

Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council
Legislative Ad Hoc Committee
September 27th, 2024

LAUREN WOMACK: It is time to call the meeting to order. It is 1:07. Staff, would you mind calling roll?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Sure. Just a reminder, if you are on the committee and participating online you need to have your camera on so you can be counted towards the quorum. Ms. Aduli. I think you're on mute, but I do see you.

CHERIE ADULI: Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Alphonse.

CONSTANCE ALPHONSE: Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Hano.

JILL HANO: Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Mr. Piontek. Mr. Rocca.

TORY ROCCA: Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: And Ms. Womack.

LAUREN WOMACK: Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: So you have five and a quorum.

LAUREN WOMACK: Staff, can you also please review the meeting protocols?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Sure thing. So for committee members and members of the public that are attending in person, please raise your hand to speak and wait to be recognized by the chair before speaking. And the chair is Ms. Womack. To help the meeting run smoothly please keep all side conversations to a minimum. Especially if you are in the room the mikes that we have in the room are rather sensitive so they hear a lot that's going on. Although we don't have a ton of people at the table so that might not be a problem this go around. Make sure that your comments are related to the topic that's being discussed. For our committee members that are participating virtually make sure that your camera is on and your first and last name are showing because that's how we monitor our quorum. Make sure microphones are muted unless you are called upon by the chair. Electronically raise your hand if you would like to speak. For attendees you can also electronically raise your hand to speak and then you will be called on by the chair, we will unmute or give you the privilege to speak and then you can unmute your mike that way.

Also, our Q & A that is just for those that have an ADA accommodation request and other than that it will not be monitored except for that particular situation. As for order of how this goes, according to the council's protocols that was passed some time ago, committee members that are in person and virtually will be allowed to speak first and then members of the public that are in person will be called upon to speak. And then we'll move onto members or attendees that are participating virtually and have their hands raised. And if there's anything in the Q and A we would address that last. All comments, questions from committee members and the public may be limited to three minutes or less depending on time. We have a lot to discuss today and only three hours to do it so please keep that in mind. If we run into time constraints we may have a limited amount of time to speak. Also, comments about a person's character will not be accepted.

Finally, members of the public, you'll have the opportunity to provide public comment before each vote and during designated public comment periods. The chair can also use her discretion to allow you to speak at any point during the meeting. And I just want to thank, I think we have quite a bit of our agency representatives from the council that are participating today. They are not on the committee but we did ask them to come just so they can share information with members of the public or the committee if there are questions about any of the community input ideas or if you want to know about some initiatives that they may be working on that might tackle that issue or if they have needs that we need to consider on our agenda, those types of things. So I just thank them for participating as well.

LAUREN WOMACK: Before we begin our discussion of the community input ideas, where we just need to kind of determine our recommendation for the council's advocacy agenda, I would like to again thank everybody for being here. And I would like to turn things over to the staff so they can share a bit about the committee's purpose and walk us through the documents received in your packets.

BRENTON ANDRUS: It's me again. Y'all just love to hear me speak. Okay. So in your packets, those of you that are here in person we have packets on the back table there if you didn't get any. If you are participating virtually you have your packets that were sent to you or emailed to you. So there's going to be multiple documents

that are included in your packet that we're going to be using to kind of have some conversations today. The way the process is going to go is we're going to discuss all the documents that you have before you just so you understand what they are and then you can go back and then start having discussions about all the different community input ideas that we have received. I'm actually going to go out of order just slightly to the document that was labeled legislative kickoff recommendations simply because I want to give you some background of why we're here today, what we're doing.

So every year, or at least since before Covid at some point, we started doing community input meetings, LaCAN leaders would host community input meetings, at least two of them, in their particular region and that would allow folks the opportunity to come and share things that are important to them and things that they feel like the council should consider in its legislative advocacy agenda. Which would be in 2025 session starts, oh, gosh, April, I think. So we would be looking at that time frame. So a lot of that advocacy, again, we're focusing on more of a legislative approach and not necessarily administrative or other areas that we might want to advocate. This is mostly just legislative.

After they had those community input meetings all of the input that is received gets sent over to staff. You do have that in your packet as well, that's the community input received, I tried to make that one pretty obvious. That is a list of everything that came from all the regions and we kind of tried to group them in particular areas just to sort of sort them out. But you'll see that it's hard to really just capture them in each area because something that may also need funding may also be an implementation idea. But we'll get to that document in a minute.

And then in years past the leaders, directors, our Families Helping Families directors they would get together, come up with a recommendation from all the community input they reviewed. They have discussions. They vote and try to rank things based on what they think are the most pressing issues based on the feedback they're getting in their communities and then it would go to the council at the October meeting to have discussions about that agenda. What happens is whenever we were doing it that way we would get bogged down in our October meeting,

it was hard to conduct our business meeting because we would spend hours just talking about our agenda. So this year we decided to do a legislative ad hoc committee and so you will be the ones that are going to give those recommendations from our leaders and directors. You're going to be the ones that are getting all the community input and you are going to decide what the formal recommendation will be to the council. So the recommendation that comes out of this committee is not finalized. It does have to go to the full council for approval and that will be in October. So that's your task today is coming up with an agenda proposal essentially for the council.

A few things to consider as you're having those discussions. It's very similar to the same sort of considerations we told our leaders and our directors when they were having conversations of one thing you can consider would be guidelines for legislative advocacy items. These are things that people might not necessarily be thinking about or thinking of whenever they're coming up with ideas but you want to first make sure that the issue that you're recommending to be on the agenda is a statewide issue. Lots of times if it's a very localized issue that may be something that we can help those members of the public address with their town councils, or city councils or their school boards. It might not be something that is a systemic issue, a statewide issue. So whenever you're considering ideas you want to make sure that it's going to be a statewide issue.

