

.Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council
Quarterly Meeting
October 19, 2023

CHRISTI GONZALES: The quarterly meeting of the Louisiana Developmental Disability Council will now come to order. I want to welcome everyone here. We're starting a new quarter this year and I want to thank everyone. Nice to meet everyone, again, in a different position. And hopefully things will go well. Which I know they will. Will Ebony Haven please call the roll for attendance.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Avera. Ms. Banks.

NICOLE BANKS: Present.

EBONY HAVEN: Dr. Barovechio. Ms. Basile. Ms. Bayham.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Cosse. Ms. Crain.

CHERI CRAIN: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Hagan.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Hano. I can see her. She's here. Ms. Harmon.

ANGELA HARMON: Present.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Hymel. Ms. Jordan.

MERIDITH JORDAN: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Dr. McKey. Ms. Richard.

MELINDA RICHARD: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Mr. Rocca.

TORY ROCCA: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Stewart.

BROOKE STEWART: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Tarver.

MARY TARVER: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Mr. Taylor. Ms. Washington.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Present.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Webb.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Dr. Wilson.

PHIL WILSON: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Womack.

LAUREN WOMACK: Present.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Gonzales.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Here. Thank you. At this time we will have Ebony read the mission statement and the ground rules for today.

EBONY HAVEN: The mission statement of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council is to increase independence, self-determination, productivity, integration and inclusion for Louisianians with developmental disabilities by engaging in advocacy, capacity building and systems change.

And our ground rules are members must be recognized by the chair before speaking. Be respectful of each other's opinions. Break for ten minutes every one and half hours. Discuss council business in a responsible manner. Except as necessary restrict the use of electronic communication. I.e. texting during council and committee meetings. Silence or turn off all cell phones. Be on time for meetings. No alphabets. And side conversations are kept to a minimum, done quietly and restricted to the subject at hand.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Thank you, Ebony. The next item of business is the approval of the meeting summary. A draft was given to everyone at the July 20th meeting. The summary was distributed. And the summary will not be read unless requested by a member. Are there any corrections? If there is no objection the meeting summary is approved as distributed. Hearing none, the meeting summary is approved.

The next item of business is the chair's report. The executive committee met yesterday and has three recommendations to present to the council. The committee first received an update from the interim executive director on the new initiative included in the FY24 action plan on the building advocacy capacity in education and employment. During the July quarterly council meeting the council accepted the Arc of Louisiana's proposal for the building advocacy, capacity contract with the stipulation that Bayou Land Families Helping Families and the Arc collaborate on the project and subcontract with Bayou Land at a minimum amount of \$5,638.68. However, Bayou Land has decided not to subcontract due to lack of responses for

participation in the focus groups for the SPED directors and community employers. And the Arc of Louisiana will carry out the contract independently.

Next, the committee discussed the executive director hiring process. Council staff provided information on how the process was concluded previously and shared that the council decided to establish an executive director search committee. The committee decided to hire a recruitment firm and conduct a nationwide search in order to fill the position. The entire process took approximately two and half years to complete. But it was slowed down by the Covid 19 pandemic and difficulty in scheduling meetings and establishing quorums for scheduled meetings. The process was also expensive. Therefore the committee decided that they would rather promote from within the current staff, specifically the current Interim Executive Director Ebony Haven instead of conducting an expensive and timely nationwide search. The committee also entered into executive session to determine a salary to recommend to the full council for consideration.

Lastly, the committee discussed the council and LaCAN's 2024 legislative advocacy agenda. Council staff provided information to the committee on how the LaCAN leaders and Families Helping Families directors determined which items to recommend to the council to consider. If you are interested in seeing the entire list of 83 issues that were gathered during the LaCAN community input meetings I encourage you all to review the documents linked in our committee agenda. The committee reviewed the recommendations and decided to accept them for the council and LaCAN's 2024 legislative advocacy agenda. Therefore the committee has three recommendations to offer for the council's consideration.

The first one, the executive committee recommends that the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council hire the Interim Executive Director Ebony Haven as the executive director of the council. I did say there were three recommendations. Because these recommendations are coming from the committee they do not require a second. After each recommendation the council will take a roll call vote on whether to adopt that

recommendation. The first recommendation-- I'm sorry. Mr. Phil.

PHIL WILSON: It seems like we need discussion before we take a vote. Is that right?

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes. We are. I'm getting to that. So the executive committee, regarding the hiring process, we recommended from the committee to hire Interim Director Ebony Haven as the executive director of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council. Is there any discussion from council members? Phil.

PHIL WILSON: I just want to say (inaudible) great job. I definitely feel like is worthy of consideration, but I think that this council, the work that has to happen here I think is very, very complex and I don't feel comfortable with not doing a search. That's my comment, I guess.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other discussions? Jill.

JILL HANO: I think (inaudible) yesterday, but am I correct in saying without the Covid break it was a lengthy process.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I would agree, yeah. What Covid did was essentially move things virtually for that search committee. I think our biggest struggles were more of just getting quorums and the amount of work that needed to be done. But it is factual that it did delay us some. And I don't have the specifics to tell you we had to delay this long for Covid. But it was an impact.

JILL HANO: And then can I make another comment?

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes.

JILL HANO: I am a member of the executive committee and so with Act 201, that was the senate bill, not being promulgated, that I don't drive so I will automatically not be attending very many executive search committee meetings. So when I did make this motion I did put that into consideration that I don't have transportation. My job is part-time. I took off. I was out of town more than I was in town. And my mom with all five kids at the house a week before Christmas. So another day to take off. I wanted to think out loud and put that out there.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Vivienne.

VIVIENNE WEBB: I love our staff and I love what a wonderful job Ebony has been doing. However, I do not

think she would be the best fit for this role and I think it is really worth considering taking the time and effort to find someone who would be a better fit.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other discussion? Ms. Mary.

MARY TARVER: I was here on the executive committee when we did the search before, and it was very drawn out. But we also during that time we weren't just paying for them to do the search. They had a lot of stuff that they had to do. We needed a job description. We needed some background things done. And I don't want us to lose the fact, I mean, have we gone back to what we did, the processes-- if we want to not hire a search committee I'm okay with that. I do think as much as we went through before and as big of a job it is I don't disagree that Ebony has every, you know, the experience and the job, she could do it. I just don't want us to get three months in and then have somebody question our process. We need to go with a process that the council knows that we should be doing. Whatever it is we need to decide the process today. And if that includes that we open up and do a-- it doesn't have to be a search. You post the job, people apply, and you go through the process. That's generally what happens in most people's jobs. And so while you do want to hire within, I think that does give an advantage, but that's something that usually comes out in the interview process. Not that Ebony is not qualified. I'm just saying after going through the heartache and the time and everything that we did before, I feel like we need to go back and make sure that we-- because every time that you don't follow the previous processes or don't have a laid-out plan I think you get off track really easily and it brings it into question at some point. So I just wanted to say that. I think opening it up and at least posting the job would be something that I would like for us to consider.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other comments? Discussion? Nicole.

NICOLE BANKS: So this was decided by the executive council so that means it came in and they took out extra time on their days to come here. And I'm not saying that we shouldn't go through the process. But we can go through the process. We can do that again.

We did that before. It took a year for us to get through every single application. A year. Putting that out there. The person that we did pick she didn't stay for what, a couple years. Ebony has been here and she was doing what other people up in the position was already doing. She was already carrying out the job and already being effective with it. So we could open it up, but are we going to have somebody as passionate and already knows about what's going on in Louisiana. Because we had a couple applicants, three of them, that didn't even know what was going on. That hadn't been to a meeting. That hadn't been to a committee hearing. That hadn't been to anything. We could look at her track record. You could open it up. That's cool. But I don't think she's not qualified. I think she's very much qualified to be in the position.

SPEAKER: I was just going to say as being a state organization or a state council I think it needs to be competitive. Ebony certainly has an advantage because she knows the work and knows the council and I think that would come out in the interview process, but I think at a minimum it needs to be competitive.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other comments or discussion?

PHIL WILSON: I think it needs to be an active search with people who have done this same work in other states. This is a statewide federally established position. I do agree the way the search company I guess, I don't remember what the right term, wasn't the best organization. It may have been the cheapest, but I feel very strongly that, for example, when I retire from my role as director of the Human Development Center, which is one of the three legs of the DD network, DRLA being the other one, that there will be a national search and there should be. Again, Ebony, this isn't about what you can do or have done. I think you're very knowledgeable and absolutely, you know, critical to try to keep you on the DD Council in a leadership role from my point of view. But I feel like to move the DD Council forward probably is going to require somebody with a lot of experience dealing with state agency heads, politicians, many other organizations. I just feel like just for the sake of expediency almost sounds like let's get a director and

keep on going. I feel like that would be a mistake. And again, I would strongly encourage Ebony if she's interested to apply. And out of that interviewing process, somebody had said if Ebony's the strongest candidate then absolutely. But I think we need to really see a person who has a lot of experience leading a statewide organization should be in one of our goals to have.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other discussions?

LAUREN WOMACK: I have a question. And I'm new so please excuse me. So if we were to open it up could they be virtual committee meetings? Like if we don't have it all the way set up to have the in-person meetings about the search. Like would y'all's concern, could it be like a hybrid thing?

EBONY HAVEN: There still hasn't been a rule that's been promulgated. We would run into that same.

SPEAKER: Roadblock.

EBONY HAVEN: Yes.

LAUREN WOMACK: Okay. The other thing is as interim is Ebony getting a pay increase or is she just still receiving her pay that she's been getting?

PHIL WILSON: Anybody on the council?

LAUREN WOMACK: Ebony, are you still getting paid the same amount as you were before you were intern?

EBONY HAVEN: No.

LAUREN WOMACK: Okay. I wanted to make sure. And then, you know, I'm glad that we have different (inaudible), but would the state agencies be able to participate in these searches or is that something that the council?

EBONY HAVEN: You're talking about the state agency reps that sit? They're council members so they can sit on the search committee if they so choose.

LAUREN WOMACK: Yeah. That's what I'm saying.

SPEAKER: They did for the previous.

LAUREN WOMACK: They did for the previous as well. Okay. Thank you.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other questions?

SPEAKER: No. Mine was only a comment when you were talking about the virtual meeting. I actually had a meeting with our LDH legal staff earlier this week about the virtual meetings and I believe, correct me if I'm wrong on this, but I think it was 25 percent of

your meetings can be held virtually. And they said we can move forward because I have another council that I work on that we lead, and we are in a position to move forward with the 25 percent of the rule. There is some stuff they have to do, but they're not waiting on anything. And so to answer your question we should be able to move forward with that meeting, the next meeting being virtual if we haven't had one, of course, within the 25 percent.

EBONY HAVEN: I reached out to them before, like maybe mid-September, and they advise that we not have virtual meetings.

SPEAKER: Reach again because they have explored it and they told me this week we can go forward. So you probably want to get that in writing, of course.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Are there any other discussions? Jill.

JILL HANO: I'm hearing everybody's point. I still, of course, want the ultimate goal for me is to have you as the ED, but also we need best practice. And I do want to follow best practices. It's almost as important. No, I'm just kidding. That's on record now. I'm going to get in trouble. And also just throwing it out there without many names. I had friends both council members and staff members that this process may have influenced them to resign. So I just know that in the past this process has led to burnout, and I mean...

CHRISTI GONZALES: Anybody else? Meredith.

MERIDITH JORDAN: I just want to really thank Ebony. Ebony has been to SEAP meetings, BESE board meetings, you know, critical things at the legislature that impacted our students with disabilities alongside Amy as well. But just-- and then Ebony and I picking up and, you know, kind of exactly where Amy and I left off with conversations and meetings and staying connected. And so I agree, I think a lot of us, you know, that Ebony certainly has a seat at this table and in this role. And so I just, you know, wanted to really thank you, Ebony, for all of that, for the support, the work alongside the department. I think all of us are really impacting and moving work. You all are impacting the things that I do, that we do as a state for our children with disabilities and our

schools. And so, you know, I hear what everyone is saying too, and I just really want to thank Ebony and say that I agree that I think she has a spot at the table. Whether we post, I agree, I don't think I want to see a lengthy process either because there is something to say for stability and moving forward. And I think this council has a lot of momentum going. We had excellent conversation yesterday in our committee meeting. And so just thinking about that too and the stability moving forward. And I know Ebony will give us that and the staff. And so I just wanted to put that on record as well.

RENODA WASHINGTON: I'll be reading something on behalf of the executive committee. I pray that you all consider what is being said and have an attentive ear. Dear council members. On behalf of the executive committee it was with great pleasure and enthusiasm that we write this recommendation for Ebony Haven as candidate for position of executive director of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council. As members of the executive committee we have had the privilege of closely observing Ebony Haven's exemplary qualities and contributions making us confident in our endorsement. Ebony brings to the table a wealth of experience in engaging in systems change initiatives and capacity building activities to improve the quality of life of people with developmental disabilities in the community. Having demonstrated exceptional leadership skills and innovative problem-solving abilities during her tenure as program monitor and deputy director. Since 2018 Ebony has assisted the executive director by supervising various departments, teams or projects and assure that the organization's goals and objectives are met efficiently. Contributing to the development of organizational strategies, goals and plans. Developing and enforcing policies and procedures that align with the organization's mission and values. Providing input and advice to the executive director and other council members. Helping to shape the organization's overall direction. Assisting with overseeing budget planning, allocation of resources and financial reporting. Addressing challenges and solving problems within the organization. Mentoring staff, providing guidance and

facilitating training programs. Representing the organization in meetings, conferences and other events by interacting with stakeholders, partners and other organizations to foster collaborations and partnerships. Her proven track record in assisting the executive director underscores her ability to further drive positive change and foster collaborative environments.

Ebony has a strong history of servitude and advocacy. She has actively participated in various system change initiatives demonstrating her dedication to improving the lives of others. Especially those with developmental disabilities. Ebony's passion for advocacy and her ability to mobilize resources for the betterment of this community is truly inspiring. Beyond her professional qualifications Ebony possessed remarkable character traits. She exhibits unwavering integrity, empathy and a genuine commitment to the well-being of individuals with developmental disabilities as well as council members and staff. Her ability to connect with people on a personal level and foster a supportive, inclusive atmosphere is truly commendable.

Ebony holds an impressive educational background having earned a Master of Public Health, epidemiology, maternal and child health degree from Tulane University School of Medicine and a Bachelor of Science degree in biology and chemistry. Her Academic achievements reflect her dedication to continuous learning and intellectual growth. Qualities that are essential for leading an organization with the caliber and mission of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council. We firmly believe that an increase in salary for Ebony is not justified but essential. Recognizing her expertise and commitment through a competitive compensation package is an investment in the future of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council. A fair and competitive salary would not only acknowledge Ebony's contributions, but also motivate her to continue her outstanding work and lead the organization towards even greater success.

In conclusion, we wholeheartedly recommend Ebony Haven for the position of executive director of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council. Her

combination of experience, character, educational background and servitude makes her an outstanding candidate. We are confident that under her leadership the council will continue to thrive and make a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities. As you can see there's no need to look elsewhere for a candidate. We have the best selection for the position before us. We eagerly anticipate the positive impact that Ebony Haven would undoubtedly bring to the Louisiana Developmental Disability Council. Thank you for considering our recommendation. Sincerely, the executive committee.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Before we go on, could you please identify yourselves before speaking so everyone who is listening can hear and see who you are.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Cheri Crain with the Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs. Ebony, did you apply last time when it was advertised for the position?

EBONY HAVEN: Huh-uh.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Was there a reason?

EBONY HAVEN: I think the environment of the council, like the climate. I didn't think that I was the right person to come in to take over during that time. And so I didn't consider the position.

PHIL WILSON: This is Phil Wilson. This is a question about that last time. I thought there was a stipulation or whatever, and I wasn't a member of the search committee last time because I was told I wasn't eligible for that. But I did serve on a bunch of subcommittees. But what I was going to ask you, wasn't it the case that any staff, were you staff at that point, Ebony? I thought so, right?

EBONY HAVEN: Yes.

PHIL WILSON: I thought there was some kind of stipulation that staff could not apply for that position?

EBONY HAVEN: No.

PHIL WILSON: Only council members. Okay. Perfect.

JILL HANO: Okay. So Ebony, if we did the whole search, like what would it take for you to keep your name in the hat?

EBONY HAVEN: I would keep my name in the hat, Jill. I feel like based on my qualifications I'm very

well qualified for this position.

JILL HANO: I feel like you are too.

EBONY HAVEN: I feel like I have great relationships with every person on the council, including the state reps that sit on the council. I feel like I am-- the council is in a rebuilding phase, and I feel like relationships with legislators are going to have to be built. So I am actively, Amy and I were actively building relationships with legislators. I'm not where the previous, previous executive director was, but I do feel like I have the qualities that an outside candidate won't have. I have inside knowledge about how the council works. Like I just said, I have relationships with everybody on the council, especially our community members. I feel like I have a strong background and I've been here for five years. Yes, I've been here for five years. And so I do feel like I'm well qualified. So I will keep my name in the hat if you guys decide to do a search. I feel like I'm very well qualified. And like Phil said, I think that will come out, that will be shown. And I feel like I'm the best candidate for the job.

CHRISTI GONZALES: We need to remember that it's about the hiring process. We need to discuss that and keep it on track. So are there any other discussions about the hiring process from within or leading a search? Jill.

JILL HANO: But now we have a motion on the floor. But can I make another motion or how does that work cause my idea's good, y'all. Everyone's going to be like yea, Jill.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Renoda.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Okay. This is Renoda Washington.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Jill, I'm sorry. As for the motion that Jill put through we have to go ahead and finish the motion before we can put another motion through, right. So the motion is the committee recommend the Interim Director Ebony Haven as the executive director of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council. Is there any more discussion? Is there any other public comment?

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I really think that it would be important to take a brief recess because I think that

there was a misunderstanding.

KELLY MONROE: A question and she was waiting for the answer. Disappointed when you started talking over them. Like her question wasn't answered. And so how can we vote when she still was asking that question before we vote.

CHRISTI GONZALES: I understand.

RENODA WASHINGTON: (Inaudible).

KELLY MONROE: I understand.

CHRISTI GONZALES: We can take a brief recess if there's no objection. Five-minute recess.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Earlier Jill made a motion but before-- the meeting will come to order. I am sorry. Earlier Jill made a motion to add another motion, but let's go ahead and revisit the first one so we can see what her second motion is. So the first motion or recommendation that we have is to hire from within Ebony Haven as the executive director of Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council. Is there any more discussion about that? Any public comment?

WEBB: I think we need to hire a search agency and I think we need to be very transparent in moving forward. (Inaudible) from the public especially within the disability community and that scrutiny has led to the council's public information which (inaudible) website. It is not on social media primarily. And attending and posting on social media, some of us just aren't on that to begin with. And it's been posted in a negative way in response to questioning council seats, for example, with demographic information (inaudible) from what I understand anyway. You had a lot of distention within the disability community. (Inaudible) the transparency in the process then basically shoot ourselves in the foot ensuring any cohesiveness and rebuilding to moving forward together. That's just a concern.

WEBB: Thank you, Ms. Webb. Any more public comments? Are you ready for the question? The question is on the recommendation for the hiring process of executive director that we hire from within Interim Director Ebony Haven as executive director of Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council. If you are in favor of the motion to hire from within the

Interim Director Ebony Haven as executive director of Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council when your name is called, say yes. If you are opposed, say no. If you abstain, just say abstain. Ebony, can you call the roll.

