your yellow and head to the Capitol!



### Issue One: Public Testimony Being Heard on the State's Fiscal Year 2024 Budget (Begins July 1)

House Appropriations is scheduled to hear public testimony on [HB1](#) ([Agenda](#)). Unfortunately, HB1 does not include the following:

#### [Recurring Funding for Families Helping Families Centers:](#)

During the last two legislative sessions, an additional \$500,000 in state general fund (SGF) was added to the Council's budget specifically for FHF Centers. The Council's request to include this additional funding in its FY24 budget was denied leaving these Center's in an unfortunate situation. Total SGF needed is \$1,007,517. Click the link above for more information.

#### [Additional Funding for New & Existing Postsecondary Inclusive Education Programs:](#)

\$3 million in additional funding for the Postsecondary Inclusive Education Fund is needed. Act 682 of 2022 created the fund with an initial \$1 million appropriation that current programs and those interested in starting a program could utilize to help with costs related to start-up and expansion. Currently, there are only six programs in our state, and most of the



### Issue Two: Amending Open Meetings Law to Allow Remote Participation in Public Meetings

Senate & Governmental Affairs will discuss and hear public testimony on [SB201](#) by Senator Sharon Hewitt ([Agenda](#)).

As proposed, SB201 would allow:

- Members of the public with a disability recognized by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to participate in meetings electronically;
- The Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council, the Louisiana Commission for the Deaf, and the state and regional advisory councils of the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities to meet virtually 100% of the time; and
- Members of any public body or advisory council with a disability recognized by the ADA to participate in meetings electronically.

Thank you Sen. Hewitt for considering the needs of individuals with disabilities. However, there are still concerns that need to be addressed:

- Caregivers of individuals with disabilities need similar accommodations when it comes to their participation as they

programs are in the south leaving north Louisiana students with developmental disabilities very few opportunities for a postsecondary education. Fortunately, since the creation of this fund, 13 two and four year programs statewide have expressed interest in starting a new program. With the average start-up of a program costing about \$156,000, the \$1 million added to the fund last year won't last long. Click the link above for more information.

## How to Take Action

Share your personal story and explain how additional funding for FHF Centers and postsecondary and inclusive education programs would affect you, your family or someone you know.

1. **Email or call** the Chair and members of the House Appropriations Committee *before the committee meets* on Tuesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>! Find committee members' [contact information here](#).
2. **Email** [h-app@legis.la.gov](mailto:h-app@legis.la.gov) your public comments about the issues above:
  - Only statements emailed to the address above and *received prior to noon on Monday, April 17<sup>th</sup>*, will be included in the record for this committee meeting.
  - With your comments, please ensure to include your name, address, phone number, email address, and bill number (HB1).

experience many of the same hardships individuals with disabilities endure which prevents them from attending meetings in-person.

- All “public bodies whose primary focus is on issues dealing with disabilities” should be allowed to meet and conduct its business by electronic means 100% of the time, not just the few exceptions mentioned above.
- Members of the general public should be allowed to participate in all public meetings remotely with no caveats. This would ensure everyone, including marginalized groups, who cannot attend meetings in-person will have opportunities to provide stakeholder input.

More information about this issue can be found in [LaCAN's factsheet](#).

## How to Take Action

Share your thoughts, opinions and ideas about Louisiana offering remote meeting opportunities and how you or your loved one would be impacted by allowing, or not allowing, virtual or electronic participation in public meetings.

1. **Email or call** the Chair and members of the Senate & Governmental Affairs Committee *before the committee meets* on Tuesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>! Find committee members' [contact information here](#).
2. **Email** [marinovichl@legis.la.gov](mailto:marinovichl@legis.la.gov) your public comments about remote operations of public entities:
  - Only statements emailed to the address above and *received at least 24 hours before the start of the meeting* will be included in the meeting record.
  - With your emailed comments, please ensure to include your name, address, phone number, email address, and bill number (SB201).

## Attend Yellow Shirt Day

### House Appropriations

WHEN: Tuesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, at 9:00 AM  
WHERE: Louisiana State Capitol – Room 5

### Senate & Governmental Affairs

WHEN: Tuesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, at 1:00 PM  
WHERE: Louisiana State Capitol – Room F

This is a chance for you to share your story in-person before one or both committees. It's also important for LaCAN to fill each committee room with yellow shirts to show how important all of the issues are to the disability community. If you plan to attend, want to share your story before the committee, need a yellow shirt and/or want to find out about carpooling options, contact your [LaCAN Leader](#).

**Make sure you arrive early so you can get a seat in the committee room!**

For those who are unable to attend meetings in person, the committee meeting will be live streamed on the [legislature's website](#). When the meeting is in progress, click the camera icon to access the broadcast.

### Confirm Your Action

- Email your [LaCAN Leader](#) after you take action
- Why confirm your action? This helps the Council know how effective we are reaching you with important information and engaging members across our state in advocacy for systems change.

### Tips & Tools for Advocacy

Looking for tips and tools to help you in your advocacy? Check out the Council's [Advocacy 101](#) page. You can also find tips for:

- [Writing/emailing your legislators](#)
- [Calling your legislators](#)
- [Writing your story](#)

### Contact Us

LaCAN is an initiative of the LA Developmental Disabilities Council. If there are any questions about the information in this email, contact the Council by replying to this email, or calling the toll free number listed below:

phone: 1-800-450-8108

email: [info@laddc.org](mailto:info@laddc.org)

website: [www.lacanadvocates.org](http://www.lacanadvocates.org)

facebook: [www.facebook.com/LaDDCouncil](http://www.facebook.com/LaDDCouncil)

twitter: [www.twitter.com/LaDDCouncil](http://www.twitter.com/LaDDCouncil)



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