Another thing is does this require legislative action. So again, that goes back to this is a legislative agenda so this needs to be something that we can actually handle in legislative session. Another thing that we have to consider would be is this something that resonates with our grassroots advocacy membership, so LaCAN. Are these items something that people are going to come out and advocate for because if the answer is no then we are not going to be successful and it likely also means that it's not impacting that many people. So you're really looking for things that are really important and people are going to come out and take action.

The other one is does the council have capacity to take this on. So what we have to consider this year is it is a shortened fiscal only session and what that means is

fiscal only, money only. They are not talking in great detail about other issues. If I'm not mistaken each legislator only gets five bills that they can bring that is not fiscally related. So you have to understand if you're trying to get some legislation passed or some amendments done this coming session you have to consider will there be a legislator that's going to use one of their five opportunities for your issue. A lot of times, at least in previous years, by this time legislators kind of already know what they're bringing to session so that makes it complicated.

Also because it's a fiscal only session it's a short session so we don't have a lot of time which means it runs very fast or goes very fast. And if we have a lot of issues that we are dealing with there might be a lot of action alerts, yellow shirt days, things like that which goes into that last bullet. It could possibly wear out, overwhelm or confuse our members. We've been seeing that a lot in sessions and we've only been doing three or four issues but we're sending out 20, 30 action alerts throughout session because any legislation that we're sending action alerts out on you get at least six of them because it's going through every committee, it's going to the full house, it's going to the full senate. If it gets, you know, if they decide to defer it and pick it up later you get another alert. So this can wear people out. This kind of gets people uninterested because there's so much information that keeps coming out.

Another thing to consider is this within the council's scope and mission. Sometimes that is not the case. Sometimes we identify issues where we think another group might be the best person to address this particular issue. And so at that point we would, you would want to defer to that group and see if we could support them in some sort of way but that might not be our primary issue.

The other thing is is it a controversial issue. So we don't typically get involved in very controversial issues. In fact, at least since I have been here, we have not been involved in controversial issues. You know, there were some bills in recent times that centered around abortion and access to abortions and there was a lot of folks that realized that that can impact people with disabilities but we didn't get involved in that conversation because it is a controversial issue, it could

take over everything else we're trying to do. It doesn't mean we may not have an opinion on that particular thing but we try to avoid those issues that are really hot button and controversial that may not allow us an opportunity to work with legislators in the manner we would like to work and keep that relationship positive. So that's a few things to consider.

Another consideration that our leaders and directors were having, if you get our action alerts you would have noticed in August, end of August, house appropriations met because they were trying to get information from the Department of Health of what would happen if they didn't have hundred million dollars in their budget. And so hundred million dollars I think equates to a little less than 400 million or something like that in actual funding once you factor in federal dollars. So this would be a massive reduction to the Department of Health. Mostly this is stemming from a fiscal cliff issue. The last numbers I read, and I feel like they change all the time, but we were looking at over 500 million dollars of a fiscal cliff next year. It was going to be over 600 the year after that. Over 700 million the year after that. And so when those cliffs are there you have to start looking at where you can trim the budget and you might not have the opportunity to get new things. You might just be working on protecting the things that you have.

So the Department of Health put together this particular list of things that if they had to sustain a hundred million dollar cut this is what would be eliminated and it's quite a bit of things that will impact the DD community or just disability community in general. A few things would be elimination of pediatric day healthcare centers, the PACE program for the elderly, the adult day healthcare waivers, repealing those rate increases that we advocated for some years ago. We got a \$2.50 rate increase. So that would be repealed.

Some of the other things would be the reimbursement rates, that the increase that they had for our ICFs, that would be like our group homes, intermediate care facilities for people with DD, eliminating those increased rates. Last year we advocated with others to increase the night rate in the OCDD waivers. That was something that would be eliminated. There's transportation per diems. I don't remember if it was two years ago that we had support

coordination rates that were increased. Those are also on the chopping block and your coordinated system of care or CSOC. So those are things that we wanted to provide to our leaders, our directors and you as well to understand that if cuts are being discussed this session there's going to be a lot of time and effort spent on that one issue because we can't allow that to happen. We can't allow people to lose any sort of services. And we typically find that in fiscal years we are just trying to maintain as opposed to getting more things. Granted this fiscal cliff is not as large as some that have passed, but you have to understand it's predicted that it is going to happen over the next three years. Every year we're going to have one.

There's been discussion here and there of how do we prevent it. Most of this is as a result of the .456 cent sales tax that's going to roll off the books so we won't have that coming into the state. There are some people that believe, you know, the legislature maybe they'll look at some tax reforms and maybe they'll look at at least reinstating part of that tax increase and hopefully that would help offset some of these cuts. I guess I'm more pessimistic. The people that I have been looking at and I've been reaching out to, or that I have heard on various programs throughout the state, they are not interested in renewing that tax. So then we have to start looking at all right, so where does the money come from. Also heard there may be a fiscal session, not a fiscal session, a special session on tax reform so that's something to keep an eye out on.

Then we go to this actual document. This is our agenda kickoff recommendations, the official recommendations that are coming to you from our LaCAN leaders and our FHF directors. So they get together at their kickoff, they take all of these community input ideas that we get and they rate them, you can see on this page the priority ratings, one, two, three, four, five. One means it's of utmost importance. A big priority. And then it goes down from there. So five would be it's not really a priority at all. So when we look at the regions that we have in the state there's ten so we figured if half of you, about five, if the categories one and two added up to five we would present that to you separately from all the community input ideas for you to have conversations about that because those were the highest rated items out of all of the community input

based on the assessment that our leaders and directors did. So that is what is on this particular page right here, this document. Those that are highlighted in gray those are the items that they were really discussing in kickoff about what they should recommend to this committee. And if you go to the next page it's going to show you how they voted. So what we asked the leaders to do is before we get to this point we also go over the community input ideas and see if there was something that wasn't rated as a high priority if we can have more discussion, if we can decide if there is a case to be made to make it a priority during kickoff and sometimes that happens. But ultimately we get it down to the top issues and then they vote.