EBONY HAVEN: I'm going to have Hannah do it.

HANNAH JENKINS: Ms. Avera. Ms. Banks.

NICOLE BANKS: Yes.

HANNAH JENKINS: Dr. Barovechio.

PATTI BAROVECHIO: Abstain.

HANNAH JENKINS: Ms. Basile. Ms. Bayham.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Abstain.

HANNAH JENKINS: Ms. Cosse. Ms. Crain.

CHERI CRAIN: Abstain.

HANNAH JENKINS: Ms. Hagan.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: Abstain.

HANNAH JENKINS: Ms. Hano.

JILL HANO: No.

HANNAH JENKINS: Ms. Harmon.

ANGELA HARMON: Yes.

HANNAH JENKINS: Ms. Hymel. Ms. Jordan. Dr. McKey. Mr. Piontek. Ms. Richard.

MELINDA RICHARD: Abstain.

HANNAH JENKINS: Mr. Rocca.

TORY ROCCA: Abstain.

HANNAH JENKINS: Ms. Stewart.

BROOKE STEWART: Yes.

HANNAH JENKINS: Ms. Tarver.

MARY TARVER: No.

HANNAH JENKINS: Mr. Taylor. Ms. Washington.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Yes.

HANNAH JENKINS: Ms. Webb.

VIVIENNE WEBB: No.

HANNAH JENKINS: Dr. Wilson.

PHIL WILSON: No.

HANNAH JENKINS: Ms. Womack.

TANGELA WOMACK: Abstain.

HANNAH JENKINS: Lauren.

LAUREN WOMACK: Yes.

HANNAH JENKINS: So Ms. Tangela abstains. And Ms. Laura Womack, what did you say?

LAUREN WOMACK: Yes.

HANNAH JENKINS: Ms. Jordan.

MERIDITH JORDAN: Yes.

HANNAH JENKINS: That's six yeas, four nays and six abstentions. The motion passes.

CHRISTI GONZALES: The yeases have it and the recommendation is adopted. Thank you, everyone.

EBONY HAVEN: I know there was a question about the actual, was the council legally able to do this. The council has a memorandum of understanding with the Louisiana Department of Health, and it states that the council is responsible for hiring, firing, evaluating their executive director. So I also made sure that I reached out to our technical assistance, our federal technical assistance, ITAC and Ms. Sheryl Matney did tell me to make sure that I contacted our HR to make sure we were within state regulations, rules and regs. And because we have that MOU with LDH you guys are well within your right to hire, fire and evaluate your own executive director.

JILL HANO: Well, I didn't know that so I was hoping this would fail and I make a new motion and it would be fine, but I am sorry. Please forgive me.

EBONY HAVEN: There's no forgiveness necessary, Jill.

CHRISTI GONZALES: The next recommendation--.

JILL HANO: Congrats.

CHRISTI GONZALES: The next recommendation from the executive committee is regarding the salary for the executive director. The recommendation from the committee is to set the executive director salary at 160,000-dollars. Is there any discussion from council members? Is there any public comment? I'm sorry. Ms. Mary.

MARY TARVER: So tell us what the range is. How y'all came up with this amount.

CHRISTI GONZALES: We took the average. We searched it and in order for economic growth. And we also looked at other states and in order to keep someone effectively doing their job as well as she has. And we took all that into consideration and we are actually under what was suggested. So that's what we came up with.

PHIL WILSON: This is Phil. Can you be more specific because that really didn't put an end to the question.

CHRISTI GONZALES: We pulled up some ratings from

each state.

PHIL WILSON: Okay. So when you say that I think we want to know what (inaudible) in the public section here, I think what some of the concerns that we have had on this council the last two or three years that created just a really difficult situation for getting work done is due to lack of transparency. And no one is questioning what you did or how you went about doing it, but in the spirit of being transparent you can't just say we got some numbers from some states.

JILL HANO: Can we put up the thing from NDAA.

CHRISTI GONZALES: The one that we received is from ITAC.

SPEAKER: What's ITAC?

BRENTON ANDRUS: The council's federal technical assistance.

JILL HANO: Can we pull the ITAC information up on the big screen, Ebony?

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes. Ms. Mary.

MARY TARVER: What was the salary of Amy?

EBONY HAVEN: Amy's salary was 89,000.

PHIL WILSON: This is Phil again. I would like to make a motion-- is it possible to defer this until people have a chance to look at things and digest it and then-- I don't know if we can get that done later this afternoon or actually defer it to the next quarterly meeting. But feels like a big decision to make. I can't even see that stuff right there. It feels like kind of rushed.

CHRISTI GONZALES: So is that a motion to postpone, Mr. Phil, for a later date?

PHIL WILSON: At least a motion to give people ample time to look at this and for Ebony, our new executive director, to kind of tell us how this impacts the budget. There's a lot of things here that just feel like too much coming too fast for me.

MARY TARVER: Will you show the Louisiana one.

CHRISTI GONZALES: And we took an average of the states. We looked at it, we met yesterday with the executive committee, and it wasn't a rush thing. So we took into account economics and her ability and a lot of other things. But if we need to go ahead and postpone at a later date that would be fine.

MELISSA BAYHAM: So you took an average of the top

of the range or the bottom of the range?

CHRISTI GONZALES: The state range. And then we also looked at other executive directors throughout the state.

MARY TARVER: Throughout the state of what?

CHRISTI GONZALES: In Louisiana. If you Google it, we Googled it and looked at other directors in the state.

MARY TARVER: Other directors of what?

CHRISTI GONZALES: Of other states.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Because you have to remember the top of the range is not-- like I'm still in first (inaudible) and I've been in my job five years.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Mr. Phil, could you restate your motion, please.

PHIL WILSON: Before I do I think we have more discussion. Patti has her hand up and looks like Mary too.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes, ma'am. Thank you, Ms. Patti.

PATTI BAROVECHIO: I'm just asking if there's any, was there any consideration or y'all don't utilize like the state guidelines? Like there's specific criteria when we are taking a position, or promoted, or moved there's certain guidelines through the HR and I'm just wondering if they would be a resource for you guys to utilize.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Thank you. Ms. Mary.

MARY TARVER: The budget. I guess that needs to be discussion too. How would we afford. We paid 89,000, now we're paying 95 and y'all are suggesting 160. That's a tremendous amount.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Brooke.

BROOKE STEWART: I would just like to address Ms. Tarver. Yesterday I did speak with staff. We did review the budget yesterday and it's to my understanding that we have a pool of money that is set aside for salaries and that money does sit year after year and it's not being utilized for anything else but salaries. So we have a pool of money that is just sitting. We did choose a salary that was below the median after we did calculations from all of the councils' executive directors, and we came up with that one. And we did decide to go under the medium that we

came up with.

And then we also wanted to make sure that everyone understands that now she will be an unclassified, or she will continue to be an unclassified employee which means she's at will. So she could have this salary, but it's all based on her performance as well. It's not that she just gets to keep, you know, she has to continuously perform appropriately to receive her salary. It's not that she's promised a position every year. So I do think that by Ebony having a higher salary it will create a culture in the LADDC where she can bring her staff up with her and we can create a-- she can bring her employees up and create like a sense of them being important and wanting to go and fight the good fight for us. So that was our belief in giving her that 160,000. Is that if we start at the top she can hire a great deputy director and that she can advocate for her other staff members.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Ms. Mary.

MARY TARVER: Part of the reason why we've struggled with and went through that process that we went through before for DD executive director if you're offering 160,000-dollars for a salary you get a whole different group of people that would have applied for this job and would have been interested in it before when we were offering less than 100,000-dollars. So I guess I'm just saying that salary seems out of our realm. And I would like to look at the budget. I would like to have somebody from the staff talk about it. What is this money reoccurring. It's just there right now. I think this is a big impact on that. Cause then you can't go back. If you're hiring somebody after Ebony leaves then you're starting them out way high for what this is. We are for the developmental disabilities world. I don't know if there's any directors making that amount of money in the State of Louisiana with all these other groups that are even coming close to that. And I don't know, but I just feel like this is, we've got to have some staff discussion about the budget in more detail.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Brooke.

BROOKE STEWART: We all know that these states in the south, we're at the bottom for a reason. We pay people next to nothing and expect everything from them.

So we can make a stance for someone who's already advocated for us for five plus years and showed commitment to our mission and vision. I just also want to make a statement that when we say 160,000 salary, please take yourself out of the equation. Don't think about oh, I don't get paid that and I've been working somewhere for 5, 6, 7, 8 years. I feel like that is a lot of people's responses is because they're comparing themselves and their salary to someone else and what we're offering. Because honestly if you want to apply to the role I encourage you to apply two years after her term ends on the DD Council to the executive director position.

MARY TARVER: Her term doesn't end in two years.

BROOKE STEWART: No. I'm saying council members can apply for staff positions after two years. So after two years you're more than welcome to apply. But I think we're at the bottom because we don't pay. People go to other states. Why can't we keep a Louisiana person born and bred here and utilize our state's great applicants.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Ms. Lauren.

LAUREN WOMACK: Can I make a motion?

CHRISTI GONZALES: Jill, I'm sorry. Ms. Lauren, we have a motion already.

LAUREN WOMACK: Okay. Well, I just have a question about it. You said a substitute motion. I just think that we need more information, and we have a lot on the agenda to digest and things like that and I think maybe this is a discussion for another committee when we can get more information about it. That's just my comment. I think we're all making good points, but in the effort of me personally to be able to vote, you know, I think we need more information. I think we're going to need something more concrete.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Jill, did you have something?

JILL HANO: After doing the research I realize that in my opinion the last executive director may have been severely lowballed. And when we have our executive meeting, particularly the executive session, because if it was a person that I was in favor of I tend to say yeah, she's worth every penny. But now that I'm seeing these conversations. And y'all, I can't say this enough. Like I don't know anything about this kind of

money, and I never will. But now that I'm in these discussions I think something in between what is being offered to Ebony's successor and then what is being discussed now. I'm a happy medium person so I think if we could find a median because you don't want to lowball someone. I think of that, and I hate to use the word selfish, but almost selfish reasons because if you go too low you're going to lose a good, or the potential of losing the right person for the job. But if you go too high then there's A, no room to grow and B, Ms. Tarver said, or somebody said, that now the next person is like okay, the minimum is how much. Like oh, I can come into a job thinking she can go above 160. And I don't really understand how the money in our budget works and how we're able to play with it. But like saying it out loud is probably like common knowledge. But you don't want to highball, and you don't want to lowball.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Nicole.

NICOLE BANKS: Okay. So I was up on the executive committee when we were making decisions up on the last executive director salary. And it was a lot of discussion, and she was going to get paid more, but they had a lot of people that denied her getting paid more. And of course it was a council, so you get votes. If the votes didn't go in favor of her getting a higher salary she didn't get it and she didn't get it. She didn't. So we were going to up her salary as far as getting it to where it needed to be, but the rest of the executive committee decided not to. So we got back in this predicament that we're in now where we're in there where we're trying to offer somebody lower than what the other one had and that's why we're in this position now because they did offer her something lower. They were trying to raise it, but it didn't get passed. So we're going to do the same thing again and go through the same thing again in another two years another executive director and then we have to bring-- I'm just saying.

JILL HANO: (Inaudible).

NICOLE BANKS: Everybody let-- I'm speaking. Everybody let everybody talk when they were speaking so. My point is, I just Googled it right now how much the average executive director does. It's 147 to 188.

That is in the middle. I'm just saying. You could Google it right now for yourselves. And that was the point of them coming to their meeting for the executive director. They spent time on this. They took probably a day off of work. They did their research. That's what the point of the meeting that they had. They did their research. All of them had stated that they talked to the finance department. They talked to the staff about the budget. Every single last person on the executive committee stated that. So we got to go again and do the same research again or y'all just need to see the numbers? I'm just confused on what we're asking here because they already did the research. So you don't trust them and what they've done?

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes, sir.

PHIL WILSON: So it's not a matter of not trusting. It's just a matter of not seeing what are we talking about. When you say that the average--.

NICOLE BANKS: You Google it.

PHIL WILSON: But wait a second. I'm asking a question. When you say the average salary for an executive director. What does that mean? An executive director of what?

NICOLE BANKS: Of a disability council. That's what I put in Google what we are talking about. Talking about her salary for a disability council.

PHIL WILSON: (Inaudible) Louisiana.

NICOLE BANKS: Yeah. One.

PHIL WILSON: So you're talking about an average DD Council in the entire US of A?

NICOLE BANKS: Right.

PHIL WILSON: So when I saw that table, which was very small and a lot of information certainly to digest, then I need time to see the data and know the source of it so that I can make an informed decision. I appreciate that the council and the executive director or the executive council did research. That's their job. But to put things out without the rest of the council being able to understand what they're saying doesn't feel transparent. I don't want this to sound like I'm questioning people's morals, ethics or whatever, but if we didn't learn anything from the last three or four years about how dysfunctional this council got because people weren't transparent then

we're repeating something that we can avoid very easily by slowing our role, getting it out there, make sure everyone understands. And, you know, I'm sorry, the Google machine to me isn't my ultimate source of information till I know what it's tied to, okay. My original motion was can we get information from the executive council that states, that shows the data that they got and the source of it. Something like oh, we got on Google isn't telling me anything. That way at the next council meeting we can bring this back up and everyone will have had plenty of time to digest the information and have a good transparent open discussion.

JILL HANO: Can I?

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes, Jill.

JILL HANO: Okay. To answer your question, Dr. Phil, we got a little graph. You can pull it up cause I put in, but you're smatter than I. It's from ITAC.

EBONY HAVEN: I'm going to get Bridget to print it for everybody.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Phil, did you want to make a motion?

PHIL WILSON: I do want to make a motion.

CHRISTI GONZALES: I just wanted to make sure.

PHIL WILSON: I'm not good at wording it so please.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Is there a motion to postpone?

PHIL WILSON: Yes. Postpone the vote until the full council has had an opportunity to review the data and the sources of the data.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Is there a second?

LAUREN WOMACK: I second. Lauren Womack.

CHRISTI GONZALES: It is moved and second to postpone to the next meeting. Is there any discussion? Brooke.

BROOKE STEWART: I just want to make a comment that a salary is a touchy subject in any regard, but I do want to make sure that everyone-- like we will never be able to touch this money. Like we will not be able to say oh, if we give Ebony 89,000 then we can do something else with the money, the difference. We won't. The council sat yesterday, and we looked at the budget. It sits year after year after year. The previous director left unhappy with her salary. We have someone here that will accept the role and we want

to give her a competitive salary.

MARY TARVER: So if you go back to look on our budget for our council you have to take into account the budgets of all those other councils. You think New York, you're looking across the nation and they have a much larger budget. So our budget last year, and this was ending on June the 30th of 2023, and so the salaries at that point the budget balance was 109,086-dollars. So I guess I would like us to see from our own budget what this looks like and project it out.

And also to say that we have been in a time where we have not had our retreats. We have not traveled. We have not gone, you know, the other money that is in this budget that we have not used in what things that we have wanted to do in the past still needs to be part of this budget. So we've got to live within our means. Of course I would expect that Ebony's salary is going to be commensurable to what her qualifications are. I just don't know that anybody would be at the level of 160,000-dollars for this. The money that we have also I guess we need to understand the budget pieces because can't we use some of this money that we have for, you know, like if we needed office supplies. If there was something else that we needed. So I guess it's kind of like an understanding of the budget so that we can see if we start spending 90 percent of the budget on salaries then that's going to limit other things that we can do, I guess. So just to kind of see how things break down in our own budget with our own funding.

CHRISTI GONZALES: So we need to remember the motion was about postponing conversation to the next meeting and it was seconded. If there's any comments we need to talk about postponement until we discuss at the next meeting.

PHIL WILSON: I don't think the wording captures my motion. I just want to make sure that we include the piece about everybody receiving the data and the sources of the data before we vote. We don't come back here next time and not have received this a week, a month in advance to kind of digest this and understand it. I'm looking at a table right now honestly that was put on the screen, but the average base range for the entire country is 81383. The top of range average is

119410. There's disconnects here that don't make sense. So let's get the data. Let's be transparent. We want our executive director to get a commensurate salary and be compensated for her work and want to stay here and work until she retires, right. But I don't understand someone referred to the budget. I run a center and have 10 million-dollars a year of budgets to manage. Not to compare agencies here. But what I'm saying is if you have a pot of money you should be able to re-budget. You can't do it necessarily in the same year, but if there's money it certainly could be something that you talk to your project officer about and if you're not spending it they should allow you to re-budget.

BROOKE STEWART: But we also know sometimes money is allocated for certain things and you can only use that money for certain items.

PHIL WILSON: Then you re-budget.

BROOKE STEWART: Exactly. So if we have money--.

PHIL WILSON: Re-budget every single year.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Let's just wait. Hold on. Do we have any public comments before we move on on the postponement?

MELINDA RICHARD: I just wanted to mention I think we're all united in the idea that we want to create a position that someone wants and is going to put us at the top nationally. I'm a very data-driven person when I make decisions, so I like to see data. And I guess what I was trying, what I was hearing Phil was suggesting that we get a one-pager that includes things like if I were making this decision I would be looking at civil service job descriptions and I would say what are the duties of these particular levels, what are the duties of this particular executive director and I'd find one that kind of manages. They manage 3 million-dollars worth of budget. They have X number of employees. They manage this many different programs or serve this type of complex participants. And I would look for a job description in civil service that two or three of them, that marry that, and I would come back to the panel and say these are the ranges of job payment ranges for similar duties. I also would look at the average of the southern states. That's something we get called to do quite a bit in the

legislature when we're answering what do other southern states do. Things like how does it impact our budget. If we were to underspend would we ask those budget dollars to be moved because you can move them. Difficult to get it out of salary and someplace else, but you can. What would we do with those dollars. I think what the team's asking for, my comment is a data driven one-pager that kind of tells us all the work you all have done and then I think people would be comfortable making a decision one way or the other.

PHIL WILSON: As long as the one-pager has the sources so that I can go look at all the data.

CHRISTI GONZALES: So the question that we have right now is to postpone discussion of executive director salary until the January 2024 council meeting. Is that correct?

PHIL WILSON: No. You do not have a statement in there about--.

EBONY HAVEN: I can add it.

PHIL WILSON: Okay. But she asked the question. Do you want to add that, Ebony?

EBONY HAVEN: What do you want to add?

CHRISTI GONZALES: To add the source of where we received the information from. Is that correct?

PHIL WILSON: You know, the one-pager, I think that's a great idea, Melinda, but my thing is we have to have enough data to know that we're being transparent and that everybody has the wherewithal to look at the data and make a decision. So for me if I have a source, great. I'll just go look there. But other people may want the actual table. So I feel like we should provide the data and the source.

CHRISTI GONZALES: So the question is to postpone discussion of the executive director salary until the January 2024 council meeting and provide data for salaries and budget with the sources provided.

PHIL WILSON: Obviously, but since this is going into a printed document let's make it clear that we need to have that at least a month in advance so we can review it. If we had it today I think I would have a difficult time packing it all in, understanding it and voting.

EBONY HAVEN: So Dr. Phil, can you look at the motion now. Does this capture what you?

PHIL WILSON: Would somebody read it.