They all agreed that the council should look at no more than three issues to tackle during session for various reasons that we mentioned earlier. I think there was overwhelming agreement that we are going to be protecting services. Many of those that participated in kickoff they know how fiscal cliffs have worked in the past. We've been on defense and we tend to shift away from the agenda that we originally set out of necessity. So they definitely wanted to make sure y'all knew that was a big priority for them. But also if there were additional items that you were going to add to the agenda they wanted to make sure it was no more than three.

We have four of them highlighted up there based on the vote. So everyone got three votes. There was 16 in attendance. You could vote for your top three issues. Obviously overwhelming majority, well, everyone unanimously, the fiscal cliff, addressing those reductions that were proposed at house appropriations. Now granted session hasn't started so if there are cuts is that what's being cut, who knows. It's possible that that list will change. But ultimately there is a fiscal cliff and making sure that LDH doesn't sustain any cuts to services.

The second highest rated was funding for Families Helping Families centers. We do not know at this point if our additional, if our request for a standstill budget was approved by the department for our Families Helping Families centers. We get about a million dollars a year and a few years ago we advocated for an additional 500,000-dollars which brought us up to that full 1 million. But every year when we try to request that funding stay in our budget it gets pulled out and so that's why this issue

was on there. They're worried that if it's a repeat of previous years we will not get that extra 500,000-dollars in our budget which would essentially cut funding to our centers by half. And you can see it was ten to six. Ten supported that. Six were not in favor. And one of the things I meant to explain that I didn't, because they only got to choose three issues, it was more so them voting on what the priorities should be or would be what they feel like they can get support from within their regions. And it's not necessarily for or against a particular ask. It's just more of a calculated approach to be in favor or not in favor.

So funding for Families Helping Families centers and asking the legislature to amend the laws that specify the fines that Department of Health can issue to ICFs. They wanted-- those two tied both ten to six so those are your top three issues that they came up with. They did throw, it wasn't ranked as high but it was there, creating a policy that would require cameras in classrooms to be included in all self-contained classrooms. And the idea is to prevent families from having to request every single year for a camera to be installed in their child's self-contained classroom. This would just automatically have cameras in those classrooms and avoid that process.

So those are the four issues that they came up with for you, again, to consider but you can see the rest of the issues that they discussed as well and how they voted. And then you can see in that last document that I had showed you this is all of the community input that was received. Hopefully you reviewed that ahead of time because it is quite a bit of pages. All of this is quite a bit of pages. And you'll see in this particular document they rate things as well. I can blow it up a little more. Sorry about that. Whenever they submit all the community input we compile this document, we send it back to our leaders and our directors and they go through and decide if that particular issue is a statewide issue, if they think there is a legislative fix and then they rank it by that priority rating that we talked about. So if it reached five under one and two it made it to a trimmed down list.

And we had been using this process because generally we get hundred plus ideas and input from the communities and so it can get a little bit overwhelming. And so that's part of why in your discussions today we've asked a lot of

our agency reps on the council to participate because there are going to be things in here that you might have questions about that we may not also have answers to. So we're talking about hundred plus issues over a couple weeks. We also don't have the opportunity to research all of these things and find out details about these things so we're hoping they might be able to shed some light on that for you. Any questions about the documents before y'all get to your discussions?

JILL HANO: I do have a question but it's not about the document. It's about I thought I understood like why we are doing this but if this, and I know like everything committees bring to the full council is a recommendation, but I don't entirely understand what we're doing because aren't we, and I'm all for waiting out the hours of discussion, but aren't we maybe trying to take away, not take away, but this just feels like there's going to be less full council opinion and what we're doing today is kind of what we do in October as the executive committee. And so I kind of am confused. So is the full council not going to decide? Or like explain to me what the results of this meeting will be.

LAUREN WOMACK: Okay, Jill, do you want me to answer or would you prefer staff?

JILL HANO: Whatever.

LAUREN WOMACK: Okay. The way I see it we're meeting today because you all were on the committee I believe with me last year. At the October meeting we were so, had so many issues to cover and things to do that I don't even know if we got through the whole meeting. And as Brenton had mentioned before a lot of the community felt that their input wasn't I guess as heard as we would like. So we wanted to have a separate chance, another chance to give the community more input and that way they will also have input at the council meeting. But just a chance for us to also invite any council members who would like to be here, just like to know that they were invited to come and really look at these issues in depth with this as our focus today so we can bring it to the council to hopefully, not really speed up the process, but just to maybe the purpose was to offer more community input. Does that answer your question?

JILL HANO: Yes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: So now you're at the point

where-- well, I should ask anybody else have any questions about the documents that we went over? We're not necessarily going to follow the documents to a tee because the idea is this committee you're going to have conversation. This is your agenda that you're going to recommend. It is not staffs. It is not anyone else's so it's up to you guys to discuss these things. I'll try to pull it up on screen, the documents, as you're talking about them. But the goal here is just to start with a conversation of the different community input that's there, are there things you have questions about, do you want to get some background on particular items. It's just for you to start engaging in that conversation and that process.

LAUREN WOMACK: Tory, did you raise your hand?

TORY ROCCA: No, I was moving my hand. Sorry.

LAUREN WOMACK: That's okay. Staff, I don't know if we could do this, but if possible could we get a list of the people from the different agencies and the agencies that are here today?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Sure.