CHRISTI GONZALES: The question is to postpone discussion of the executive director's salary until the January 2024 council meeting and provide data for salaries and budget with the sources to council members prior to the January meeting. Is that correct?

PHIL WILSON: Yes.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes, Jill.

JILL HANO: Cause I don't know can we add a word or no? Can we say between the word members and the word prior, can we specifically add the words for purposes of transparency.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Is there any objection to this? No. So again, the question is to postpone discussion of the executive director's salary to the January 2024 council meeting and provide data for salaries and budget with the sources to council members for purposes of transparency prior to the January meeting. Is that correct? Are there any objections to the motion? Are there any abstentions? Hearing no objections, the motion is approved.

EBONY HAVEN: I have a question. So I know the vote was to hire me as the executive director. I guess my question is if you're not going to determine salary until the January meeting my start date wouldn't be until after the January meeting?

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes, Phil.

PHIL WILSON: I believe that you would continue in your interim role at the increased salary from the interim salary until. So I don't know. Bambi, you have a lot of experience in government and so forth. Somebody in state agency might better answer that question. But it seems like you would stay in an interim role until you have a salary.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: She has to accept it.

CHRISTI GONZALES: So right now Ebony would stay as the interim director until the January meeting plus discuss salary. The last recommendation from the executive committee is the 2024 legislative kickoff advocacy agenda. The recommendation from the committee is to adopt the following issues. The first one is recurring funding for Families Helping Families centers. The second is funding increase for direct support workers' pay raises. And the third is to

eliminate family flexible funding, the wait list. Is there any discussion from council members? Is there any public comment? Ready for the question. The question is on if we accept that we recommend the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council accept the legislative kickoff advocacy recommendations from legislative kickoff and for the 2024 advocacy agenda to include the following. Reoccurring funding for Families Helping Families center, funding increase for direct support workers' pay raises and eliminate family flexible fund wait list. If you are in favor of the motion when your name is called say yes. If you're opposed say no. If you abstain say abstain. Ebony, can you please call the roll.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Avera. Ms. Banks.

NICOLE BANKS: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: Dr. Barovechio.

PATTI BAROVECHIO: Abstain.

NICOLE BANKS: Dr. Barovechio abstains. Ms. Basile. Ms. Bayham.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Abstain.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Bayham abstains. Ms. Cosse. Ms. Crain.

CHERI CRAIN: Abstain.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Crain abstains. Ms. Hagan.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: Abstain.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Hagan abstains. Ms. Hano.

JILL HANO: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Hano, yes. Ms. Harmon.

ANGELA HARMON: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Harmon, yes. Ms. Hymel. Ms. Jordan. Dr. McKee. Mr. Piontek. Ms. Richard.

MELINDA RICHARD: Abstain.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Richard abstains. Mr. Rocca.

TORY ROCCA: Abstain.

EBONY HAVEN: Mr. Rocca abstains. Ms. Stewart.

BROOKE STEWART: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Stewart, yes. Ms. Tarver.

MARY TARVER: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Tarver, yes. Mr. Taylor. Ms. Washington.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Washington, yes. Ms. Webb.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Abstain.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Webb abstains. Dr. Wilson.

PHIL WILSON: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: Dr. Wilson, yes. Ms. Womack. Well, Ms. Lauren Womack.

LAUREN WOMACK: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Tangela Womack.

TANGELA WOMACK: Abstain.

EBONY HAVEN: Eight yeses and no noes.

CHRISTI GONZALES: The yeses have it and the recommendation is adopted. Thank you, members. The next item of business is the executive director's report. The chair recognizes Ebony Haven for the report.

EBONY HAVEN: The executive director's report is the gray report that's included in your packet. So I'm not going to read the entire report. I just wanted to highlight a couple of things. This report is for July through September, that quarter. And this report includes activities from the previous executive director and myself. Just to highlight a couple of things. The report states that the budget report will include expenditures through August 2023 is included in the packet. However, I was able to include expenditures through September 2023 and I'll discuss the budget report. The council's action plan for federal fiscal year 24, FY24 was submitted electronically to the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities before the August 15th deadline. And the council received approval of their action plan for FY24 on September 28th. The program performance report or the PPR for the FY23 action plan is due at the end of the year on December 31st, 2023.

A no-cost extension was requested by the council on August 22nd, 2023, for the expiring FY22 grant due to having a significant amount of funding left on that grant. So the no-cost extension extended the project period for FY22 for another 12 months through September 30th, 2024. And this allows the council additional time to ensure that those activities listed in the plan are completed. And it allows us more time to expend that funding. So the council received approval of the no-cost extension request for the 22 grant on September 20th, 2022. And lastly, we did hire a new executive secretary or an administrative assistant, Ms. Bridgette

Talley. I think most of you guys have met her already and she's been a great addition to the DD Council staff. And that concludes the report.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Thank you, Ebony. Are there any questions from council members on the report? The report requires no action-- I'm sorry.

MARY TARVER: When y'all went to BESE to talk about the convicted felons inside the classroom, what did BESE say?

EBONY HAVEN: So we didn't go to BESE. That was a conversation that we had with Meredith. And we just wanted to bring it to their attention that there was concern. This was brought up at one of the community input meetings that I think was held in region nine, if I'm not mistaken. And we just basically advocated that there was a lot of concern about that language in that bill, but there was no action or anything, there was no resolve.

MARY TARVER: Are we going to put this on something that we will continue to-- I guess what's the next step to make sure. You know, sometimes we have to write a letter, just put it on record of this is our stance and be able to keep this on a watch list, I guess. I guess I'm asking what's going to happen next.

EBONY HAVEN: So if the council would like to send a letter that's something that we could draft. I guess you need a motion.

MARY TARVER: I would like to make a motion that we draft a letter to BESE stating our concern about this Act 392 language that would allow for a convicted felon inside the classroom. Especially with students with disabilities.

CHRISTI GONZALES: So there is a motion. Is there a second?

JILL HANO: Second.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Is there any debate on this? I'm sorry. It is moved and second to go ahead and draft a letter to BESE in reference to allowing convicted felons inside the classroom, students with disabilities. Is there any debate on this? Any public comment? The question is for the Louisiana Developmental Disability Council to draft a letter to BESE about Act 392 of the 2023 legislative session which would allow convicted felon inside the classroom.

Are there any objections to the motion? Are there any abstentions? Hearing no objections, the motion is approved. At this time if there is no objection the meeting will recess for 15 minutes. Hearing none, the meeting is at recess. It is now 10:20 and we will reconvene at 10:35.

CHRISTI GONZALES: The next item on the agenda is the budget report. The chair recognizes Ebony Haven for the report.

EBONY HAVEN: The budget report is included in your packets. I'm going to share it on the screen. So the budget report included in your packet includes the council's expenditures for the last quarter of the fiscal year. And that's July through September 2023. And there are just a few things that I want to review on the budget report. The previous executive director, the current chair Christi Gonzales and the vice chair Ms. Jill Hano attended the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities, our NACDD annual conference and TA Institute July 24th through the 27th. So those are the expenditures that you all see under the staff and council member out of state travel for August. Those are those expenditures. Additionally, the expenditures seen under the council meetings and in-state travel for September, that fee was for the diversity, equity and inclusion and accessibility training that the council and council staff participated in. The council staff was trained in July and the council was trained on the 13th.

And lastly, if you notice in the rent, the rent in July was doubled just for the change of fiscal year. So we pay our rent on the state fiscal year. The state fiscal year ends in June and so whenever there's a change it's a delay in payment. So the building was delayed in getting paid so that's why you see the rent was doubled on the July payment. This occurred last year as well. Are there any questions about the budget?

CHRISTI GONZALES: Phil.

PHIL WILSON: So I always get a little confused because-- does this budget reflect-- so the grant comes on a federal fiscal year and the budget is based on the first quarter of your report here, is that for the

state fiscal year or the federal fiscal year?

EBONY HAVEN: This is the first quarter of the state fiscal year because the budget is ran through the state so we go on the state fiscal year.

PHIL WILSON: July, August, September.

EBONY HAVEN: Yes.

PHIL WILSON: Okay. So I'm just going to make notes that pertain to the discussion we'll have next time, I guess. But looking at what are the impacts of-- what does our budget look like if we are increasing salaries and so forth, right. That answered my question. Thank you.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Are there any other questions from council members? Ms. Mary

MARY TARVER: Since we're still just, or this just finished the first quarter, when you look at the travel, the 76 percent of the in-state staff travel, 96 percent of members out of state, and then 50 percent of the conference registration fees, will we be able to move some money around in the budget for the upcoming months if that's needed cause that wipes out a lot of it?

EBONY HAVEN: Yes. So whenever they explained the budget to me they look at the total category. So all the travel. We could move money within those categories if we needed to. And I would just say we just had a lot of travel this time around because they attended the conference. So Jill, Amy and Christi all attended the conference, and those registrations were expensive. Plus flights, hotel rooms, food. All of that was included.

MARY TARVER: And I think we had seen that the travel, we would expect now that there would be more opportunities for you to go to conferences and do things now that we're not in the public health emergency. You might be using more money for travel.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Phil.

PHIL WILSON: I just want to see if I can catch you sometime before the end of the day just to suggest some things you might be able to do budget wise with moving money.

EBONY HAVEN: Okay.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Anyone else? The report requires no action and will be placed on file. The

next item of business is our committee reports. The first report is from the membership committee. Chair recognizes Jill Hano for the report.

JILL HANO: Okay. Thank you. Just quickly because I think y'all have a lot of information in your packet. This is a chart that says what position. So first of all I would like to thank everyone who was on the committee. First, we talked about the Louisiana demographics verses the membership by the feds according to the DD Act. And then we looked at federal demographics and areas where improvements can be made with our membership in regards to demographics, geographic location. All the time I was on the membership committee this was the most seats we had to fill at once. We had seven seats to be filled which included institutional seat. Five parents or immediate relatives terms ending in this November and February.

So we reviewed all the applicants. Which y'all can do this. We broke down all the members who applied to what position. So we filled all the seats. And so our nonprofit seat is filled by Cherie Aduli. Which I don't-- do I have to read all of these? Y'all see all the names. And then we discussed all our parent interviews. It was a lot of really good applicants. Especially the immediate relatives. So the conversations were really good, and I believe we have some really good applicants. And y'all have the bios of all the members that are waiting to be appointed by the governor. And that's my report. So do I do it or does Christi? So we're going to do it one by one. We have a motion on the floor to consider Cherie for our nonprofit representative seat. So Christi, can you call the question.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes. So on behalf of the membership-- sorry. Because the motion is coming from a committee it does not require a second. Is there any discussion from council members? Mary.

MARY TARVER: Do you know what nonprofit that she represents?

LAUREN WOMACK: I interviewed her. My name is Lauren Womack. She is a very strong candidate.

EBONY HAVEN: It's called Mina's Mission.

LAUREN WOMACK: I'm sorry. Mina's Mission. I really liked her as a candidate. She's been doing a

lot of work with representatives, local and state. She was working with our lieutenant governor, I think Nungesser, on inclusive playgrounds and things like that. And she was just talking about like how we don't have a lot of places where people with disabilities-- she found it really challenging as a parent and a certain nonprofit of finding like a lot of inclusivity where she was living. I think she would be a strong candidate. She does have experience speaking to our state officials and things like that.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Anymore discussion from council members? Is there any public comment? Are you ready for the question? And the question is on whether the membership committee recommends Cherie Aduli to fill the nonprofit representative seat on the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council. Are there any objections to this motion? Are there any abstentions? Hearing no objections, the motion is approved.

JILL HANO: Okay. I have a lot more, Christi. Okay. So our next candidate is not Nicole Banks. Okay. So now the institutional facility seat, that is a requirement by our DD Act. We had a motion to recommend Ms. Christina Bechtold.

CHRISTI GONZALES: On behalf of the membership-- sorry, Jill. It's moved to recommend Christina Bechtold to fill the institutional facility seat on the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council. Because the motion is coming from a committee it does not require a second. Is there any discussion from council members? Is there any public comment? Sorry. Ms. Julie.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: I just had a question. I didn't see anything in the packet about Christina so is she a person who lives in a facility or?

SPEAKER: To answer your question, so I interviewed Ms. Bechtold, I'm not sure why her information's not included in the packet. But she has a child at Pine Crest which is a facility. With the interview she was very passionate about her child at Pine Crest, and she was recommended to apply through her child's ombudsman. She has a military background. She is very passionate for advocating for her son and children in Pine Crest. And then she has had experience calling, writing with local senators and representatives already in her

personal advocacy. And then she did have-- she was not very familiar with, to be completely transparent with you all, she was not very familiar with the council and our purpose, but I do believe she had a strong capacity via systems change advocate and she fully supported our DD Council and our acts. And then she demonstrated true leadership qualities in her personal life and advocacy skills with her son in Pine Crest. So that's a little bit about Christina Beckett.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other discussions? Ms. Mary

MARY TARVER: Yeah. Does that meet the qualifications? You could be a parent of somebody? Okay.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Is there any public comment? Are you ready for the question? The question is on for the membership committee to recommend Christina Beckett to fill the institutional facility seat on the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council. Are there any objections to the motion? Are there any abstentions? Hearing no objections, the motion is approved.

JILL HANO: So Ebony, can I do all the parents at once? Okay. So then our final recommendation we had a few parents and immediate relatives to fill positions, so we have quite a few names to recommend. And y'all, I'm very-- I don't know how to pronounce two of these names. So we have Pascal Nguyen, Missy Moore, Samantha Singletary, Melinda Paridon and then finally Mike Billings. These four candidates are recommended to fill the parent and immediate relatives seats opening up on the council.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Thank you, Jill. It is moved to recommend Pascal Nguyen, Missy Moore, Samantha Singletary, Melinda Paridon and Michael Billings to fill the parents, immediate relative seats on the Louisiana Developmental Disability Council. Because this motion is coming from a committee it does not require a second. Is there any discussion from council members? Ms. Mary.

MARY TARVER: Hey. I just wanted to find out, we try to also move across the state to have representation and I'm one of the people rolling off. I'm from central part of the state in Alexandria. And this person Samantha Singletary I think is from the

Lafayette area, St. Landry Parish. So I'm just wondering was there anyone who was in Central Louisiana area that applied?

EBONY HAVEN: Unfortunately no. We didn't have any applications from central.

MARY TARVER: I reached out to our Families Helping Families person, and she said that there was somebody that told them that they did submit an application.

EBONY HAVEN: I don't know if you feel comfortable. Because I have everyone that submitted an application. I have that pulled up and she applied as a parent. I don't have her application.

LAUREN WOMACK: Could I speak?

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes. Go ahead, Lauren.

LAUREN WOMACK: I'm saying if I was at the membership-- I'm a part of the membership and if I was coming today I would have questions too. I would be like look, objectively our first priority is to fill our area locations, but I had seven people to interview. We were only able to get two people. Now one was a special circumstance which is personal. But if they're not showing initiative to get in touch with me for an interview, how are we going to have a quorum and move forward, you know. So that, when I was, you know, voting and I think we all were, if I can speak to other council members, we were trying to weigh getting one, the demographics, the location. But two, people that were going to participate. So it's threefold. But I just want to, from being there, that we did due diligence. If that helps.

BROOKE STEWART: So I serve on the membership committee as well. I had seven applicants to interview. I was able to interview six of the seven along with Eric who was not here today. We were given best practices to follow. They want two membership committee members to be on the interview if possible. Reach out three times per person. So with that being said, and we didn't have a lot of time to complete our interviews. I believe we had two weeks. And as you all know this is a volunteer position, so we still have to work and do our interviews in the evening or weekends. So I just wanted to put that in y'all's mind when we were because I don't feel like we were able to reach all of the people who applied. I just feel like

we may have missed some good applicants by having, I guess I just feel like may have missed a good opportunity to have some great people on the council by not having enough time to interview. Cause the seventh person did reach out but it was after our membership meeting. If they're a parent of a child with disabilities I would just like to give them the opportunity to interview. But that wasn't the case so.

JILL HANO: Can I ask the chair?

CHRISTI GONZALES: Go ahead, Jill.

JILL HANO: Okay. If like Brooke said, she has an applicant reach out to her after the deadline and she couldn't interview a potentially great candidate because of the time, can we keep that person's application to look at for next cycle?

EBONY HAVEN: Yes. So the council keeps applications on file for a year.

JILL HANO: Okay.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Did you have something?

MERIDITH JORDAN: I didn't. I just wanted to add, for what it's worth, we just went through our new selection process for our SEAP vacancies and our parent seats, it's a wonderful problem to have that so many parents want to be involved and want to serve. It's amazing. For what it's worth some of these individuals apply for me, for our executive committee selection and did very well and would have loved to have these individuals. I would have accepted all of our parents if I could have. But unfortunately I understand how difficult it is for selection committees. Mine repeatedly told me how hard it was to make those decisions for their parent members. But for what it's worth some of these individuals were also in our committee interviews and did phenomenal. And we do that too. We look at diversity. We look at region for our panel too. But just for what it's worth these individuals did phenomenal for us too.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Ms. Julie.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: I just have a question because I see these are representing parents. Is there a certain number of self-advocates that we have and a certain number of parents that we have? Because it seems like we don't have as many self-advocates as we do parents. And so I'm just trying to better

understand.

JILL HANO: You know me well.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: I just was trying to clarify if there's like a certain number of seats for parents and a certain number of seats for self-advocates. Or how is that divided on the council?

EBONY HAVEN: The Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council has 17 community members. Seven of those members are self-advocates and ten of those members are parents or immediate relatives.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: Okay.

EBONY HAVEN: That's how it's broken down.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: So when we were looking for folks there wasn't any self-advocates rolling off at the time.

EBONY HAVEN: Yes.

JILL HANO: The only self-advocate rolling off was the institutional so that had to be very specific.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: Okay. Thank you.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other questions? Brooke.

BROOKE STEWART: My one question I feel like I didn't get answered during our other meetings were I was just reviewing the best practices for the interviewing of the applicants. Is there any criteria where an interview, do they have to interview to be offered a position on the DD Council?

SPEAKER: Or do we go by just their application.

LAUREN WOMACK: No. Because there was one person that didn't that we recommended that I couldn't get an interview with.

EBONY HAVEN: Brooke, I went back and read the bylaws. I don't think that it said that they had-- let me go back. I don't want to misquote anything. I'll go back and look.

CHRISTI GONZALES: In the bylaws in reference to council membership it says persons interested in council membership must submit a completed application available from the council office or from the website. Applications can be mailed to the council office or submitted online through the website. The chair appoints a membership committee, and the committee reviews the applications, conducts interviews and nominates candidates for council approval.

BROOKE STEWART: So what are we interpreting that

to mean? They have to interview, or they don't have to?

CHRISTI GONZALES: It says conduct an interview. Whether we speak to them or. Ebony, is that correct?

EBONY HAVEN: It would be how you guys interpret.

CHRISTI GONZALES: The membership committee.

EBONY HAVEN: Yeah. The membership committee.

NICOLE BANKS: If it's in there, if it's stated in the bylaws that all that has to happen then all of that has to happen. If we're being transparent that issue got brought up before about following bylaws, we need to follow the bylaws. So the person that didn't get interviewed should not be recommended.

MARY TARVER: Read what that said. I'm so visual.

CHRISTI GONZALES: I have it if you would like to read it. So it does say that we would review the applications and do conduct an interview.