LAUREN WOMACK: So that the council knows that we can maybe ask.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yep. Well, we have Meredith Jordan who has joined us. She's with Department of Education. We have Brian Bennett that has also joined us. He's with Medicaid. Erin Downing is with OCDD. She's joined us because I think Julie can come on around twoish is what she said last time. Although I see two Erins so I don't know if Bernard's on here too. So Julie will also try to join us later. In the room we also have Melissa Bayham. She is with LRS. Did I miss anybody? Is there anybody on the attendee list? I do see Bernard so I'm going to move him over in case y'all have questions. Oh, I see Julie too. It also looks like on the attendee list obviously there are members of the general public but I see a few folks from provider agencies as well that can chime in if you have questions specific to them. So lots of people here to share information with you to answer questions. Constance is also, she's with LSU HDC. I didn't know if I should throw you in there because I don't know if you can speak to those types of things or just your particular programs. And Tory is with Disability Rights. But they are also from those particular agencies as well.

LAUREN WOMACK: I guess I have a question for Meredith. I noticed that there are some things on the list, particularly the cameras and some other school related issues. I was wondering if you could maybe look over them and if you mind just giving us some background or feedback of kind of the questions that we are looking at on these issues of is this even something that would be a legislative issue to advocate for.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I don't know if there was a particular issue you had in mind but I just wanted to pull them up.

LAUREN WOMACK: I know one was cameras. Because some of them were more like policies so I don't know if that's more of a school board issue.

BRENTON ANDRUS: So is your question about cameras, the feasibility of this ask?

LAUREN WOMACK: Yes, and what it would entail.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Okay.

LAUREN WOMACK: And she can speak to that.

BRENTON ANDRUS: We can't hear you, Meredith.

LAUREN WOMACK: You're muted.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Still nothing. I know if you click the arrow by the microphone it will let you change. I don't know if that's working or not.

LAUREN WOMACK: She's going to call in.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yeah, you can call in. That would work. If there's any other questions. I do know in relation to that particular question though would there be a fiscal note tied to it. We did have some of that conversation.

LAUREN WOMACK: I guess I just wanted to see what she thought.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Got you. We'll table that for when Meredith is able to join us.

LAUREN WOMACK: Anybody else?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Can y'all hear me okay?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yep.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Excellent. Much better. Yeah, I'm really sorry. I tried to start talking a long time ago. My audio on my computer is not being friends with me today. So yeah, I mean, I'm happy to answer questions. So I did see the one concerning just requiring cameras to be a part of all self-contained classrooms. I will say, and I see on here, Brenton, the one that you're sharing here it's struck through the child's IEP. So that was one of the

things that I was just going to bring to your attention that is was it the intent here that the IEP team is going to determine that the camera is needed and then it goes in or is the legislation you want to say just by law all self-contained classrooms in Louisiana where the child spends more than 50 percent of their day, the way the law is currently written, that just every self-contained classrooms have a camera? So there would be implications, right, if you tie that to an IEP process but it looks like y'all discussed that and thought differently about that at this point.

I will say just to give you information, remember we previously had 8 million-dollars legislatively dedicated to this. Because someone mentioned like a fiscal note. And so if you mandate this but if we don't address the fiscal part it becomes an unfunded mandate that school systems may not be required to do. I will say we still have, actually school systems still have about 6 million left of that original 8 million. Now I'm not really sure all of the particulars about how that would work. Would that cover putting cameras in the rest of the classrooms. Do they have enough money if it became a mandate, right. Or they should use what they have, put it in as many classrooms as possible and then you come back and look at what additional funding. So I'm not really sure about the funding particulars, you know, and how the remainder of the funds that they already have, you know, if this goes into place is it enough. I'm not real sure. We would have to have some of those conversations with school systems. But it could. It could be. I'm not sure. Not sure if that's helpful around the camera discussion or not.

LAUREN WOMACK: Yes, thank you. And then I think they had another one but I don't see it on there about SPED complaints with schools. Oversight and accountability with schools receiving formal complaints.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Okay. Require LDOE to strengthen laws. LDOE doesn't strengthen law. Around oversight and accountability for schools receiving formal complaints. I think on that we just need, like I would need more information, right. What do you mean by strengthen accountability for schools who we receive formal complaints on, right.

JILL HANO: Brenton, can you make it bigger?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Sure.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yeah, I think this one, you know, I just need to know specifically what is the question or what does this look like. I think the first piece, LDOE strengthen laws, we write policy tied to law.

LAUREN WOMACK: Yeah, a lot of things looked very vague.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yeah, I think a lot of times when we have to compile this list we don't have lot of background information so we don't have a ton of information around the specific laws. Actually, the way it's written so we would likely have to figure out which laws we're looking at and then get a legislator to amend those laws and look at what we're trying to do. So it wouldn't necessarily be LDOE amending the laws, it could be us.

LAUREN WOMACK: (Inaudible) if she saw anything that spoke to her.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yeah. And just a reminder, we wanted to make it accessible and welcoming for families to come to the department if they need help resolving a dispute or filing a complaint. And just a reminder, we changed, in response to legislation, parents may now file complaints for allegations that happened up to two years prior as well as due process. So we've done a bit in this space around complaints. You know, I think there's just questions here around ambiguity and what exactly this looks like. And we've also, when I think about this and accountability we've also changed, so when we are looking at now school systems as we are ranking them based on risk and who we need to go out and have boots on the ground formal complaints, how many formal complaints that school system has had is a piece of data we are considering as we're making those decisions. So that is a piece of accountability tied to formal complaints that we don't want to in any way make this seem like a negative thing or like we don't want parents coming to us with help, for help. But for school systems we've tied it into their monitoring based on how many complaints. You know, we're considering that as we're saying okay, who do we need to go out and provide additional boots on the ground support and monitoring to. So just sort of informational there.

LAUREN WOMACK: Thank you, Meredith.

MEREDITH JORDAN: You got it.

BRENTON ANDRUS: So I believe Constance has her hand raised and then you have a member of the public, Kathy Dwyer that has her hand raised.

CONSTANCE ALPHONSE: So my kind of question was for Meredith related to what she was just saying. I think she kind of went there after I raised my hand. Some of the work that you guys are doing now with complaints and the team that you guys are developing. Would that kind of address this concern here of formal complaints with the process and some of the issues that have been reported in the past?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yeah. And we've got some SEAP members here but I do think our state panel-- and even with you all know we've talked about the dispute resolution, the legislative audit that we've had and a lot of the response we've had to that. We have done a lot of in terms of revising policy and practice around formal complaints, you know, around our ombudsman who assist parents with that and so we have made a bit of change. I'm not saying that we shouldn't listen to our stakeholders and if there's something else. But to your point, we have, alongside SEAP and stake holders, done a lot in this area over the past year and two years even including some legislative responsive changes as well.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Do you have a question, Jill?

JILL HANO: I don't know what's going on but I don't think y'all can help. Requires of the LDOE to strengthen laws around oversight and accountabilities for schools receiving complaints. Was that one of y'all's issues? It was. But your recommendations for kickoffs are only the four issues in gray, right?

BRENTON ANDRUS: That is correct, yes. So in the initial rankings those that are highlighted green on that community input document, those are things that they considered a high priority. But only the ones that are in gray on that particular kickoff agenda recommendations document, those are the official recommendations from your leaders and directors.

JILL HANO: Okay.

SPEAKER: So I do have a question about cameras in the classroom. Is there a future projected funding for the maintenance of those cameras for like let's say next year?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Did we lose you, Meredith? We may have lost Meredith. Or at least Meredith's audio. If you can hear us we can't hear you. Hold that thought. Christina.

CHRISTINA: So I just wanted to clarify, I think, I can't speak for all of us, this wasn't my specific agenda

item, but when I look at this in discussions that we had this, I would believe, is to provide more oversight for districts or even specific LEAs that have considerable or high amounts of complaints what does that accountability look like. Is there a plan to get those LEAs and districts up to where they're supposed to be in terms of federal guidelines and get students learning and thriving in settings. So that was kind of where we were going with that is there are districts that have considerable amounts over other districts and what that accountability actually looks like for them. Do they get fines. Do they get corrective action plans. Kind of just more information from the department on what that looks like in terms of accountability.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yeah, can you hear me?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yep, we can hear you now.

MEREDITH JORDAN: Okay. So let me address that one and then I'll go back to the maintenance funding. So anytime-- there's a lot in that. So there are corrective action if that complaint comes in and the school system is found at fault there's immediate corrective action. And so that's already happening through our complaint processes. They have 30 days, a certain amount of time, I don't have policy in front of me, to correct whatever the issue was. Let's just say we got a complaint that an IEP meeting was held and prior written notice wasn't given to the parent, parent files a complaint and says the school held a meeting, an IEP meeting and they did not properly notice me per bulletin, right, or per law. So that school system is going to be found out of compliance because we know you have to properly notice meetings and there will be immediate corrective action that the IEP team must reconvene with a properly noticed meeting, right. To go back and handle that business or whatever was taken care of at the meeting that was not properly noticed.

So there is built into complaints and findings around complaints already compliance that we are required to hold the LEA accountable if that allegation did come to fruition after investigation. There is accountability there. So I think what this particular piece what I went to, right, and again, I don't know the intent was that the LDOE would take into consideration, which is part of what you just mentioned, the number of complaints that we're seeing from school systems and consider that when we are going in and

monitoring schools. That is something new that we just put into policy last year that we are implementing now in terms of saying okay, what are our high-risk districts. One risk factor is how many complaints we're getting out of your school system. And so when we go into monitor whatever is found there, if there are findings, there is corrective action plans and things that a school system is required to do to come off of and out of corrective action and get a closeout from us. That you would get a closeout letter, you have completed all of your corrections of noncompliance, et cetera, et cetera. so that's how it works now. I think what we need to really, you know, questions or I could better answer what the intent of this particular or what more this particular interest, not saying it's a bad thing at all, and I have to stay neutral, you all know that, but we just need to know what more this is looking for, right, in terms of complaints and holding additional accountability.

And then I'll switch to the maintenance funding piece. The department requested last year in order to continue, because we know as school systems are implementing cameras and some of the school systems that put cameras in all of their classrooms that they may need, right, you all said it, maintenance. What are those additional cable costs, additional software, replacement cameras if something happens, maintenance. So we did ploy maintenance funds that we asked for from the legislature in house bill one I believe. As part of our state general budget we asked for some maintenance fund. Let me find out, I'm pretty sure that is going to be an annual ask for us, but let me find out. But we have already deployed. And it was a fraction of what they got before, but at least something as you mentioned, to cover maintenance costs in terms of replacement, wear and tear, additional wiring, whatever that might look like, right. So we have deployed some additional funding to support the maintenance of cameras. And I believe, I can double check and let Ebony know so we can communicate that out, that that's going to be an annual part of our budget request from the legislature every year.

SPEAKER: Now do the school districts already have the funding for the cameras to be placed in the classrooms for this fiscal year?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yes, they got the full amount upfront and they are rolling that money over to just meet the needs

of parent requests come coming in. They already have the funding.

SPEAKER: And what if they're not going to be using that money to put cameras in the classroom? What happens to those funds after this year is done?

MEREDITH JORDAN: We worked with finance, each year it rolls over. We worked with our finance team and the intent of the legislature on that legislative funding and the intent is that it just continues to rollover for when there's a parent request and when the school systems needs those dollars.

SPEAKER: So if there is a school system that has not had a parent request for cameras in the classroom, or I'll just narrow it down to a single school, so if they don't have a request for cameras in the classroom, they have the funding for that, are they still going to receive that maintenance funding for next school year?

MEREDITH JORDAN: That is a good question. I believe so. So I believe every district got a percentage of their original allocation as maintenance. A small portion, yes.

SPEAKER: And would the cameras in the classroom help alleviate any of the complaints that are coming through, the formal complaints as far as like not receiving services, not getting services, any types of abuse in the classroom or anything like that?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yeah, the department fully supported the implementation of this. I think we have seen cases where already we're seeing where school systems are using this to verify, to investigate. So we've been very positive and supportive about the combined efforts here on this, yes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: We do have other hands raised. Ms. Kathy Dwyer also has her hand raised.