MARY TARVER: The must part is completed application. Then you appoint the committee and then they review applications, conduct interviews and nominates candidates. It doesn't have a must.

LAUREN WOMACK: But we don't have to recommend somebody based on interview. That's how I'm interpreting it. The must is the application. Not the interview.

NICOLE BANKS: The discrepancy on what the interpretation is between the members.

SPEAKER: Can we make a motion?

NICOLE BANKS: A motion is on the floor already, so we have to discuss that one first.

CHRISTI GONZALES: So let's go ahead and finish the motion that's on the floor. And the motion is to recommend Pascal Nguyen, Missy Moore, Samantha Singletary, Melinda Paridon and Michael Billings to fill the parents, immediate relative seats on the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council. Because the motion is coming from a committee it does not require a second. Is there any discussion from the council members on this motion? Brooke.

BROOKE STEWART: I just want to make sure everyone knows that we did not interview Michael Billings. He wasn't able to-- I don't know if we want to discuss that portion. We just weren't able to reach out or have a completed interview with him, so I just didn't

feel comfortable recommending.

LAUREN WOMACK: I reached out to him. He responded in a text. He was going through a very personal matter. I can read the part of the text that is not personal to the council if they would like that just considering. But he has experience. I was on the fence because he didn't do the interview, obviously, but I was convinced given the discussion that we had. He had the experience. He had the ability and everything and that he would be an asset.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Nicole.

NICOLE BANKS: I interviewed him also and I have the same message that Ms. Lauren has. And even though we didn't interview him, he did mention something personal. I'm not going to mention that part, but he said he wasn't jumping through hoops to get on the council.

MARY TARVER: Wait. Did you say you did interview him?

NICOLE BANKS: No, no, no. We did it together. So our communication was together. So every time she text, I saw the text. Like we put it all together.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Brooke.

BROOKE STEWART: Just to finish I just wanted to say I just wanted to give the same leniency to others that we were not able to interview. So I don't feel like that same privilege was given to my last person that I wasn't able to interview. So I just wanted to give that.

CHRISTI GONZALES: I'm sorry. Go ahead.

SPEAKER: Is there any reason why we could not, if you feel like there was someone else who reached out who was interested in a position, not fill that or is that counterproductive? I don't know. I'm just saying if we wanted to wait until these two individuals who apparently are interested, but did not have the bandwidth to meet the deadline, could we vote on these others and hold that spot? Just a suggestion.

EBONY HAVEN: I just wanted to just bring up if we're looking at the demographics of the council, and that's included in this little form, you guys are way low on males. The applicant that applied, unfortunately he wasn't able to interview. However, he has previously been on the council. That was a

discussion that was had, and he was the only male applicant that the council received. So I just want to make sure that you guys are keeping that in mind. That currently the council for males you're at 12.5 percent. You are supposed to mimic the state demographics and the percentage for males is 49 percent. Y'all are at 12.5. So I just want everybody to keep those things in mind whenever we're looking at the federal requirements according to the DD Act. We're trying to make sure that the council mimics the state demographics and right now you don't.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Jill.

JILL HANO: So as membership chair I was able to have input on whether or not I let Mr. Billings' application be considered. And the only-- and as I'm looking around I see four, five, six people that can agree with, seven, that can agree with me. The only reason why Mike was allowed to go through was because I have personal experience as him on the council. And I think I said this before at a committee meeting. I know I mentioned this to Ebony, but I'll say it again. If we don't allow Mike Billings on the council we are doing this council a huge injustice. And Mike was not only a council member, he was an officer. Was he a member at large?

MARY TARVER: He was on the executive committee.

BRENTON ANDRUS: He was chair of the Self-Determination Committee.

JILL HANO: I know he was a chair, but I wasn't sure if he was member at large. So I just, I mean, I want to do everything best practice. This is, again, the only reason on why I even considered him one, because I knew what he was capable of. And Brooke, to your point, like had I known there's going to be a limit, but had I known that you had someone that you were impressed with I would not have done anything unjust with one and not another. But I can't just be like okay, everyone like applied in December. (Inaudible) doesn't look at this one's qualifications. So just to put that out there. At the committee meeting I did vouch for Mr. Billings. And so I feel I needed to vouch for him again. Thank you.

CHRISTI GONZALES: So he was our only male applicant. Okay. Brooke.

BROOKE STEWART: I just had one other question. I know that we need to mimic, you mentioned mimicking the state. When was the last time that we were in compliance of mimicking the state? I just want to bring that. It seems like it's been a while since we've been in compliance so what's another.

TORY ROCCA: So I've only been on the council for about two years now, but I do recall I used to attend council meetings back in 2019 and I've been attending since then. I seem to recall we had somebody coming from a national organization in 2019 and admonish us for not meeting the national demographics. Four years ago we were possibly running the risk of getting in trouble for not mentioning demographics. From what I recall several years ago.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Phil.

PHIL WILSON: So I applaud the council for doing a lot of work to kind of get us more aligned with the demographics. I really, I seriously doubt that, at least in my many years on the council, that we will ever be in compliance with the male demographic. And I don't think we'll get slapped around for that. I just think that making an effort to include men or recruit them, not so much include them, because I think that's already out there is very positive and we should take sort of an affirmative action kind of approach to men on the council. But I don't think it's something anybody should lose sleep about. I mean, I think the concern was more about people of color and people of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and I do think that the council has moved very positively to correct some of those shortcomings. But I don't know how many men we're going to actually be able to recruit for a volunteer position. And plus the fact of the matter is men are not as engaged in a lot of advocacy. I'm not saying all men. But just as a generality. So I think, I applaud the notion. I think that, you know, I've been on the council for over the last 20 years, all but a few years, and I'd known Michael, and I also would say everything everyone else has already said. If there's going to be an exception made I would say he would be a good person to make the exception for. But don't lose sleep over not having 50 percent men. It's not going to happen.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other discussion or questions? Brooke.

BROOKE STEWART: How do we get to make exceptions for some things and then not other things? Like we don't have a standard operating procedure for membership. It seems like we don't have like a standard operating procedure for. Like we have best practices to follow, for sure. But I just don't agree with, you know, I've never met Mike. I just don't feel comfortable.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Bambi.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Yeah. So I've worked with-- I kind of feel a little bit uncomfortable even having this discussion about a person who is so incredible. And I don't know if I'm going to get in trouble for this, but Mike literally was going through what is our worst, my worst nightmare. So he didn't just not show up. It is like he was going through the worst experience any parent could go through. And Mike has been a parent for multiple kids with disabilities. Him and his wife and the children were family of the year last year for the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs, the GOLD awards. And so I don't think we should have exceptions. I think we should follow procedure as much as possible. But Mike has already done an interview through his service on this council that is recorded in our minutes and all that. So that could have been looked at given the situation that he was experiencing at the time. So I think it would be really a disappointment if the council did not get someone who has Mike's institutional knowledge and experience on the council as well as a parent. So I highly recommend Mike to be a member of the council.

LAUREN WOMACK: I'm just going to also say objectively he did respond before the deadline. He did respond to my request, our request for doing an interview through text. Did give his background, just that he did not want to speak over the phone. So it wasn't like a no-show, no response kind of a thing. So just want to make sure that we're clear on that too. And I don't know if I need to make a motion or sub-motion if we could just maybe vote either move forward with these candidates or not.

EBONY HAVEN: There's already a motion on the

floor.

SPEAKER: Can we vote?

CHRISTI GONZALES: So it's moved that we recommend Pascal Nguyen, Missy Moore, Samantha Singletary, Melinda Paridon and Michael Billings to fill the parents, immediate relative seats on the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council. Are there any objections to this motion? Are there any abstentions? Hearing no objections, the motion is approved. Thank you, Jill.

JILL HANO: Thank you, Christi. So I think we had a lot of good candidates, and I can't wait for them to get started. And that concludes my report. And thank y'all for y'all time. And I did briefly see, correct me if I'm wrong, Bambi, I know you will. I did see his bio in the packet, did I not? Okay.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Thank you, Jill. The next item of business is the report of the Act 378 subcommittee. The chair recognizes committee Chair Bambi Polotzola for the report.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: I'll be less passionate about this. The Act 378 subcommittee met yesterday. We did not have any recommendations for the council to consider. We did spend time reviewing the fiscal year 23 end of the year data and fiscal year 24 first quarter data for programs for the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities and Behavioral Health and the Office of Aging and Adult Services through the Arc of Louisiana. These reports can be found linked in our committee agenda on the council meeting's website for you to review. They're also in your packet. They're not in your packet. They're linked.

OCDD provided us with an end of the year individual and family support program priority request and expenditure report. We did look at the disparities within regions for the amount spent on certain services. Specifically the personal care attendant and respite as well as the vocational employment supports. Thirty-four percent of all funding was spent on PCA respite services and 17 percent was spent on vocational employment supports. We asked the department to follow up with all the districts and authorities that have spent at least 10 percent points above or below these averages to discuss why they may be spending more or

less than their peers. Ms. Hagan stated that she will also invite the developmental disability directors from each of the LGEs to the January meeting. When discussing the yearend report for the consumer care resources program, or CCR, we noticed Florida Parishes had an extremely low expenditure rate for this program. Dr. Savicki OBH stated a corrective action plan will be required and will be able to share more information at our next meeting about what steps Florida Parishes will take to ensure families are served in that program efficiently. We also noticed that Northeast Delta had a lower expenditure rate, but they did spend all of their original funding. Their lowered rate was due to additional dollars that was not spent so a corrective action will not be needed.

Finally, when reviewing the CCR report we had a question about the expense from South Central Human Services Authority. They spent nearly 7,000-dollars of their program dollars on marble composition books. Members felt that was a large amount of funding for notebooks so OBH will follow up with clarity and report back to the subcommittee.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Thank you, Bambi. Are there any questions from council members on the report? Is there any public comment? The report requires no action and will be placed on file. The next item of business is the report of the Self-Determination Committee and Community Exclusion Committee. The chair recognizes Brooke Stewart for the report.

BROOKE STEWART: Good afternoon, everyone. So I will go ahead and read the Self-Determination and Community Inclusion Committee report. The Self-Determination and Community Inclusion Committee met yesterday and does not have any recommendations to present to the council. We received a lot of great updates from the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities or OCDD. The Department of Health and Medicaid. A lot of the information shared is included in their agency reports and a committee specific report linked in the agenda. I encourage you to take a look at those reports. A lot of the information we discussed will also be included in the agency report coming up later. So I'll let those agency reps speak to those things. The committee did receive an update

on Families Helping Families of New Orleans as a follow-up to our discussions at the last meeting. One thing I did want to mention was at our last council meeting you voted to use the additional funding the center receives from the council to help pay any debits owed. Council staff was informed by LDH legal this was not an allowed use of state general funds, so the executive committee met in August to discuss. They decided to withhold the additional funding from FHF NOLA this year essentially halving the amount of funding they received from the council as part of their probationary status. That funding was split amongst the remaining centers.

FHF NOLA has been taking steps to address concerns. An internal financial assessment was completed to identify areas of need. New auditors and accountants were hired. The bookkeeper was let go and a firm, a new firm acquired. Center has realigned its financial goals and has developed a more accurate and realistic budget based on their finances. They have implemented various measures to cut costs and reduce unnecessary expenses while actively exploring new revenue generating opportunities. They have submitted monthly financial statements to show positive cash flow and have established a financial committee within the board to review financial performance and create action plans more regularly.

Employee advances were discontinued and the employee that had unpaid taxes has worked out a plan with the IRS to repay those taxes. The center will not face any penalties for this mishap. We also found out that the executive director is planning to resign at the end of December, so the board is working on getting an interim director until the new ED is hired. The center also reported continued efforts after the last meeting to meet with the concerned parents that filed a complaint with funders but have received zero response from the group. If you are interested in seeing all the summary reports and policy submitted to our committee by FHF NOLA you can find those linked in our committee agenda.

Finally, we discussed some of our contractual activities in goal one and two in the council's fiscal 23 action plan. I encourage you all to review the

status update document that we received quarterly for specific updates on each activity and any of the documents linked in our committee agenda.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Thank you. Are there any questions from council members on the report? Ms. Mary.

MARY TARVER: I thought that the person was supposed to be here. It seemed like there was a question yesterday and we couldn't answer it, but now I don't know what the question was. Do you remember, Brenton?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yes. The director was supposed to be here yesterday and then she was hoping she could make it today. She's having some medical issues and so she wasn't able to make it. That's why we have no one here from the center.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Is there any public comment? The report requires no action and will be placed on file. The next item of business is the report of the Education and Employment Committee. The chair recognizes Ms. Renoda Washington for the report.

RENODA WASHINGTON: All right, everyone. The Education and Employment Committee met yesterday and does not have any recommendations to present to the council. We received a lot of great updates from the Louisiana Rehabilitative Services also known as LRS, and the Louisiana Department of Education. Melissa Bayham with Louisiana Rehabilitation Services was not able to attend the meeting on yesterday, but Stacy Marbs came from LRS and provided information to the committee. During the July 2023 meeting the committee requested an official copy of the MOU between LRS and the Louisiana Department of Education. Unfortunately, Ms. Marbs stated that the legal department within LRS had to be contacted regarding sharing the MOU between LRS and LDOE. Therefore, the MOU was not shared at this meeting, but the committee requested an update from Melissa Bayham at the next meeting in January 2024.

Ms. Stacy Marbs also provided the committee with information requested during the July quarterly meeting regarding the third-party cooperative arrangement at high schools including the assignments and contacts. TPCA or contracts between the school district and LRS

to provide preemployment transition services or PreETS starting age 16 to 22. Ms. Stacy provided the council with a summary list from each region and captured the public and nonpublic high schools in each district with a TPCA or fee for service vendor attached to the school. Ms. Stacy also presented data on each region and copies of the data were made and distributed to the committee. Says the data was not provided before the meeting. The committee expressed concerns that some schools did not have TPCAs or fee for service vendors attached to their school. However, Ms. Stacy stated that even if a school did not have a TPCA or vendor listed there was still an LRS counselor assigned to all the schools and those counselors can provide the transition services. The committee asked Ms. Stacy if the LRC counselors contact information could be shared but she would have to check with Ms. Bayham. Great information on yesterday.

The committee also received an update for Louisiana Department of Education from Meredith Jordan. Ms. Jordan shared that the special education directors met on August 17th, and they invited LRS out to talk about transition service and the options available to ensure that directors are aware of TPCAs, and that the information is given down to the schools about services available after high school including the Paycheck Program. Ms. Jordan shared that the information was very well received. Ms. Jordan also informed the committee that the school districts have spent just over 1 million of the 8 million that was allocated for cameras in special education classrooms during the 2022 legislative session. That amount may increase this year as more parents' requests are received. The committee will continue to monitor and receive information on cameras quarterly.

It was also requested at the July meeting that the committee be provided discipline data relative to students with disabilities and Ms. Jordan provided information on student discipline from a three-year time period. That was 2019 to 2022 on each school system in Louisiana. They will also be gathering data from the 22-23 school year to distribute to the committee when available. We encourage everyone to take a look at the data that is linked in the committee

agenda. Due to the data suppression rules actual data could not be provided for discipline if it was less than 5 percent. It was noted the drastic in suspensions or discipline during the 2020-2021 school year was due to the pandemic and many students still participating in virtual instruction. Ms. Jordan also highlighted that when looking at the data by disability category those with other health impairments and specific learning disabilities had higher numbers of suspension and expulsions and could be due to behavior not relating to the disability. It has been reported that behaviors have increased since the pandemic and the department is looking more into how they can support schools with behavior support plans. Dr. Phil Wilson also informed the committee that OHI, which is other health impairments, and specific learning disabilities are also categories trying to get diagnosed because they can't pinpoint the diagnosis. A lot of kids with autism are misdiagnosed and we should really look more into correct diagnoses.

The Human Development Center has made a commitment to look at fetal alcohol spectrum disorders due to the high prevalence, one out of 20, and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder being the leading cause of developmental disabilities in the world. These kids are getting suspended from school because they are being misdiagnosed and not getting the correct interventions. So Dr. Wilson asked the council to collaborate on the efforts to bring more awareness of this disorder. The committee raised concern on the large number of disciplinary removals included in the data, but Meredith stated the number could be high because it counts every removal, and the same student may be counted multiple times. However, the department is going to look into training all teachers regarding discipline rules.

Lastly, Meredith Jordan informed the committee that the department is hiring a new state ombudsman to assist families with grievances and dispute resolution. We discussed some of our contractual activities in goal three of the council's action plan and I encourage you all to review the status update document that we received quarterly for specific updates on each activity and any documents linked in our committee's

agenda. The committee further discussed the state ombudsman that the LDOE plans to hire and expressed concern over having only one ombudsman. The committee would like Meredith to discuss the Special Education Advisory Council on the next agenda in January 2024. There were a lot of great dialogue on yesterday shared in this committee meeting and I encourage everyone to read the summary once it is posted or watch the entire meeting on the council's YouTube channel.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Thank you, Renoda. Are there any questions from council members on the report?
Vivienne.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Not a question, but more of a statement. I feel like I was misunderstood yesterday. I did not mean that we need two ombudsman. Parents already do not trust the Louisiana Department of Education with their complaints after the recent audit revealed most of them were left unaddressed and unacknowledged. The ombudsman role created to address the grievances needs to be filled via a contract with an outside entity to best fit the needs of these families. I would like to make a motion to add this to the legislative agenda under education.

CHRISTI GONZALES: So the question is on whether we have a motion about getting an outside source?

VIVIENNE WEBB: Yes, ma'am.

CHRISTI GONZALES: For the ombudsman and send it to legislative session? Is that correct?

VIVIENNE WEBB: Yes, ma'am. Thank you.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Is there a second?

NICOLE BANKS: I second it.

CHRISTI GONZALES: It's been moved and seconded to go ahead and add an outside source for the Louisiana Department of Education ombudsman and add this item to the 2024 legislative advocacy agenda under education.

EBONY HAVEN: For next session, 2025?

JILL HANO: This session.

EBONY HAVEN: For the 2024 legislative session.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Is there any debate? Jill.

JILL HANO: I'm not debating. I have a question. Was that an item discussed at the LaCAN kickoff or from the community input meeting? Okay. Thank you.

SPEAKER: This actually happened shortly thereafter in the legislative community input meetings were held.

However, there was a lot of input available widely online that speaks to that effect. The LaCAN members have been contacted by members regarding this specifically. But it is actually very important to the parents that we address this because they do not have a lot of trust in LDH to once again tackle any of these complaints and issues. And they coupled that with the way it was ignored per the reports audit. They don't have much faith (inaudible). They would prefer an outside contract be arranged.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any public comment? Are you ready for the question? Sorry.

PHIL WILSON: I'm not sure if the wording is clear. Thank you for clarifying. To outside source. So what the motion is asking is...

CHRISTI GONZALES: That the ombudsman be hired from on outside source.

PHIL WILSON: Yeah. But somehow that seems very ambiguous the way it's worded. Somebody else help with the wording there.

LAUREN WOMACK: Would we need to get a contract?