KATHY DWYER: Thank you. To address a statement that Meredith had made about unfunded mandates probably cannot be mandated or followed through. I just wanted to remind everybody that (inaudible) is an unfunded mandate and that certainly has to be followed. So I don't think funding necessarily dictates whether or not a mandate can be adhered to or not. I don't think there's a choice. It doesn't have to have funds to it. It's nice to have funds because it makes it easier for whichever agency is responsible for implementing that new law, but mandates do not necessarily have to be funded.

Also, I want to thank, I don't remember who it was, that acknowledged that last year that a lot of families concerns about legislative items were not necessarily heard last year. I want to thank you for making that statement. I think it was important that it be recognized. I also think it's important to take action to possibly remedy the problems it caused by not listening to families and that is not supporting or advocating an increase in the wage floor for workers. That problem still exist so much so with the OCDD State Advisory Council voted unanimously to at least raise the wage floor from 9-dollars to 10. I think it would be very appreciated by the State Advisory Council and families like me and others who still are not receiving services because of the shortage of personnel if the council would at least support the State Advisory Committee's motion. That motion is being considered by OCDD administration. It also doesn't necessarily have to include additional funds.

As I had suggested in the email to OCDD leadership and at the State Advisory Committee that due to the analysis OCDD did with the 2021 wage floor increase it was determined that workers only got 30 percent of that increase so there's still funds from that past increase that could be used to raise it to the 10-dollars. In other words, instead of raising the reimbursement rate you just raise the wage floor from 9 to 10. Agencies are still receiving the 18-dollars and somewhat change in reimbursement. So that would put it a little bit over 50 percent. It would also put the wage floor closer to a mandate that would be coming through in about six years from the feds due to the new access rule that will require 80 percent of reimbursement rates to go to workers. So I am asking that the council and others please consider supporting that.

LAUREN WOMACK: Thank you, Ms. Dwyer. Meredith, I have one more question. In efforts for the future are there any reports that your agency does that's open to the public where we can read the different complaints by school system, any metrics on the new initiatives being done and any outcomes? Or is that information that you could share with the council when you report?

MEREDITH JORDAN: Yeah, I'm really happy to do that. We do a number of reports. For example, last year we did our first compliance report that was required by, I'm going to probably misquote it, it was a house resolution but it's

a compliance report that kind of breaks down what complaints, what compliance issues do we see. We also are required to publicly report due process findings and we will be reporting later this fall our first, just for public transparency, it's not required, redacted state complaint results to be a little bit more transparent about what we do see. So there are some legislative reports that we do as well as a lot of publicly reported data on our students with disabilities and results that I'm happy to share. I shared a little bit of data with our state advisory, our Special Education Advisory Panel at our last meeting and I'm happy to do the same with the council.

LAUREN WOMACK: That would be great. Thank you so much. Any other comments? Okay. Can we move onto the next topic. Melissa Bayham is here and I'm going to let her introduce herself.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Hi. I'm Melissa Bayham. I'm the director of Louisiana Rehabilitation Services. We administer the vocational rehabilitation services and as part of vocational rehabilitation it's preemployment transition services which are services for students with disabilities.

LAUREN WOMACK: Ms. Bayham, would you like to just talk a little bit about some of y'all's initiatives?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Sure. I would love to. So just want to give y'all some information about the vocational rehabilitation program and the challenges that we have. Our program has been underfunded for so long that I don't even know that people completely understand the fullness, the full program that LRS can provide to individuals with disabilities. I gave a handout out to the people who are here today and feel free to share this information. But LRS was last able to retain our full grant in 2006. And since that time we have returned over 400 million-dollars to the federal government because we have not had the state matching funds in order to drawdown our full federal allotment. We've been at the top of the list for a really long time but this year we were number one in the country in terms of we return more federal funds than any other state or territory. So it's not a list that I want to be at the top of.

So just to give you some perspective. So last federal fiscal year that ends in a couple days the full VR grant allotment was 64.3 million dollars which will require 17.5

million dollars of state general funds or matching funds. We had 7.9 so we were 8.6 million dollars short of matching our full federal allotment. We served about 18,000 people last program year and we're projected to serve 19,000 people this year. One of the great things about preemployment transition services is that our name is out there more because we should be in all the public schools and so more people are participating in services which is great, but my capacity, my staffing capacity continues to decrease because we have just constant turnover of staff. So complaints have continued to increase because I don't have staffing capacity to serve all of the participants that we need to serve.

So just an example. If we were to get fully funded, which would be about 89 million dollars, we could serve a little over 31,000 people. Which we have not been able to do since we were fully funded before. And just to give people an idea for those who are not aware what vocational rehab can do. Right now the federal regulations do not require us to have a financial needs test for any of our services. But because we don't have the funding we do have a financial needs test for a lot of our training and support services. So with a fully funded program we could expand what we do in school districts with preemployment transition services and we could provide services to all individuals with disabilities no matter what their income level is. And why that's important is, you know, you have individuals who might be over what we allow in terms of our financial needs test but still absolutely need the services that we provide.

In terms of post-secondary education we can provide college training services but also all the supports services meaning books and supplies, transportation. If the person doesn't live within commuting distance we can pay for room and board. We pay everything that that person needs in order to succeed in a college environment. For individuals who just need to maintain employment we provide vehicle modifications, home modifications, assistive technology. And I know Lauren can probably appreciate this. I mean, imagine, you know, you go buy a car and say it's 30,000-dollars. Well, imagine having to add 40,000-dollars to that to modify the vehicle so you can actually use it. This is what people with disabilities experience in terms of transportation. We help purchase

prosthetic devices, orthotics. There's physical restoration, mental restoration. So that's physical therapy, mental health counseling. There's just a lot of things that we can do. And I don't know if that's what y'all wanted me to talk about, but I want people to really understand the types of services that we can provide.