MERIDITH JORDAN: Additional information. So we had conversation about this. I'm sure everyone is familiar with the audit report that was released. I would abstain from this neither pro or against. But I will say to be clear in the report there were 61 normal, written, signed complaints per law. All of those were addressed by the department. There is no excuse for the nine or ten emails that were received by parents that didn't receive a response or that proof couldn't be generated. There is no excuse. Every single parent in our state, in our communities deserves responsiveness, deserve the benefits that come with those procedural safeguards and the rights for those families. It does sadden me there are people who don't trust the department. I get it. I want to build that. I want that for us and for our parents. So that's, I just wanted to put my, I want us to have trust. And there is work to be done to build that trust. Part of that starts with ensuring that every parent gets a response when they email our inbox. I don't disagree. I completely agree with that, Vivienne.

I'll also say whether this moves forward or not so we have this position we're under interviews. I would

expect this person to be selected very quickly. Second, we also have in our state another really new position is there's another child ombudsman, I forget which office that is in, but there's another child ombudsman position already in our state. So just thinking about, you know, if the department has created a position, is about to hire a position, you know, how this moves forward, what happens with that, or how that transition would happen would be up to the powers that be. But just want to certainly put that out there.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other? Ms. Mary.

MARY TARVER: It's me again. If we put this, if we're saying that we want it to be on the Developmental Disabilities Council for our legislative agenda from the SNAP perspective we need to understand what that entails because you don't say it. You've got to have like all the back papers. You've got to have somebody who's taking the lead on it. So I guess I want to see how that would work.

EBONY HAVEN: So just based off what Meredith said they are in the hiring process. They're doing interviews. We don't have any information to even give to the LaCAN leaders and the FHF directors to even go out on legislative visits for them to find a legislator to number one, take this on and then get traction from the LaCAN members and the other legislators. So I don't know if this is a realistic ask or an addition to the advocacy agenda just because like you just said, we take time to research things. We have to get information from the departments. And then we have to put together factsheets that we send out and get comments on, you know, and feedback before we actually use those factsheets. So if they're already in the hiring process, there's no time.

NICOLE BANKS: Okay. I didn't know that that was the whole intel of that. So can I take my second back? Can I retract that? I'm just asking.

NICOLE LEARSON: Really there's no need if the motion isn't withdrawn. You just vote it down.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other comments or questions?

MERIDITH JORDAN: One last thing. And I'll say, you know, I feel like everybody agrees, the support's needed for our families. And just want to be clear. The department didn't have any, we had to take steps on

what we could do and what we could control. We didn't have any ability to say hey, you know, this entity or that entity, you hire this position. And so we kind of did what we felt like was in our control. A step forward and a recommendation that we talked with the auditors at length about. And with the other individual that we contracted with to review our dispute resolution process as well. That was something that came out as a recommendation was for us to hire a special education ombudsman. But I didn't want this group to think that we said, we just came up with a step to take. That there was other input around that too and a suggestion for that.

PHIL WILSON: Yeah, I don't think anybody has an objection with the department paying the position, that's great. I think the concern is we talked about last night in our committee meeting is kind of bearing what was-- I'm sorry. I don't know names. But what's your name? Just mirroring what we had said a minute ago. It's that whole transparency and trust issue. So as we talked in our committee meeting yesterday I also suggested that, you know, if there's a way, even if the person's hired, before they begin doing their job, if there's a way to, you know, move that person under another independent organization so the parents have a level of trust that apparently they don't have right now. It's going to make the purpose for doing this more functional. It's like if no one called because they said oh, we can't call the people that are policing, watching the hen house then it doesn't make sense. An organization like DRLA or another type of organization that has an advocacy, legal blah, blah, blah sort of a background might be something parents would actually feel more comfortable with. Again, I applaud the department for attempting to do something that really needed to be done a long time ago. But the trust I think is already broken. So it might not be very effective.

CHRISTI GONZALES: So the question that we have is for the Department of Education state ombudsman to be hired from an outside source other than LDOE and add this item to the council's 2024 legislative advocacy agenda under education. Made by council members Vivienne Webb and seconded by Nicole Banks. Are there

any objections to this motion? Sorry, Ms. Mary. There is an objection so we will take a roll call vote. If you were in favor of the motion to have the Department of Ed state ombudsman be hired from an outside source other than LDOE and add this item to the council's 2024 advocacy agenda under education when your name is called if you are in favor of the motion when your name is called say yes. If you're opposed say no. If you abstain say abstain. Ebony, please call roll.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Avera. Ms. Banks.

NICOLE BANKS: No.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Banks, no. Dr. Barovechio.

PATTI BAROVECHIO: Abstain.

EBONY HAVEN: Dr. Barovechio abstains. Ms. Basile.

Ms. Bayham.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Abstain.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Bayham abstains. Ms. Cosse. Ms.

Crain.

CHERI CRAIN: Abstain.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Hagan.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: No.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Hagan, no. Ms. Harmon.

ANGELA HARMON: No.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Harmon, no. Ms. Hymel. Ms.

Hano.

JILL HANO: Abstain.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Hano abstains. Ms. Jordan.

MERIDITH JORDAN: Abstain.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Jordan abstains. Dr. McKey. Mr.

Piontek. Ms. Richard.

MELINDA RICHARD: Abstain.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Richard abstains. Mr. Rocca.

TORY ROCCA: Abstain.

EBONY HAVEN: Mr. Rocca abstains. Ms. Stewart.

BROOKE STEWART: No.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Stewart, no. Ms. Tarver.

MARY TARVER: No.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Tarver, no. Mr. Taylor. Ms.

Washington.

RENODA WASHINGTON: No.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Washington, no. Ms. Webb.

VIVIENNE WEBB: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Webb, yes. Dr. Wilson.

PHIL WILSON: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: Dr. Wilson, yes. Ms. Lauren Womack.

LAUREN WOMACK: Abstain.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Lauren Womack abstains. Ms. Tangela Womack.

TANGELA WOMACK: Abstain.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Tangela Womack abstains. Two yeses, six noes and eight abstentions.

CHRISTI GONZALES: The noes have it and the motion fails. If there is no objection, the meeting will recess for lunch.

LAUREN WOMACK: Objection. Sorry. Can we maybe have a motion to put this on the, I don't know if this is possible, put this on the agenda for the next council meeting, this topic to revisit?

CHRISTI GONZALES: It needs a second.

VIVIENNE WEBB: I second.

EBONY HAVEN: Lauren, I think it may be more appropriate to go to the Education and Employment Committee first and then--.

LAUREN WOMACK: That's fine. I retract my motion.

EBONY HAVEN: No, you don't have to retract it. I'll add that we'll add it to the agenda for the Education and Employment January meeting.

LAUREN WOMACK: Thank you.

PHIL WILSON: Question.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes, Phil.

PHIL WILSON: Could it not go to the Executive Council?

EBONY HAVEN: The executive committee?

PHIL WILSON: It feels like if it goes to the Education and Employment, I don't know.

EBONY HAVEN: That committee has the power to make motions and then send them to the full council.

JILL HANO: I feel like the ED would know more about this than the executive committee. That's why I abstained because I had no earthly idea what y'all are saying.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Vivienne, you had seconded?

VIVIENNE WEBB: Yeah.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes. Okay. So it is moved and seconded to add this item to the agenda for the January 2024 Education Employment Committee meeting. Is there any, are there any questions? Any public comment? Are there any objections to the motion? Are there any

abstentions? Hearing no objections, the motion is approved.

If there is no objection since it is now 12:03 the meeting will recess for lunch. The meeting is at recess. It is now 12:03 and we will reconvene at 1:03.

CHRISTI GONZALES: The next item of business is the standing council member reports. We were asked by a few of the council members to change the order due to personal commitments and other commitments within their office and personal issues. Any objections to the order being changed?

PHIL WILSON: I don't have an objection to the order being changed, but I need to leave by 2:30 so if you can squeeze me in somewhere in there I would appreciate it.

CHRISTI GONZALES: All right. Any objections? Okay. We will now hear from the Office of Aging and Adult Services. The chair recognizes Mindy Richard to present the report.

MELINDA RICHARD: Thank you all for letting me go earlier. I don't normally ask for special favors, but today I am. So I appreciate that. So let me just-- mine is I'm going to call it the salmon-colored report, pink color. And I'll just kind of give you some highlights and like I normally do just kind of tell you some things that we're working on and answer any questions you might have. We have our stats here and the number of people in our various programs. The one that I think everybody's interested in, including myself, is under the second section, the waiver registry. The community choice waiver wait list is just under the 9,000. And the portion that we list are people that don't have some other type of services already is 4168. I can share with you, I think I shared this last time, that we were under 900 on that number last October and then it just ballooned. I mean, we've got tons of requests in. But I can say that in the last month it has leveled out some. It kind of went way up and now it's kind of leveled out. In fact, just last Friday it was under 4,000. So we're kind of maybe going in the right direction there.

The wait time, that's the other thing people want to know is once I get on the wait list and I have no

other services, how long might I have to wait. And right now it's a little more than ten months. It's not terrible, but we want it to be six weeks. And so we're at 41, almost 42 weeks and so we're still working on that. We have a lot of different things going on in order to try to eliminate the wait list. But the most promising piece of this is in the legislative session, and I think I shared this with y'all last time, we got 500 new waiver slots. So we're working to fill those waiver slots. The process is, you know, we send in a letter, person says I want the services, then they go through the support coordinator, you know, gets with them and does an assessment, et cetera, et cetera. So we can't just issue 500 right at once. It would swamp our providers. And so we are pushing it out pretty heavy. So our support coordinators are feeling pressured by the fact we want to get these waiver slots filled. So it's a delicate balance, right. We don't want to swamp the boat as they say, but at the same time I would like to send all 500 letters in one day because we want to get people off the wait list and into services. But that's going pretty well. The team seems to be managing getting those certifications done as quickly and helping the support coordination when need be to do that.

Another thing I might mention, this might be a good time to weave that in. In the legislative session there was a House Resolution 209 that created a workgroup to study how the Support Coordination Community Provider Association was really helpful in saying let's look at support coordination. Support coordination said we need to get paid, we get paid at certification. We need to get paid for the stuff we do before that. Is there a way we can do that. And some of the rules we have at CMS preclude that. However, we're looking at every which way we might could do that. Because a lot of the work they do they never get the certification, or they never get paid. And so you guys know this enough about me already. We're looking at the data. We have pulled data to look at what percentage of the time do they not get paid, why don't they get paid. Basically digging into the data and also the policies to see are there some things we could do that would help them in that space. At the same

time that we're pushing on those 500 waivers we're also trying to help that partner get through this process in a cost-effective business happy way.

The other thing I would mention in the Traumatic Head and Spinal Cord Injury Program during the pandemic that program is funded through people going to court and having to pay fines for different DUIs, reckless driving. Different types of traffic violations. And a percentage of the money that they have to pay in those fines funds this work. Well, with the pandemic courts weren't in session, cases weren't being heard, fines weren't being levied so therefore our revenue was affected by that. Now last legislative session last year the legislature plugged the hole because our collections were down, and they helped support us in that gap of what we didn't collect because the courts were closed. I'm happy to say that now collections are back up and they appear to be pre-pandemic. What that allows us to do is to basically work through that wait list. That we are now working on cases in 2020. So we do still have 245 people on that wait list, but these are state dedicated funds. Statutorily dedicated funds. So when there's funds, we can open cases. When there's not, we can't. So I'm happy to report that our collections seem to be trending, not only trending upward, but staying upward. So we think we're recovering from the impact of the pandemic there.

On the SPAs I will say that our team just recently sent out an RFI which is a request for information. The folks that we work with, the vendors that work there for the case management we've asked them to provide us information on, you know, A, their willingness and capability to be able to provide services. And we will use that information in order to develop our new contracts. We all know that inflation has hit everybody and so we're hoping to get information from the people that can do the work, want to do the work so that we can pay appropriately for the work.

Adult protective services. Really two things to note here. If you're a math person and you're looking at the last chart there, normally caregiver neglect is kind of our number one allegation in our cases. And for this quarter fiscal year 24 it appears it is number

two and that number one is self-neglect. Now we're going to keep an eye on that because it may be the quarterly blip. But I will say that my experience, and I mean, I went in the car with the investigators and went out into the field a few times to kind of see what they see and a lot of what is classified as self-neglect sometimes, I'm going to say it's kind of twofold. One, sometimes it's hoarding. You know, and what one person-- like I might go into someone's home and say oh, my gosh I would never live in this. People have the freedom of choice to live the way they want to live. Another person might say I'm filing a complaint that you have self-neglect because you are living like this. And sometimes they turn out not to be substantiated because this person, this is how they choose to live. So it's not neglect, it is just their choice in how they live. So I suspect-- we've been seeing more and more of that. And so when a complaint comes in it's not necessarily an indication that the person feels that way. So we're going to keep our eye on that category because that's kind of interesting that we're seeing an increase there. But it's not something that's not being seen across the country.

Another thing that we're doing in adult protective services is we paid a consultant to come in, an actual consultant to look over all of our policies, all of our procedures and just kind of do just a quality check for us. Is there anything in the way we do our cases and report our cases that may not be best practice. Or there may be other practices that are more effective or more recommended. And so that consultant is about 75 percent through. And they've had a few suggestions. I haven't had the final report come through, but the tenor is nothing major. Just a few tweaks.

The other thing that I am interested, we're going to have them go through a sampling of our cases and say was there anything we could have done differently or should have done differently in an investigation. So I'm happy to put ourselves in front of these experts to say are we doing the best we can be doing. So just to let you know that work's going on. And we used some of the money that came from the federal funding during the pandemic to pay for that.

Other activities that we have going on just in the

broader OAAS is of course working through the American Rescue Plan Act dollars and the initiatives there. I'm sure Julie will want to talk about this too. But our bonuses finally got paid out. And I believe they've all been paid to the workers who worked during those months during the pandemic. So now we've got our fingers crossed that they don't leave the workforce now that the bonuses have been paid. That we've got our fingers crossed to maintain that workforce.

And then the public health emergency unwind is ongoing. You know, when the feds said stop the emergency, public health emergency it was in May, and they gave us six months to unwind it. And Tanya will probably speak a little bit about that from an OAAS standpoint. There were some policies that we stopped in May. There were some policies we stopped in September. And there are a few more exceptions that we put in that we'll stop in November. And so the last ones there's a few that are still going to stop in November. But we've been communicating those all along so that nobody gets caught unaware. We also have been working closely with Medicaid as they are beginning to redetermine people and say hey, wait a minute. You didn't reapply. We don't have your information. Our population we get a list from Medicaid, and we reach out, our regional operations reach out and talk to the people and let them know hey, next month you're going to get a letter that you're getting taken off of Medicaid because they don't have this information. So we're trying to kind of close that gap, so nobody loses coverage. Even before that letter goes out. So that's kind of it for me today. Does anybody have any questions about anything that I covered? Nicole.

NICOLE BANKS: I know that you guys were talking about you got the 500 new waivers, right. And you said that they were doing work, you know, before they get certified and all the other good stuff. But are they not getting paid for that while they're doing that?

MELINDA RICHARD: So here's how CMS looks at it. Because support coordination gets paid a per member per month fee once a person is certified. So in other words, certified is they're financially eligible and they're medically eligible. So once that's determined an assessment is done and it's determined that they're

eligible then that's when CMS will start paying. And so CMS says until you determine they're eligible we can't pay you. What they do before then is gathering all that information. And so CMS looks at the rate that we pay them to include all that prework I'm going to call it. What we're hearing from support coordination, because we're listening with really open ears, is that there's a lot of work that goes in that prework that they feel isn't covered by that rate. So we're having to say okay, what do we need to ask of CMS. Maybe it's the situation where we can say if we find out you are eligible can we go back and pay you so many days prior for the work that you did. And does our rate, did it include that work or maybe not include that work. So we're digging into the roll up your sleeves, dig into the weeds of that. But it has always been CMS policy that you can't get paid till you get certified and we're trying to kind of push on ways we might could do otherwise.

NICOLE BANKS: And how long does that process take for them to get certified to start doing work?

MELINDA RICHARD: That's a great question. Sometimes it takes six month. So let me tell you why though. Because it includes that financial eligibility piece and sometimes the participant has to provide documentation for Medicaid eligibility and they kind of do the back and forth. We need the this. Now we need the this. And it can take longer than the three months it's supposed to take. And so sometimes it's not the support coordinator's fault. It's not Medicaid's fault. It's really kind of the coordination with the participants. And so it's a little bit I'm going to say, out of their control sometimes. And out of the control of our own Medicaid department because they can't approve what they don't have. Anyway, we're trying to find ways to kind of fill that gap for them because it's not insignificant. But thank you for the question.

NICOLE BANKS: I have a couple more. I took notes. Okay. So you said that you would like for that process to happen like y'all at a ten-month process right now in regards to the waivers and the waiting list and stuff. How long people stay up on there. I know you said that y'all working on ways to get that there.

Okay. What does that actually look like? Is it hiring someone? Is it bringing in extra support staff? Like what does that look like?

MELINDA RICHARD: Yeah. That's a great question. So it's probably about a ten-prong approach. So one of the ways that-- so remember that number I told you about that's just now under 4,000. That's people who get no other services. So one way to solve that is to give them other services that's not a CCW waiver. Can we get you an LTPCS. Can we get you a pace program. Can we get you somehow with adult day healthcare. And so we've been sending out letters to people who are on that wait list saying would you be interested in these other programs because we could get you some services while you're waiting.

Another thing to do is to find out like we're doing this situation like I told you last time where when we send the letter we call you and tell you the letter's coming. Once we send it we call you and say did you reply. We're trying to hurry you up to get you to respond so we can hurry up and get you in a waiver. We also had there's an aspect that's kind of I'm going to say scrubbing the list. In other words, what if 400 of those people that are on the list no longer need services. And so we have to reach out and say do you still have the same needs you had, you know, a year ago. And so we're scrubbing the list. There's some cases where they're actually getting services through OCDD, and they need to come off of our list. There's some of them can we give you other services that are maybe not a CCW, but while you're waiting. And then some of it is just pushing the process faster with support coordination because they don't come off the list till they get through that certification process. So how can we speed that piece up.

And the last piece is we're asking this year's budget that we put in 750 more waivers. Now that has to go through, and I've explained that before, seven layers of approval, basically, before it goes to the legislature and really gets approved. We made it through that process last year and got 500. This year we may not get 750 but we're asking for that. And, you know, most of the questions that I have asked to me is if we give you 750 can you fill them. In other words,

can you really do that many if we give them to you. Can you fill them. And we believe we can. Our goal right now is to get the 500 filled by Christmas. We feel like is we ask for 750 that's within our capabilities. But it is pushing our system. And so that's the other, if you added another 750 that would help as well. And there's attrition, right. There are people who are in a waiver that either move out of state, they pass away, they don't need services anymore. We do have attrition. So even if we got no new waivers we have a fair amount of attrition that's in addition to the 500 that we're building.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Thank you.

NICOLE BANKS: Okay. And one more thing. So you said that you guys had an outside entity come in and do an audit upon you all, right. So when are they giving y'all that feedback?

MELINDA RICHARD: So they report to us weekly to my teams and say hey, here's what we looked through. Here's what we saw. But actually I'm getting the final report I think it's within two weeks is when the final report is, kind of like an exit report. And I'm happy to share with you all once I get it what we saw and I'm anxious to see it myself.

NICOLE BANKS: And then y'all are going to have preventive steps?

MELINDA RICHARD: Oh, absolutely. I'm sure they've already fixed the things, they're already kind of given them a hint that we might need to button up. And usually there are things like, you know, policies and procedures that we have in place that they might say other states do it this way. It's not wrong, the way we're doing it, but you might consider doing it this other way. That's what I'm hearing. The feedback I'm getting is there's nothing earthshattering. It's just some tweaks and polishing up some things.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Thank you. Are there any other questions from the council members on the report?
Jill.

JILL HANO: So the 750 waivers. Is that for 2023 or 24?

MELINDA RICHARD: No, ma'am. If they get approved by the legislature they would be given to us in July of 2024.

JILL HANO: So for 24?

MELINDA RICHARD: Yes.

JILL HANO: Okay. Thank you.

MELINDA RICHARD: So the ones we have, the 500 right now we have until June of 2024 to fill for this fiscal year and the 750 would be for the next year.

JILL HANO: Okay. Got it. Thanks.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other discussions or questions? Is there any public comment? Hearing none, the report requires no action, and it will be placed on file. The next item of business is the report from Families Helping Families centers. The chair recognizes Mr. James Sprinkle for the report.

JAMES SPRINKLE: I promise three minutes. I always try to do that. People have a white piece of paper. Region 2 is Baton Rouge. Region seven, of course, is up in Shreveport. So y'all have that report in front of you. I'm not going to go over it. You can read that. You'll notice three or four blank spaces. Some people had emergencies. Anyway, what I wanted to do today was give a little bit different perspective. A personal perspective to show you who Families Helping Families is by a slide show. Now I took pictures of our center, 12 pictures. I'm going to talk fast. We are in Pineville, Louisiana. We have about a 3-acre complex that is composed, we have a recess program. You'll see a two-story building there. Next one. A different picture of it. And just want to give you a personal view. So you see you can see what the Families Helping Families center looks like and the outside. You're not going to be able to see the people because you obviously have to have permission to put the people on any kind of pictures. That's a different view. And there is the front. This is a two-story building. We recently had a freeze, and we got a 60,000-dollar remodeling. Completely refinished wood floors. Put on a new roof. It's been beautiful.

You can switch to the next one. Back there right behind that car there is a 700-foot walking trail with a bridge that's made for wheelchairs or for people jogging or walking. And this particular thing it was going to cost us 7,000-dollars to pave it. We got it at auction at a shipyard, a big conveyor belt this wide and this thick, 400-dollars. Went down with a trailer

and almost squished the trailer. It was bad. Volunteers came up there and said (inaudible). It was this tall to unroll. You can imagine over 10,000 pounds. Anyway, it goes all the way through the property, back around, back up. Next page. This is from the rear view of our center. The Early Steps Program you'll see the blue way back there on the right-hand side. That's hand painted by one of our artist of an aquarium scene that's been there for years that she painted for us. We have offices that we added, the two white sections. That's our parking lot.

Next space. We have a place for 12 cars. This particular thing right there is a garage that houses a quarter of a million dollars' worth of supplies supplied to us by not Wal-Mart. What's the drugstore, Wal-Greens. Supplies a quarter million dollars' worth of supplies. A semi-truck up here. My board of director come up with a tractor to unload it. We had mayors come all the way down last Hurricane Ida to help people coming up. Within a week it was empty. We had everything, supplies having to do with Covid, things like that. All those types of things. Next one.

Now this is where we get personnel. This is my financial director Solica, and we hired her many years ago before she went to college, and she went to college and got a bachelor's degree. And she stayed with us and when I retire she will become deputy director and she is good. She so far out does me now I don't know who I am. You can switch to the next one. And there's Kristen. Kristen, what can I say. This lady programmatically knows everything. I mean, you ask her anything she can show you where it is. She spoils us. So we have two people. End of the year they don't want me to go. I'm going to watch and see what's going on. These are great people. And you get to see what happened after they refinished everything in there. You can go to the next one. Oh, and this is another. We go above and beyond. Office for Citizens with Developmental Disability, when they need anything you see that trailer there. We sometimes have things brought to us, given to us. We deliver to the people's homes for free. You'll see the building over on the left. We give away wheelchairs, walkers, hospital beds. I think we've given away ten hospital beds this

year. They get donated. And in the center you'll see a swing set. That was donated to us right there in Alexandria. Anyway, the foundation matched us there. You can go to the next one.

You'll see back there, there is a sidewalk of the walkway we talked about. I'm on the board of Head Start for Avoyelles Parish and we invite them to our centers. Head Start you are required to have so many people with disabilities. So they could come up there and you'll see them swinging. Rapides Foundation, that's the organization that donated. We had to match funds with it. But you can go to the next one. And there's the-- that should be the last picture of me having fun. So I wanted to give you a personal picture of what Families Helping Families does in a short presentation, but something you could put your eyes on and see what's there. All the centers are different. They have different views. They have different populations which means they have different needs. So we are just one of those and I would hope that one day you'll get to see some other centers show you something with their centers too because this is my last year. I'm 72 years old and I'm going to be around for a while. But that's my presentation.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Thank you, Mr. Sprinkle. Are there any questions from the council members on the report? Is there any public comment? Yes, ma'am.

MARYLIN THORTON: Just to add to it--.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Can you please tell me who you are.

MARILYN THORTON: I'm Dr. Thorton, Families Helping Families of Greater Baton Rouge. We're located here. We serve seven Parishes in this region, region two. We're supportive of all of the Families Helping Families whatever work they're doing. A lot of us have some of the same contracts. Some of us have a little bit different contracts. And we want to make sure that the council understands the significance of our touching the people kind of one-on-one in the regions where we are. We know that there's a greater need to reach out in the rural areas and which requires additional moneys. We want to thank the council for helping to support the additional money coming in with the legislative approval into our regions. We still

need a lot more because it's a lot to be done. We are here to really advocate on behalf of those family members who have people with disabilities in their families. I see from the perspective of a lot of the agencies sometimes the discussion does not go as far as it needs to go to make sure that the people that we are serving, we have to serve are included in those discussions. It's kind of like an add-on or attachment, but the significance and the impact is much greater than a lot of people can even realize. I heard the discussion with DOE and some of the things that I sat, and I heard from the perspective of those people who have disabilities or family members with disabilities are really not being addressed. I mean, there's some serious concerns.

Now having attended the meeting, many have been here longer than I have, I'm seeing those kinds of issues are not seeming to get to the table like they need to if DDC is the advocacy for those with disabilities. So I just want to kind of highlight. I appreciate and I thank all of the regional offices for what they do. We're probably the only one right now that have a statewide program where we're trying to, the Empowerment Program, we're trying to reach a lot more out there. So I just wanted to kind of highlight some of what James said. They've done an awesome job in region six and the Crossroads. And we have Nicole here from region four. Appreciate all of what she does as well. So I just wanted to have that comment.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Thank you, Dr. Thorton. Is there any other public comment? Nicole.

NICOLE FLORES: Nicole Flores, director of Families Helping Families Acadiana. And just want to reiterate, thank the council for including the funding in the advocacy agenda. And we do have two statewide programs. At our center we have Parent to Parent. We're the alliance member. And of course we also have the Louisiana Youth Leadership Forum.

MARILYN THORTON: Excuse me. We have winter wonderland coming up and want to make sure y'all pass the word around.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other public comment? The report requires no action and will be placed on file. Next up is Mr. Phil from the LSU HSD Human Development

Center. Dr. Wilson.

PHIL WILSON: Hi, everybody. So our report is in your packet, and it is purple, blue, green, whatever color it is. Teal. That's it. I'm not going to read from it. I wanted to spend a minute, I know I told my colleagues in the Employment Education Committee yesterday that they could nod off while I make this comment today. But I just wanted to share with the rest of the council that the Human Development Center, Louisiana's (inaudible) program has included goals in two of our major grants to raise awareness, increase identification and provide treatment for children, youth, and adults with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. So it's going to be one of our major points of focus over the next five years. And I'll just say a couple quick things about FASD and conclude with inviting the council to consider joining with us, and the Disability Rights Louisiana as well since we are the three sister agencies in the DD network. And Tory, I have no idea who the director of the DRLA is. Actually, I think I have an idea, but I would invite you to speak to that person and let her or him know that I think our new DD Council director, executive director and myself would really love, not to say this for you, maybe you don't want this, Ebony, but in the past we always met quarterly as the three directors to kind of make sure we were as a triangular kind of sister agencies kind of addressing things, and aware of what each other are doing, and how we can support the efforts of one another. So that's a direct ask to you.

TORY ROCCA: If I can speak to that. So much like the DD Council we currently are operating with an interim director on a temporary bases. We are conducting a search for a full-time permanent ED right now. We're doing interviews and our expectation is that sometime after the beginning of the year we will have a permanent ED on board. So we are currently operating under interim ED right now. So probably next year sometime.

PHIL WILSON: So can I ask you as a personal favor that when that happens can you let me know and certainly let Ebony know and we'll try to welcome that person into the DD network. But just with that aside then, real quick I just want to say that fetal alcohol

spectrum disorder, according to World Health Organization, is the leading cause of developmental disabilities in the world. According to the CDC fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is the leading cause of developmental disabilities in the United States. I would ask most of you in this room if you know an individual who has fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and I will wager, but we're not going to really do this because I'm too cheap to pay off, but I would wager that the majority of people in here would answer no, I really don't know somebody who has FASD. One in 20 kids our chairperson from the EDD committee stated earlier has a fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. One in 800 kids has down syndrome. I'll bet you everybody in this room knows somebody with down syndrome, but yet it's 40 times more likely a person would have fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. That's kind of where we're at in terms of moving the needle on this very, very prevalent and devastating condition that mostly is misdiagnosed as another thing. Sometimes mental health. Sometimes autism. Sometimes the oppositional defiant behavior, et cetera, et cetera.

These kids and families are in crisis. Many of them are in foster care. Many of them are on a path to prison and bad outcomes because they appear to be kids who are troublemakers but they're not. They have brain injuries. And their behavior is misconstrued and by the time these kids are in second or third grade they're sort of on the road to watch this one, watch this one. Or if you're a mom or dad you're so frustrated because you tell your kid what you want them to do, they do it great. The next day they come in and do the same thing. What's wrong with you. We talked about this yesterday. They have a brain injury. We could go on. And I invite all of you, and if the council would help, and Tory to the extent DRLA can help us get the word out. I will send information to the council and to DRLA about we want to invite people to come to a live/virtual Zoom or live, a live event most likely in New Orleans but we will do it a hybrid way so anybody wherever they're at can come. If you have any interest at all in this topic and helping us formulate our strategic plan we want to hear from you. We are going to form a state chapter of FASD Fetal

Alcohol Spectrum Disorder United which is the support and information and advocacy organization for fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. So we would love to have, you know, people engaged with us so that we can hear from those folks that have lived experience or are very touched by this condition. I know somebody very near and dear to the council that's no longer with us, and I won't say names just now, but it's a very significant person for all of us on the council over the last ten years or so had fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. And probably a lot of people didn't know her didn't realize that. So these are real people who contribute who are smart. Sometimes they have other co-occurring conditions that impact them. But for the most part they are people that we all bump into from time to time. So all that said, I'll send some more information out and to the extent you guys can help rally more engagement, yea.

Last thing is there's a thing called the Respect Act and those of you who do any kind of advocacy work, legislative advocacy in particular, please let your congressional representatives, your senators and representative know that this is a piece of legislation that's going to put the needs of people with FASD and their families on the national agenda. And we're hoping they'll support that. We're going to Washington early November and we're going to visit as many of our congressional reps as we can to educate. That's all I got.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Thank you, Dr. Wilson. Are there any questions from council members on the report?

LAUREN WOMACK: Do you post updates on your website or anything about what's going on?

PHIL WILSON: Yeah. It will be on our website. Our newsletters and all those other fun things.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other questions? Is there any public comment? Hearing none, the report requires no action and will be placed on file. Next up is a report from the Louisiana Rehabilitation Services. The chair recognizes Melissa Bayham for the report.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Thank you. My report is on this bright, bright. So with all our reports we give a lot of fiscal information. We currently have about 3400 students that we're serving through preemployment

transition services. That number continues to grow and so we're excited about that. We're also up to 8,983 people in vocational rehabilitation. And as of very recently we've gotten that number to 9,000. Which again, we're really excited about.

VR cases we have 2,737 cases open for individuals with developmental disabilities. And in the last quarter we were able to close 40 individuals in competitive, integrated employment. We also have statistical information on our rehabilitation employment development specialists who are our in-house job developers. I will tell you the region seven, that's the Shreveport area, we just had a resignation of our REDS. So we currently do not have a REDS in the Houma or the Shreveport regions.

We have our next Louisiana Rehabilitation Council meeting next week. It is on October the 26th at the Hampton Inn in Baton Rouge. All of our meetings are important, but this one is especially important because we will be going over a draft of our combined state plan. In order to receive funds from the federal government we have to have a four-year state plan and in 2024 we do have a state plan that is due. So we will be going over the draft of the state plan that needs to be reviewed by the Rehab Council.

We also will be going over, we're doing some pretty significant changes to our rate structure for employment services. And this is, I think Mindy spoke a little bit about this. We have a lot of our providers who have been struggling for many different reasons. And one of the gaps that we have seen is that, you know, if we send someone to a provider until they receive, until they place them into employment they don't get paid. And so luckily we're able to address that through what's called job search assistance funding. Which is federally allowable for us. So we will be changing some of our rate structures to make sure that our vendors are compensated throughout the process so that they're able to, you know, pay their expenses. So we have a lot of rate changes coming that I think are going to be really good for our providers. You'll see here we currently have vacancies for two current or former applicants or recipients of vocational rehabilitation services and

director of a federal section 121 project which that's the American Indian project.

Benefits planning. Last quarter we had 34 consumers that were directly assisted by our in-house benefits planner. But we also still refer consumers to the Lighthouse for the Blind and LSU Development Center for work incentive planning. We had our second annual statewide disability inclusion job fair on October the 11th. It was very successful. I'll have some more statistics next quarter. But it was very good. We collaborated again with Healthy Blue of Louisiana, and we were glad to be able to provide that job fair again this year.

We also continue with our Disability Innovation Fund Project, Project STEMM-UP with Southern University Baton Rouge. We are in year three. We just started year three of a five-year grant and we're currently recruiting participants in Baton Rouge, New Orleans, Lafayette and Monroe. So if you know anybody who is an individual with a disability who either would like to see or advance in employment in a STEMM occupation, you know, please send them our way and they can receive some additional services through Southern University in Baton Rouge. And that concludes my report. If anybody has any questions.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any public comment? Thank you. I have one, Ms. Melissa. Is there any way for next year, because we did want to attend this because our school participates in the vocational training that we could find out about it a little early.

MELISSA BAYHAM: The job fair?

CHRISTI GONZALES: Yes.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Okay.

CHRISTI GONZALES: If it could be sent to the schools and the SPED directors. It was just too late for us with school starting in August since we were new starting the program for us to attend.

MELISSA BAYHAM: No problem.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other questions or comments? Any public comments? Hearing none, the report requires no action and will be placed on file. The next order of business is the report of the Office of Public Health. The chair recognizes Patti Barovechio for the report.

PATTI BAROVECHIO: Patti Barovechio. I work for the Bureau of Family Health. We are the program in the state that administers the federal title five program for children and youth with special health needs. I just want to share with you the new national survey dataset 2022 was released and in Louisiana approximately 24 percent of our pediatric population 0 to 17 have identified with a special healthcare need. And just some things-- my report is rather long because under the Bureau of Family Health we administer many, many programs. We have some subspecialty pediatric services that are available in areas of the state where certain specialists are not available. We also support family resource centers and I encourage you to share this resource. It is a statewide resource. It is available to all families. There are no eligibility requirements, and these services are available at no charge to families. And they can help them with resource navigation, connection to insurance. Anything and everything. We have resource specialists that man the phones 8 to 4 Monday through Friday and they also email. We also work with our Families Helping Families partners, and we work to coordinate families at the statewide program, youth with special healthcare needs resource and referral services.

And then we also have a transportation assistance program for those children and youth with special healthcare needs that need support. They have to apply through Medicaid first and if those resources aren't amenable to what their needs are then they can apply for the CSHS transportation assistance program.

We also do birth defects monitoring network. All families that are identified through birth defects monitoring surveillance are provided outreach through our family resource center. We outreach to these families and offer them resource and referral services if they would like to participate. More information. We also have peer support through Louisiana Hands and Voices for children and families--- families of children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. A lot of great information on that program. The Commission for the Deaf, the genetic disease screening in our state, newborn hearing screenings, we administer those programs. There's information throughout the report.

I'm happy to answer questions that I'm knowledgeable or happy to take them back. One correction, our statewide young child wellness collaborative, our next meeting for that is December 12th. It's not August 8th. And so we also sponsor, Bureaus of Family Health sponsors a developmental screening initiative where we provide clinicians with a QA, we publish a toolkit. All this around promoting early childhood developmental screening so that when there is a risk of delay it is identified early, and we are able to link them to screening early as possible.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any questions or comments?
Thank you, ma'am. Yes, sir.

PHIL WILSON: Is there a possibility of adding after discussions about what and how a component around FASD screening?

PATTI BAROVECHIO: I would say yes. And we just are undergoing-- there's a Louisiana developmental screening guidelines that just went through review. But something you certainly could bring. I would reach out to Dr. Tresa Worthington. She's the developmental screening coordinator. I'm thinking maybe some of the early childhood screens that are recommended by the (inaudible) and Bright Futures may align with what you're looking for. I'll send it to you. I'll email it to you, Phil.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other questions or comments? Is there any public comment? Hearing none, the report requires no action and will be placed on file. Next up is the report from the Bureau of Health Services Financing Medicaid. The chair recognizes Tangela Womack for the report.

TANGELA WOMACK: Good afternoon, y'all. As Mindy previously mentioned I'm going to start off with Medicaid unwind just because it's really the hot topic on Medicaid right now. What Medicaid unwind is during the public health emergency we were not able to disenroll anyone for any reason. There were a couple of reasons. You had to move out of state, pass away or called us and asked us to take you off. With that being said, we had over 2 million members and all 2 million of those members are having to be redetermined. So we're taking a 12-month process to do that. It's started in May and it will go to the end of 2024. Most

importantly the feedback that we've gotten from some members is that, you know, I did this before, I didn't know I had to turn in any paperwork. If you receive any letters or know anyone who has received letters please have them to respond. As Mindy mentioned, when we get the list of members who are up for redetermination we distribute that to our sister agencies OPH, OBH, everyone. And our support coordination agencies they're reaching out to members. We are getting a higher response rate, but we are seeing that people are updating their contact information but not providing the information that we need to redetermine your eligibility. So update your information and respond. Don't just update your information.

Another thing that we are seeing we have posted data now on our LDH website so you can see how many members were up for renewal verses how many have responded. Our first happened in June. So since that time we're starting to see that members are recognizing that they lost health coverage so they're coming back. They're going to the doctor or the pharmacy and it's like you don't have insurance. So they're starting to come back, which is good. If you do that within 90 days they can get reinstated and hop back on. So there's three ways that you can update your information. Respond here, online. Renewal packet and fax it or mail. Or you can give us a call if you're not sure because some of those forms can be confusing and we're happy to help.