In addition to that obviously we help with job development and placement. So we have individuals who don't need much support to be able to find employment and we have individuals who need a lot of support and may need job coaching and follow-up services for the duration of their employment. We can provide all of these services to individuals. So that's my spill, but do y'all have any specific questions? I don't think I mentioned this. So for federal fiscal year 25, which is about to begin October the 1st, our anticipated grant is 70 million dollars which would require 19 million dollars in state general funds. We had appropriations today. Basically states are just trying to keep what they have. But I want people to understand, because I actually have the opportunity and the support of my administration to provide this information to you, just all the things that vocational rehabilitation can do for individuals with disabilities. I know this committee, this council, has a lot to consider. The health and safety of individuals with disabilities is obviously of utmost importance, but I don't want y'all to forget about employment because the employment of persons with disabilities allows them to go from dependence to independence. So that's all the information.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I do have a couple of questions.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Absolutely.

BRENTON ANDRUS: One, so gosh, I think it was like a decade ago, maybe not that far, maybe eight years or so that we last advocated for funding for LRS to get those matching funds. Is it still the case that if we leave funding on the table other states can access that pot of money?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Thank you. So much to talk about I forget. So yes, and there's two things that can happen there and it actually is going to change this year and I'll explain that. So I told you last year our allocation ended up, the final allocation ended up being 64 million dollars and we sent back 29 million dollars of federal funds. So all those funds go into a pot and it's called reallocation. So other states can actually apply for your funds to

basically we reallocate in terms of we return funds and other states can provide additional match and take those funds. So the last several years, not this year, state VR agencies haven't been able, there have been a lot of state VR agencies in the same boat as Louisiana returning those funds. Those funds then in turn go into what's called the Disability Innovation Funds for those funds that were not matched by other state agencies and they have discretionary grants that they award for those. Now we're getting into the situation where more VR agencies are actually getting all of their funds and not returning funds. There was a very short list of states that actually reallocated or returned money this year and unfortunately we were one of those states. So there won't be any disability innovation fund grants this year because all the money was taken by all the state VR agencies. I say we funded California's reallocation because we gave up about 29 million and they took about 29 million.

LAUREN WOMACK: Did you know did we get any of those grants last year to fund any projects?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Lighthouse for the Blind did receive a 10 million-dollar DIF grant. I don't know the details of it yet.

LAUREN WOMACK: Okay. I was just wondering.

BRENTON ANDRUS: My other question was just they're 8.6 million short. Does LRS request it and it's just not approved? Like in your budget request are you trying to meet that full match?

MELISSA BAYHAM: So with the previous administration I do not believe it was requested. This administration did request the full match, it just didn't happen. But this was the first time in a long time that it was requested.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Christy had her hand up.

CHRISTY CURTIS: Christy Curtis, LaCAN leader for region four. My question to you is, and more for clarity, the staff shortage is the reason that you can't use all the funds, is that what it is?

MELISSA BAYHAM: I didn't explain that really well. The staffing shortage is really just a situation where over the years we've lost positions, we've lost TO. If y'all heard us talk about TO in state government. The funding is solely because we don't have the state general funds to match the federal funds. Because we have done staffing contracts for contract workers, it's not my preference but

if I had the funding there could be a way for me to figure out how to get the staff that I need. But we have been, I've been the director for six years, we've been stagnant at about 8 million dollars in state general funds. Does that make sense?

CHRISTY CURTIS: Yes. Follow-up question to that though. As far as the staff shortage is concerned what do you think the reason is for the turnover?

MELISSA BAYHAM: The pay.

CHRISTY CURTIS: And that's what I was trying to get at.

MELISSA BAYHAM: If you look at our postings for entry level rehab counselor, civil service gives you a range, but if you're coming out of college with a bachelor's degree we're going to pay you \$17.18.

CHRISTY CURTIS: Now in the rural areas, which is I think the areas that are probably not getting the services, you can contract, you know, you can contract in those rural areas?

MELISSA BAYHAM: We can contract staff, the only caveat to that, just so that everybody's aware, there are nondelegable functions by the federal government, by federal regulation. So there are some things if we contract staff there are certain things that they can do, but there's certain things they can't. Like they can't determine eligibility for the program and they can't authorize services. They can get us all the way to that point but somebody from LRS would have to approve it.

I just also wanted to also note, because you mentioned the rural areas, but interesting enough New Orleans and Baton Rouge are actually one of my most difficult regions to recruit for and I think it's because of the pay.

CHRISTY CURTIS: The area where I am we have Lafayette but then you have rural parishes around it and so that's why. Thank you.

LAUREN WOMACK: And do you still need to have a master's degree to do rehabilitation counseling or no?

MELISSA BAYHAM: So that was pre WIOA. If you have a master's degree we can pay you additional, extraordinary qualification pay. And in the counselor series because the counselor series is a career progression group in civil service. We have a rehab counselor entry, rehab counselor and a rehab counselor masters. The rehab counselor master requires a master's degree.

LAUREN WOMACK: Okay. And I guess the other question I had, if for any reason we can't advocate for it this year, and it's a staff question, have y'all done any research or reports on how getting those funds not just affecting VR services but other, because I think you mentioned it in this report, like the Department of Health, DOC, universities and other agencies if there was a way to get like maybe a contractor or something as one of our actions to maybe look at that to present to legislators to show them the impact that VR services will not only have on VR services but on other areas in the state. I didn't know if any other states use that when they advocate?