Section two, our Act 421 Medicaid option. A couple of statistics on that. As of September 27th we've approved 1,468 children to receive coverage. And with the Act 421 that's for children 19 years and under who would otherwise not qualify because of income. But if you have disabilities they're still able to get the Medicaid services. With that these members are having to be renewed as well. But that comes with an annual level of care assessment. So we tried to align both the financial piece and the level of care, and we've seen a great response in that. I think we have here 92 percent. So just keeping in mind it's not just Medicaid members who are not on a waiver or in a special service option, it's everybody. If y'all know

anyone on Medicaid that receive any letters, please have them respond.

So a couple of statistics in our other areas. Permanent supportive housing. We currently have 3860 individuals being served and 2387 households provided permanent supportive housing. And our Money Follows the Person or my Place Program as of September 1st we have approximately 4,051 individuals that are transitioned from institutions through our MFP program. And on the top of page five it shows our transitions by the calendar year.

The next section, self-direction. As of August 31st there's 2356 enrolled in our self-direction program. And right below that it shows which waivers those participants are enrolled in. Over on page six our EV verification. Approximately 92 percent of our providers are meeting state benchmark of 80 percent for EVV input. We're also in the process of implementing EVV for our home health providers. So our contractor will be working through the home health agencies doing those trainings in the upcoming months.

Section seven under behavioral health. Our CSOC waiver. There's currently 2,217 enrolled as of September 23. And then it shows the breakdown per region in the chart below. Over on page seven is our network advocacy report for behavioral health and it's broken down by MCOs. It's continued over on page eight. And for the last piece on page nine is our ABA services. And this shows our breakdown by FTO as of August this year. Happy to take any questions.

CHRISTI GONZALES: No questions? Thank you, Ms. Tangela. Any public comment? Hearing none, the report requires no action and will be placed on file. Thank you, ma'am. The next item of business is the report of the Department of Education. The chair recognizes Meredith Jordan for the report.

MERIDITH JORDAN: Thank you. So just a couple things. I'm on the light pink sheet. A couple things from across our agency and within our office specifically that we've been up to lately and that we're starting to roll out. So the first thing I have on here we had some discussion here in a previous meeting really around math supports, and we are launching a math refresh opportunity for our school

systems now. We are encouraging special education leads to also attend these meetings. And so we are doing a regional tour starting a little bit later this month for school leaders, system leaders, all educators who want to learn more about our math initiatives, more about some resources becoming available. Including our Zearn math. We did an impact study in our state on our Louisiana students who were participating in Zearn math as an intervention or as a tutoring initiative to help close math achievement gaps and found phenomenal results for Zearn math for use of that for intervention. And that's not something that you hear commonly coming out of the department that we say hey, try this. But when you have a study like that that has been done. And we're actually launching another one I'll tell you a little bit about. It's one of those things that we feel like we feel obligated when school systems don't know what to do for math intervention or support, if you have nothing try this, right. It's totally optional. Our school systems have a lot of local control around curriculum they use and what interventions they use. But we feel as a department the obligation to support any studies that we could do and anything great and impactful for intervention and helping to get those materials out and the word about those opportunities out. So on the tour system leaders and educators will hear about Zearn math.

They will also hear about implementing some of our math refresh resources which include some newly created foundational math resources. So you think about the impact of this group, we had that discussion at a previous meeting. Dr. Michel was here talking about we're doing a lot, Meredith, around literacy but we need some support in math too. And so this is something that is newly launching. You know, we love acronyms. But I did try to be respectful of our no alphabets and spelled out Foundational Lessons for Accelerating Math Education or our FLAME resources. So lighting a FLAME to decrease gaps in math and closing those achievements. So we've got some brand-new math resources out. Some foundational resources that we will be providing a lot of support around. The math tour will kick that off. And really discussions here with other stakeholders and input and even in our

latest LEAP scores we showed a lot of improvement around literacy and reading and that is due to a lot of the literacy work that we believe that has been happening and the literacy initiative statewide. And so you know what happens when we do that we see other things that then need support. And so we didn't grow as we wanted to in math and so now we know we've got to support our school systems with this. So we're really excited about it. You know, share with your special educators. We're sharing it with special education leaders in our school systems to attend, go learn about high-quality math intervention and what are some options out there as far as instructional resources to use to do that. So feel free to share.

Attached to this we're also going to be doing a study on an intervention called Ameri learning. It is a science of reading focused phonics tutoring program. So in addition to high-quality core instruction, high-quality curriculum this is a tutoring program. We actually started it as a pilot to support English learners, but we are expanding that, encouraging that in our expansion pilot to be accessible and be used with students with disabilities that it may benefit. And that will be part of an impact study we do there is looking at the subgroup performance in that particular literacy intervention work and how that impacted our students with disabilities who access that. So just another area. Again, something that not historically has been common for the department to start looking at specific interventions or specific programs and what's working. But more and more is we hear school systems, educators, principals say what can I use, what's out there, what's effective. So doing a few more of these studies and trying to help them choose high-quality intervention. Nothing replaces the quality of a highly effective educator and direct intervention. But trying to also use resources and what else is out there for intervention.

The second piece on here that I wanted to remind you guys about, we bring this to you every year. Our high-cost service fund is launching round one for this year is launching it supports our school systems and schools that serve our students with the most significant needs. So these are students who have

excessive costs, right, by way of specific assistive technologies that are needed that are expensive. Additional costs around special personnel support that are needed to support some of our students with our most significant disabilities. We commit annually about 4 million-dollars to this. Now school systems also have a portion that they have to also fund part of those expenses with their local MFP dollars. That supports all of those maintenance of effort and you have to spend just as much local dollars on your students with disabilities as your federal. So they have to braid those funds and use those funds and also support kids with their local dollars. But this literally comes straight from our set aside funds and actually goes back to support individual, very expensive student needs. This is not something that we have to do as a state. It's something that we have done for quite some time. Not all states have a high-cost service pool of money, but it's something that we've committed to, and we have a lot of districts. We spend it all. We don't give any of our money back. But we have a lot of districts who take advantage of this for their students who have some of those really expensive support needs and allows them to provide those real specialized needs for some of our students. So round one is launching.

We also have a round two option that happens after the new year. Really I think when this program was first launched that need was identified because we have some students who are mobile. And we may not capture them in round one, but we still have some students with some significant needs that could benefit from this, you know, after they have a little bit of mobility maybe around the October 1 counter within the fall and winter of their school year. So we can capture some of those students for some school systems. If they didn't get to apply for them in round one they can apply in round two and still get to take advantage of these funds. So that's opening this month. It is so many kudos go to my team as it is an extensive review process for these funds. There's a lot of documentation that our school systems have to show, and they have to document that in our special education reporting system showing this is the student's need and

have it as a part of the IEP is required to support that student so there's a lot of review that goes into. It's a lot of work. But something that we're really committed to serving some of our students who need some of these really significant supports.

We have also started working alongside our accessible educational materials center to start a workgroup really focusing in on some of the issues, concerns that we all talk about, that my state special education panel talks about with again, our students with the most significant needs. The first project that this task-- and it includes a lot of individuals with a lot of that expertise, right. So we're talking about students with significant communication needs, assistive technology, highly modified instruction in a lot of ways. And so the first project that this group has been digging into is really helping us, I don't want to say refresh. It's almost like a revamp of our assistive technology framework, standardizing some AT checklists, considerations. All of those forms that are part of that AT consideration for a child at their IEP meeting. We'll have a considerable guide that talks about, you know, what are all of the things that you need to consider when you're looking at assistive technology. We're aligning it to what's called the national SETT framework. SETT stands for the Student Environment, the Task and then the Tools. So starting with the student. What do they need. What are their needs. What are their goals. What are their outcomes. What environment. Where are they learning. What environments are they in throughout the day. And how do they access not just the classroom. But if they're in workplace environments when they're in the library, when they're in the cafeteria, when they're in the gym. All of those settings that our children experience and how we need to facilitate their communication, their access to those, what tools do they need. The tasks. What are they asked to do in all of those locations throughout the day. And then what's the tool. What's the thing that will best support their needs in all of those places. So it's a national framework that I have been in several sessions on nationally at several OSEP conferences and worked with a couple others and having conversations with other national accommodations and

accessibility groups. So we're really excited about it. This group is meeting biweekly. It is time consuming. We are working alongside that group every two weeks. It's a lot of work. There's a lot of heavy conversation. Lots of document reviews that will ultimately-- we're going to be presenting actually at our next SEAP meeting exactly what this group has been working on. Of course we'll bring a lot of those tools, a lot of those documents to get input and review. But I wanted you all to know that that work is happening and is something that we've been really committed to this group of students who often need so much more significant specialized supports. There's not a playbook of sorts that addresses all of the needs of these students because sometimes they're so specialized, so individualized. So kind of taking it step by step and where do we start. I can foresee additional projects being worked on by this group. But we wanted you all to know this work is happening and something we're committed to.

We have updated-- so every time our ELA state curriculum that is available for school systems is updated with new units, new texts because it is a Louisiana generated curriculum we also generate some resources for that curriculum that are helpful for our students with significant disabilities. So we work alongside what we call some teacher leader advisers, some teachers who are certified. Their experience is in those students with significant needs. Worked alongside them and created updated materials for educators to use with these students. They just launched so we're just getting them out there. I will provide some additional support. So these are materials that we have had been because any time we're creating something in the state department we're obligated to also create resources that align with those students' needs as well. We don't have that, necessarily that opportunity with some of our tier one curriculum that other vendors are creating. We can't take their stuff and modify it unfortunately. But for what we are putting out there we can. And so this is something that we had, but definitely needed a refresh.

I talked some yesterday, so I'll just give a high-level overview of our special education playbook

tour. So we have adopted and committed to three high-leverage instructional best practices for students with disabilities. A focus for instruction. The importance of that high-quality teaching and learning in ELA and math for sure. Practice two is providing extra time equitably built into their school day for intervention. Most of our students with disabilities we know they've always needed it, and they still need more time. That core instruction time for them is not enough. They need more. And previously we've done that before school tutoring, after school tutoring and we know those are just not equitable always for our kids with disabilities and their families.

Practice three is around providing content strong experts who can help them close those achievement gaps in whatever their struggle is. And so that one is the one that probably we've had the toughest conversations. We talked about this yesterday. Just in light of staff shortages that are out there. That is one of the toughest conversations I think right now for people to wrap their mind around. But we can say things like for the people who are in your building are we ensuring that the highest quality educators are in front of our students with disabilities also. And paying attention to that and not ignoring our kids with disabilities. And noticing where are they in our buildings. Are they included. Do they have access to high-quality instruction. Do they have access to high-quality intervention. Do the people in front of them know and understand how to close reading gaps, how to close math gaps.

And so we have finished our tour just recently. We had approximately 300, but I know there were people who didn't register and walked in. And we weren't turning anyone away. Our team decided that too often we're asking people to come to us and for some of our school systems that's hard and we need to go to them. So we started in North Louisiana and worked our way back. Catching over 300 people. We required a three-person team. School superintendents, chief academic officers and their special education director together so that we can have these necessary though sometimes hard conversations about practices, adult practices and some things that we may be doing in our school systems

that aren't best instructional practices in helping to close achievement gaps. We came off of that tour with a lot of momentum. I was so thankful for the superintendent, the CAOs. Some of them brought school level principals, literacy directors. Some of them brought special education lead teachers with them. And so we came off of that tour with a lot of momentum. They got to action plan, think about what can I do now to start impacting outcomes for my students with disabilities and making sure they have access to these practices verses what are some things that maybe I can't change until middle of the school year or even next year. Because I do think really changing the face of special education and ensuring our kids have high-quality teaching and learning will be a journey. It's not something we will change overnight. But I'm really excited. I'm exciting about that momentum.

We've been asked a lot about developing some modules for each of those practices so they can then go back. Because one of the common things we heard is school leaders need this level of support and need learning around growth mindset, and inclusion, and best instruction for our kids with disabilities. And so creating some modules that they can go back and use with them. Many of them their next steps were to go back and honestly do what we call in the education world, learning walks. So that key leadership team goes together. Don't ignore those classrooms that you haven't been to. Go see. Where are our students with disabilities. What does instruction look like. What does intervention look like. How is the rigor. Are our students with disabilities being challenged. Do we have a culture of inclusivity in our schools. Those were some of the action steps. Next steps for them. And then, of course, again, this is just initial support. It's definitely going to be a journey. Something that we're committed to working alongside our school systems to implement and ensure that our kids have best instruction.

The next piece here. This is new. This is something that just came out of legislation and was changed. So now our Literacy Advisory Commission has a dyslexia subcommittee. So this is something that's a big interest in our state, across the nation. You

know, with the literacy push and looking at the science of reading and the best ways, researched ways to teach students how to read there's a large body of research. There are still some things with students with significant disabilities that you have to think differently about how you teach them to read. But we know a next step really for us in Louisiana. We've got a lot of educators now based on law who are trained in the science of reading of really learning how to support reading and closing reading gaps. One of our next steps we're talking a lot through this subcommittee around additional dyslexia support. We're going to be launching a cohort of dyslexia therapists. That way we can get some additional folks trained around some very specific strategies to support students with dyslexia. We're going to look regionally. We're going to try to, you know, make sure this cohort is situated across the state, so we don't put ten people, ten new dyslexia therapists (inaudible), right. Verses looking across the state and making sure that we're distributing that. But we'll be funding their coursework and helping them get that certification added on.

You all also probably remember we also have legislation that now requires dyslexia screening for all kindergartners. We are in that process. So because the legislation required that the state choose one instrument that goes into a lot of procurement rules. And so we are looking at launching a request for information. If we only get one vendor who says we're the only ones that meet the requirement for this then that's one route. If we have multiple vendors who say well, I have a dyslexia specific screening that meets the letter of the law of the requirements then we'll have to go through RFP. And those of you who are in state agencies and understand RFP knows that we likely will not have that one selected screener for this year and next year may even be pushing it. Sometimes RFP can take about 18 months. But our school systems are continuing right now with the policies that we have in place around dyslexia screening. Until that process is finalized with selecting one dyslexia screening for all of your kindergarteners.

The next piece on here, we have been sharing

our accessible education materials. The Aiming for Success Conference is coming up this month. Our team is presenting-- we always attend again, this is a conference that really is providing professional development anchored in those evidence-based practices of focusing in on student access to grade-level content, universal design for learning. How do we get our students with even the most significant disabilities access to high-quality curriculum. What are some strategies. What are some tools. What are the universal designs for learning principals where we don't have to go look for programs. We can take a high-quality curriculum and with some modifications and some teacher supports they have access to that same high-quality curriculum and instruction. So really providing a lot of professional development. A lot of that happens at this conference. So you'll see we usually have a lot of special educators in attendance. TVIs, teachers of the visually impaired. Teachers of the Deaf attend this conference. Teachers who support our students with significant disabilities. As well as teachers who support some of our students with mild/moderate but still need assistive technologies, communication supports for them to access that general education curriculum. Last year Lynette Fontenot was the guest speaker. You know, so they always bring in phenomenal speakers, wonderful sessions and partner with the department on this. So we are really trying to get out that information.

You'll also see if you watch our newsletters we have several webinars coming up in November and December that again, are targeted towards our students, our educators who support our students with significant disabilities in how to, how they can support those students in accessing curriculum. So talking about our students who are alternately assessed, our students who take LEAP Connect and what does best instruction look like and how can I modify, how can I use communication supports and visual supports in multiple modes of teaching to get them access. And so we have a lot

of webinars coming up. So you'll keep hearing me say this. It's kind of been a real shift and a priority this year. Always, but certainly trying to increase the supports that we have for educators who are supporting some of our students with some of those significant disabilities.

And last but not least, just a SEAP update. We had our most recent meeting in September. We welcome our newest members. We had several items on that agenda. We discussed the kindergarten through third grade alternate literacy screener. Received feedback, comment. We also talked a lot there about the Third Grade Retention Act. The implications there on students with disabilities. Received comment and feedback. We discussed the Local Special Education Advisory Council reports. Which I know we're going to come back at the next Education Committee and talk more about that and I want some feedback. And then our next meeting is at the end of November, November 29th.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Thank you. Any questions or comments? Jill.

JILL HANO: Okay. So we got to go back to Act 392. What does the act say? Like what is your stance in-- I had a third one, but I don't know.

MERIDITH JORDAN: Act 392?

JILL HANO: Yes.

MERIDITH JORDAN: Tell me which one that is. Oh, yeah. So Act 392, I think y'all had a little bit of a discussion earlier about that. And that's the act that's had some comments, concerns around convicted felons and which felonies are allowed to be in classrooms. My stance is we need to have discussion as you all started. That, it's my understanding, that that has been in place for quite some time. And I don't remember, Jill, the specifics of which felonies. Certainly there are some felonies that are prohibited, cannot. There are some that are exceptions that if you after so many years from that conviction you can come back, appeal and get your teaching certification back and go into a classroom. I don't have all those details. But I think you all are certainly, we are certainly warranted to have those discussions. And I'm happy to bring back more details if I can find out from

our certification department exactly, more details around 392.

JILL HANO: Cause this is very intriguing.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other questions?

JILL HANO: I'm sorry, y'all. I think I did glance at the law, but it made me mad, so I stopped reading. But I did think it did list specific like offenses. But thank you.

MERIDITH JORDAN: Yeah. Absolutely.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Nicole.

NICOLE BANKS: Okay. You said y'all were working up on getting it in legislation for all kindergartners to be tested for dyslexia, right?

MERIDITH JORDAN: It's already there.

NICOLE BANKS: It's already there. Okay. So what about the students that missed that like that's in the third, fourth and fifth grade?

MERIDITH JORDAN: Yeah. So there's nothing preventing a school system, a parent from requesting dyslexia screening at any time. We just now have the law that says all kindergartners must be.

NICOLE BANKS: Okay. So let's say a parent request for their child to be screened for dyslexia. Do they get the results? Do they get the test? What's the process with that?

MERIDITH JORDAN: Yeah. They should get the results of that. Typically a school system is going to call what they call a school building level committee. They'll discuss those results with the parent, you know, and then as a result of depending on what it says, you know, okay, we did a screener. If there are additional concerns they may refer to 504. They may refer for a special education evaluation around that depending on the needs. Or they may say there's no concerns, you know, let's move forward. There may be concerns. There's a reason we ask for dyslexia screening so maybe there's interventions that are needed. But yes, they should communicate those results to parents.

NICOLE BANKS: And it shouldn't be like where-- like what's the process? How long that take? Like is it like a school year that that should take or?

MERIDITH JORDAN: So typically when parents request some sort of screenings, no, dyslexia screening won't

take a school year. It's usually a setting, you know, in a sitting they'll conduct a screening. Now the timeline as far as, you know, getting that screening, having a teacher administer it or a pupil appraisal person administer it, if it's just a screener, typically teachers can also administer screenings. Now if it's a very specific dyslexia assessment that's more pupil appraisal. Like once you're going that 1508 route, special education route then usually pupil appraisal steps in and does some of the testing. There's not a clear, like there's not a required timeline. Like a parent says I want dyslexia testing, you know, then they have to start that. That should happen ten to 15 days. Like what's a reasonable amount. Give them a reasonable amount of time to actually conduct that screening.

NICOLE BANKS: It shouldn't be a school year though, right?

MERIDITH JORDAN: No.

NICOLE BANKS: So if they had it in the first nine weeks we shouldn't be getting results at the end of the fourth nine weeks.

MERIDITH JORDAN: No.

SPEAKER: Yeah. I just had a question about the pilot program you mentioned about some tutoring that would be expanded to kids with disabilities. Where is that being piloted, and it is expanding?

MERIDITH JORDAN: Yeah. So we have about 18 school systems. If you give me a second I can pull them up who elected to expand the Amira learning pilot. So it's a literacy tutoring pilot. It's using artificial intelligence. And so that is to be done in an additional time to their core instruction. And that program, let me pull it up, because I can definitely tell you where. It's Amira. And I can tell you who's in our pilot. We've got a couple charters as well. So East Baton Rouge. We have First Line Schools. Jefferson Parish, Lafourche, St. John, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa and Terrebonne have elected to expand that to additional K5 students. Not just their English learners, but potentially all K5.

SPEAKER: So after the pilot is there any movement-- like are you just seeing how the pilot does? Is there going to be any enforcing the school systems

to implement it or?

MERIDITH JORDAN: So our school systems have a lot of local control over their curriculum that they select, interventions, programs. But what we have done and will do is provide that study, provide whatever the impact is and usually that's how you can gain momentum for other folks to say oh, I want to try this. Now we do have other school systems, I don't have them in here. We have some school systems who are using some of their own funding. So we pilot, and this pilot was funded using some of our state ESSER dollars. Some of our school systems are using Amira but they're funding it with their own funds. And so that's a possibility too. But it's very difficult for us to mandate certain programs or curriculum on schools. Good question.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other questions?

CHERI CRAIN: I just had a curiosity question. How was it determined that it started for the testing for dyslexia at the kindergarten level? The reason I'm asking is both of my girls are dyslexic. They're 30 and 28 now, but back then I didn't even see signs of anything until fourth and fifth grade when they were both diagnosed. So how was it determined at kindergarten level because I would have never picked up on anything at that level.

MERIDITH JORDAN: I am not sure. So it was legislative-- and there were lots, I mean, I went to those and listened in and there were lots of folks who came in and spoke to that. And there were lots of folks who wanted to also make sure okay, we're not just screening kindergarteners because we could see these things manifest later or not catch it then. But can we also then still screen it at different grade levels, and you certainly can.

CHRISTI GONZALES: I have a question. In regards to the updated ELA guidebook for grades three through five, is there going to be work done for grades six through 12?

MERIDITH JORDAN: So let me check. I think we may have some materials for them for guidebooks but let me go check. If they update the units definitely we'll have to update them.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Three to five has been for a while. I don't think I've seen.

MERIDITH JORDAN: The six through eight units.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Just wondering.

MERIDITH JORDAN: Yeah. No, extremely valid question.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Also I know a lot of school systems recognize students like for their ACT scores and whenever they graduate and things like that. I don't know if maybe different school systems do that but ours do. But I just wanted to let y'all know that our parish is now going to be recognizing our students who score advanced mastery on their LEAP scores for the alternate assessment. So moving in a positive direction. Because some of them did not take the ACT. For them to score mastery or advanced is really huge. Any other questions? Yes, ma'am.

SPEAKER: When are you guys accepting SEAP applications?

MERIDITH JORDAN: Our SEAP applicants for this year, we always open that in the spring. So I'll bring that to y'all as well. So we always open in the spring and then we try to do May or June interviews. Much like you all know they take quite some time. But we usually do our interviews May through June that way we have our next, our newest members start with us in the September meeting.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other questions? Any public comment? Hearing none, the report requires no action and will be placed on file. The next item of business is the report of the Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs. The chair recognizes Cheri Crain.

CHERI CRAIN: Good afternoon. My report is going to be quite short due to technology. Other half, not the better half. So EPS is usually the information that I give you where it breaks down the number of cases that we've received. With our ARPA funds we had our system updated and it was completed at the beginning of September. However, when we started running reports and cross-referencing to make sure that that system is doing the reporting correctly we found a lot of errors and it wasn't really accurate. So we're not giving those numbers out because we're working with OTS to fix those reporting issues. So hopefully that will be done next quarter I'll be able to report on those.

Last quarter I kind of reported on the EPS audit. We have worked with the auditors. We made some changes in our system. We now had a new after-hours reporting toll free number where we used to only take complaints during working hours. Now it is 24/7. You can either do by the toll-free number after hours or we also have now implemented an online reporting system where you can just go in and fill out the complaint form. It is very extensive because it's just like when you call in a complaint you get as many details as you can so you can send investigators out to determine if it's a high-priority case or a low priority. So we have found where some people will call and say I tried doing it online, it just took forever. That's technology. It depends on where you're at. If you're in a rural area your service is not that great. So there's challenges there. So that's all on EPS.

As far as our aging disability resource center, nothing really new going on. They are wrapping up the grants that were from Covid for the vaccine grant. They had some activity going on that. The closing of that. And reporting those numbers to the feds with the Louisiana MIPPA program. If you're not familiar it's the Medicare Improvement for Patient and Providers Act. It allows, we have that grant and what we do we contract out with the Councils on Aging and open enrollment which is going on now and has been since Monday. It helps enroll individuals in certain services and it also includes their insurance, Medicare insurance. So that's the program that's going on right now.

I usually have those numbers too, but we are closing out two grants at the same time and those numbers are due at the end of the month of this month, so I don't have that information. I don't want to give you a piece of it and not all of it. That will be also on next quarter. Open enrollment ends December 7th. There has been a lot of changes so we just, you know, if you know somebody that is Medicare, and they usually go to the council we ask them to bring their previous year packet so they can do a comparison from what they did get to what's offered now and what providers did provide the service last year but no longer provide that service. It's a better comparison for the client

if they bring their packet from last year.

Then let's see. We actually provided our Councils on Aging with a new director training which we have not been able to do in years because of Covid. So we had that last month up in Pineville. It was a two-day training. And kind of got some feedback from the councils and the directors of what they went through Covid, what they kind of had to change gears and think out of the box of how they could provide those services. How they could provide those meals if the seniors did not want to come back to the centers and have those congregate meals which they were normally used to getting and now they want the home delivered meals. Some, you know, constituents were still on the fence about getting into congregate setting. They wanted their home. They wanted to stay safe as much as they could. So the feds have allowed us for now to continue those home delivered meals and not force them to go to the congregate meals. So we're trying to get those councils back to getting them into congregate but how do we do it, how do we make them feel comfortable. Those kind of things. So a lot of good information being bounced back from council to council.

We also have updated our website to allow for the training information. And we've also created a YouTube channel for GOEA so we can put information on those social media platforms that we didn't use to utilize and now we are utilizing those to get that information out and share the information more easily. And Melissa kind of mentioned a state plan too. We actually, GOEA submitted our plan earlier this year that covers 2024 to 2027. And we did get that approved. And I just feel your pain because I did that, and it was my first time to do it and it was very long. I thought it was going to be easy. Plug and play from the last one and they changed all the requirements on me. And I'm like oh, great. It took me about six months' worth of work to submit that plan. You kind of have to say what each program is going to be doing to meet those requirements that we have to meet and how we're going to provide that data to prove that we did do what we said we were going to do. And they really hold you to that. So that's your funding, you know. So you have to make sure that all units are doing what they're supposed to

be doing and it can be quite tedious. If you need assistance just reach out. Other than that that's all that I have. And hopefully with our systems being updated we'll be able to provide that data next quarter.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Are there any questions from council members on the report? Any public comment? Hearing none, the report requires no action and will be placed on file. If there is no objection the meeting will recess for ten minutes. No objection? Hearing none, the meeting is at recess. It is now 2:50. We will recess until 3:00.

EBONY HAVEN: Can we power through?

CHRISTI GONZALES: Do you have an objection, Jill?

JILL HANO: I do.

CHRISTI GONZALES: You want to object and power through? Is everybody okay with that? Okay. So we're going to power through. All right. I'm just following the rules. The next item for business is the report of the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs. The chair recognizes Ms. Bambi Polotzola for the report.

BAMBI POLOTZOLA: Hi, everyone. On the front of this is the GOLD awards. You can see on the screen. It's going to be on November 13th this year which is earlier than normal. You have to have your nominations in by the 31st. Please nominate people if you know people that would be deserving. You can see on here the list of all those awards that are on the screen. And so I really encourage you guys to nominate people. And we also have the inclusive art contest that day. And the theme for this year is Nothing About Us Without Us. And that is open to anyone. Anybody who wants to draw. You don't have to have a disability. Doesn't matter your age. You can enter the contest. But that has to be in by the 31st as well. It's at the Old State Capitol. It's going to be great event. And then some of the members were asking me earlier, they wanted to meet the governor. I said the one place I know the governor will be between now and the end of his term is the GOLD awards. So if you want to go you can meet the governor and take a picture in between the programs.

And then some other information. There's a link on the second page to all the recordings from our GODA conference this year. And just an interesting fact.

You see that link. You just change the 23 to 22 or 21 and you can get to all the previous years' recording of the conference as well. There's some good information there if you're ever researching that. And then you can kind of read the rest of this.

This will be my last report. It might not be my last meeting, but this will be my last report as the director of the Governor's Office of Disability Affairs. And I just wanted to throw this in. As we have a change of administration I really encourage you guys to reach out to people that will be in leadership in the new administration. It is really important that those of us who are advocates can get the ear of people who are going to be within the new administration. I don't know who that's going to be yet. But I know when Governor Edwards took office we made concerted efforts to look at who's on the transition team for the new administration. Look and see if you know somebody. You don't have to agree with everything, but if you can build relationships with certain people we can make end roads. And if you ever have to use my name to say that you know me and I'm your friend, that's fine. If you have to use my name and say you know me and you don't like me and that pushes support for the agenda, do it. Do whatever you have to do to advocate and continue moving forward with what our people with disabilities need and their families. So thank you, guys.

JILL HANO: I have a question.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Go ahead, Jill.

JILL HANO: Not necessarily related to your report. Are you resigning?

CHERI CRAIN: No. I'm in a classified position.

JILL HANO: Oh, okay.

CHRISTI GONZALES: All right. Any other public, any questions or concerns from our council?

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: At the risk of trying not to take much time I just want to take time to recognize Bambi the executive director of GODA and the awesome, awesome work you guys have done over the last eight years.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other questions? Yes, ma'am.

MERIDITH JORDAN: I second that. Bambi and I have developed a relationship of support both ways. She's

shown up to SEAP. She's proxied. She's come to our BESE board meetings and made comments and I appreciate it. I really do. Look forward to still seeing you.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any public comments? Hearing none, the report requires no action and will be placed on file. The next item is the report of Disability Rights Louisiana. The chair recognizes Tory Rocca for the report.

TORY ROCCA: Thank you. So out of respect for everybody's time and Jill's concern I will give the hyper-condensed version of my report. On July 31st of this we completed our five year (inaudible) representative payee program which provides benefit and payment management for beneficiaries who require assistance with managing their social security supplemental income. (Inaudible) a new five-year program. In that program we have completed 1,382 appointments, identified 1418 deficiencies, made 153 referrals and submitted 376 corrective action plans to representative payees.

Our work incentives planning and assistance program has received 532 referrals for assistance between July 1st, 2002, and June 30th, 2023. And for reference if you're wondering why I'm using numbers from this period is because I get these numbers from reports that our department (inaudible) to our board of directors. And so pretty much whatever they write to the board of directors is how I get my information for these reports. And our community living ombudsman program. Between March 1st of this year and August 31st of this year filed 13 complaints with LDH's health standards section. Issues in group homes and ICFDs. Our client assistance program presented on our services to New Horizons Independent Living Center in Shreveport. And the Tunica Biloxi Tribe in Marksville. We also met with the Rehabilitation Services Administration during its audit of LRS. Our FAIR program, financial access inclusion resources program which helps people with disabilities who are formally incarcerated. Between April 1st of this year and June 30th of this year 18 of our 64 clients were employed. Eight connected vocational programs for counseling. Fifty-six percent full time, 44 percent part-time. And the average hourly wage during this period for this

program was \$13.20 per hour.

Client successes. We are working on following up on the Cooper litigation. The Cooper litigation involves an action that we are involved in in which people who by reason of insanity or incompetent to stand trial were not being admitted to inpatient psychiatric facilities for treatment properly. That is an ongoing problem (inaudible). It involves people not being able to get (inaudible) in a reasonable amount of time. And that's a version of the report. If you have any questions, please ask.

LAUREN WOMACK: I have a comment. For next meeting, Tory, would you serve as like a resource for if they're worried about drafting a letter or something regarding the felons in classrooms. If somebody had a disability that was someone with a felony, would you be able to speak about possibly the impact on their rights on-- or conflict of interest?

TORY ROCCA: It would depend on the actual facts of the situation. I would have to look it over first to see what our position would be on that.

LAUREN WOMACK: I don't know if that's going to be an issue.

TORY ROCCA: It could be. I would probably have to look at the actual facts and then run it by the people in my organization.

LAUREN WOMACK: An individual with a disability with a convicted felon, you know how that would effect.

TORY ROCCA: If you're thinking of specific cases and you give me the information on that before the meeting I can look it over and run it through my organization and see what our position would be on it. Because I don't solely decide what our position is at the organization.

BROOKE STEWART: My name is Brooke. I have a question. I was just reviewing the third paragraph. Is this something typical for those like every six months the complaints that were filed within those six months reports of sudden or questionable deaths of residents, allegations of neglect or resident health, lack of medical care, unsafe conditions. Those 13 complaints, is that something typical you guys see in that amount of time?

TORY ROCCA: My initial brief answer is yes, but I

would have to look over past reports to see exactly like what the previous reports say. Also bear in mind we are redacting these things because we don't want to reveal confidential (inaudible). So it's a little vague intentionally because I try to err on the side of being careful to not reveal information we shouldn't be revealing about people we're looking into. But we do file complaints, going by memory it's common complaints and these would be typical things we file complaints for.

BROOKE STEWART: I didn't know the 13 (inaudible).

TORY ROCCA: The exact number of complaints, I don't know, to be honest. If that would be (inaudible) August 31st period, I don't know if 13 would be standard for us. I would have to look at previous.

BROOKE STEWART: Right. I just didn't know if like you typically see 20. One would be alarming.

TORY ROCCA: At first it doesn't seem like an unusually high number of complaints. In terms of which of those 13 are questionable deaths, I don't know.

BROOKE STEWART: Right. I mean, all of them are.

TORY ROCCA: But the total number of complaints, 13 does not strike me as an unusual number for our organization.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Thank you. Any other questions? Any public comment? Hearing none, the report requires no action and will be placed on file. The next is Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities. The chair recognizes Julie Foster Hagan for the report.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: Good afternoon. I just want to highlight four or five quick things that we've been getting the most questions on lately. The council had advocated to add incontinent supplies for adults in our OCDD home and community-based waivers. That did start October 1st, but we're still working on the communication. So there are still folks kind of asking. We have done some training with our support coordinators what will happen like you are an adult, you have the medical need. There's a form that we use called a 90L. They'll have to have medical documentation on there that there's a medical need for incontinent supplies. And then it's not limited just to diapers or whatever the correct term, disposable briefs. It could be any incontinent supplies that are

needed up to 2,500-dollars in that person's plan of care year. And so the support coordinator, again, will be assisting folks with that. I should say effective October 1st for the new opportunities waiver and the residential options waiver. The supports waiver, we are delayed on that because we have to get that into our and through a waiver amendment before we can implement that. But we are working on that, and we will be having an amendment out soon.

The next thing is an update on vocational services. I'm super excited that we were able to get a rate increase for activities called community life engagement and community career planning. So lot of the services that we had in the past in OCDD like day program services or vocational services, kind of like one person, one staff person with eight people. So trying to go in the community with eight people that's not easy. It's not easy. So with the community life engagement and community career planning the focus is on smaller groups. Like giving a higher rate to providers because it's going to take more. If you need more staff or you need more transportation. So we were able to get rate increases for those two new programs. And then in January 1 we're going to have some service realignment. So in our NOW, our ROW and supports waiver, those services and rates are going to be aligned around those services as well as others just to help people navigate through that.

We do have a roadshow coming up. We sent it out through the council. I've gotten a lot of questions about a virtual option that was accidentally left off of that original flier. We're working on an updated flier now that will add a region nine meeting location. We're still trying to find the meeting location. And it will add the virtual option. I asked the Self-Determination Committee meeting yesterday for some feedback. They've given me some feedback to take into account. As a result we are looking at doing an evening virtual session as well as a day virtual session. That roadshow will focus on there still seems to be some misinformation about the post PHE pandemic, what folks can and can't do. So we'll be trying to clear those up as well as providing some information on some upcoming things or what we're planning to work on

this year.

And then we also have upcoming this flier should be going out if not this week, it will be next week. We're trying to put together some focus groups related to foster families. OCDD is partnering with Department of Children and Family Services to sponsor these focus groups. We're trying to find families who foster children now with disabilities, people who've considered it to try to hear from them some things that we may be able to do differently within our systems that will help give the resources families need so that they would potentially be more comfortable fostering children with disabilities. In general, but we're also going to have some dedicated discussion around adolescence with disabilities because those are the kids that we have the most trouble finding foster home placement for. That will be Thursday, November the 12th at 6 p.m. and Saturday November the-- I'm sorry. Thursday November the 2nd at 6 p.m. and Saturday November the 4th at 10 a.m. And again, it will be a brief sharing of information, but really want to be able to hear from folks so that we can take that back and see what we can work on together for recruitment.

And then my final thing is just for folks who may pay attention to things happening on the federal front. There are a lot, a lot of federal rules and regulations and proposals out there that will have a pretty significant impact on people with disabilities open for public comment. It's closed now, but there is an access rule that if that comes forth will have major impacts across all of our systems and things that we will need to do. Philosophically I think they're all awesome. The timeframe for which we have to do them in three to five years is going to be tough because it's some pretty massive changes. There's right now a Section 504 Americans with Disabilities Act rule changes that they're looking at that will have far-reaching impacts for people with disabilities in a lot of areas.

And then for our waiver services they're looking at making changes to how we report quality indicators and looking just at our waiver amendments themselves. So we have a lot on the horizon that we're looking at and I share that just so you guys know there is some

opportunities for public comments for those of you who are interested in reviewing and commenting on that. But also to kind of I guess forewarning that if any of these do go through in the way that they're originally proposed it's going to be probably for all of us sitting on the state side some pretty massive undertakings that we'll all have to go through to make sure that our systems are in compliance with these new regulations. That's it for me.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Are there any questions from council members? Any questions from the public? Hearing none, the report requires no action and will be placed on file. It is now 3:09. The meeting will come to order. At this time we will have public comments. I would like to thank everyone for your comments, questions and concerns. At this time we will have announcements. The chair recognizes Ebony Haven.

EBONY HAVEN: I just wanted to thank the members that we are replacing. I know Roslyn hasn't been to a meeting for a while, but we do want to thank her for her service. Mr. Bristo, Ms. Libby Airhart, Dr. Hyacinth McKey, Ms. Kim Basile, Ms. Mary Tarver and Ms. Brenda Cosse. And last but not least, Ms. Bambi Polotzola. We thank you for your service on the council. Thank you for your guidance and your mentorship. And we wish you guys well. Keep us in your prayers.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Thank you, Ebony. Is there any further business? All right. In your folder there is a meeting evaluation. If you could get this back to Ebony or even email it to them we would appreciate it just to make things a little better for everyone. If there are no objections the meeting is now adjourned. Thank you, everyone.