MELISSA BAYHAM: I'm not sure but you brought up a good point that I would like to explain. And I neglected to talk about this. So we have an order of selection within LRS meaning we have to serve individuals with the most significant disabilities firsts. So we have three orders of selection and right now all orders of selection are open. If things do not improve soon, and when I say improve in terms of staffing and funding, we may have to close order of selection. And just as an example, you know, with the waivers in OCDD we have a MOU with them. And so essentially if someone needs supported employment services they have to come through VR first unless we have a waiting list. So if we would get to the point where we would close order of selection then OCDD would have to provide the supported employment services through the waiver and not through vocational rehabilitation. So that gives you one example of the impact that could happen if we close order of selection.

LAUREN WOMACK: I know some people are confused, social security defines disability one way, but how does LRS, could you maybe explain that?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Sure. So we do have a little bit different definition than the ADA, for example, but because our definition, not our definition of disability, but our definition of who is eligible for our program is a little bit different because we are an employment program. So to be eligible for LR services you have to have a mental or physical impairment but also that physical or mental impairment has to result in a substantial impediment to employment and that you need VR services. You have to have a disability and then you have to need VR services in order to obtain, maintain or advance in your employment. So I

think the ADA talks about regarded as. You have to actually have a physical or mental impairment to be eligible for VR services.

LAUREN WOMACK: Thank you. Do we have any other questions or comments? Did they have another agency?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yeah, well, OCDD is here if you have any questions. I don't think they necessarily have a presentation for you. If there were any questions about any of the particular things that are being recommended to you by leaders, by the directors, by the community if you wanted some insider thoughts.

LAUREN WOMACK: Is this from Julie?

BRENTON ANDRUS: The reduction list, yeah. That is from the slides that were presented at house appropriations. That would be the list that LDH provided. If there were reductions that's where they were initially looking at.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: Just letting y'all know I'm here if you have questions. For some reason my camera is not wanting to work.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Understood. I do have one question. So one of the recommendations that came out of our kickoff was for increased fines for ICFs. I know so that came out of an audit that was done in July, is that whenever it came out? I can't recall exactly. But I think that was one of the recommendations that came out of that audit. And I know the department was not necessarily in agreement with increased fines and I was wondering if you could shed some light on maybe the why, the thought process behind what it would or wouldn't accomplish if those fines would be increased.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: I'm honestly not able to. That must have come from Health Standards so I wasn't a part of that conversation. I can take that back to try to find out. I do know that there's legalities and statutes that outline, you know, what those fines are and I'm familiar with the audit, but I just wasn't a part of the conversations. But I can find that out to be able to get back to the council in terms of what that rationale was.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Thank you.

LAUREN WOMACK: Julie, I don't know if there's a simple answer for this but if you could, could you talk to-- I mean, as always we're advocating for the DSW pay raises that we are coming out with doing the rate study and things like

that. Obviously families are, trying to think of the right word, I guess as patient as possible waiting for to see some outcome. Can you maybe say why it's not possible or if it is possible or how raising the rate would affect services for having the pay rate increase.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: So you're right. There is no simple answer and there are different folks who feel differently about this but I'll share with you the factual information that I have. I'm going to blank on the timeframe. But when we increased the rates, most of the rates were at about 16 dollars an hour and we increased them to the 18.50. There was a lot of discussion at the legislature. There was a lot of discussion both during committees and several meetings outside of the committee meetings where advocates were invited as well as provider agencies were invited and there was a rule that came out that said that we needed to, with the rate increase up to the \$18.50 that the workers needed to, I'm sorry, that the providers would have to pay a minimum to the direct support workers of 9 dollars an hour. Where that came from is that a portion of that \$2.50 increase needed to go to the worker so they added that portion of the \$2.50 on top of minimum wage and that is where the 9 dollars an hour originally came from.

They also asked our office to do an audit to determine what-- well, I guess to make sure that all workers were being paid 9 dollars an hour. And so we did that. It took us almost an entire year. We had to take five people off of the other jobs they were doing to do the audit for five years. So some folks have asked me why I haven't continued the audit. We've had to look for other ways to do it because it wasn't sustainable. But what we did is we had every provider was required to give us their payroll records for staff, I think it was a two-month period before the rate increase happened which was in October and then their payroll records for after October. And so what our staff did is they looked at the salaries before and after. We did do some comparisons. We did ensure that workers were being paid the 9 dollars an hour. Where we did find that workers weren't being paid 9 dollars an hour we went back to the provider and we said hey, you're required to do this. We're giving you an opportunity to fix it. And by fix it we mean pay them 9 dollars an hour moving forward and go back and pay the workers what you didn't pay them

starting October 1 when you got this extra money. Most of them did do that. If they did not then we turned them over to Program Integrity and Program Integrity is the group that can then enact fines and sanctions for noncompliance.

And so Kathy Dwyer referenced earlier a report. That report is available. It does show, you know, what it shows is the average pay for workers two months before the increase and then the average pay for workers one month after the increase. So there are some statistical information that is used to be able to show that. There was then after that report there were some additional conversations, none of these occurred in, I don't think, any of them occurred at a public hearing, but there was some conversation and the department had put forth a rule where we were going to require without a rate increase that additional, that there be an additional part of the rate that was paid to workers. And after several meetings with several different legislators the department was asked to pull that rule and so we did. And so the conversation it sounds as if you guys are saying is is could there be a rule that required the providers to pay more than the 9 dollars an hour. We could look at that. There's definitely a lot of pros and cons around that and we have not had legislative support to do that which we have to have in order to make a legislative change.

There is also the ability to ask for a rate increase and in that rate increase figure out a way that we would say what portion of that would need to go to the direct support worker and then update the rule. Of course that would have a fiscal note tied to it if we did that. I believe last year there was a lot of discussion around the state being able to have some money that we pay directly to the workers. The problem is is that we as the state agency we don't pay the workers. We either pay the provider agency who pays the workers or in self-direction the fiscal intermediary bills and then pays the worker. So there's not a mechanism for us to say if we had X amount of money for the state to be able to directly pay direct support workers. There's just not an ability to do that.

So again, in order to look at an additional amount being paid to the worker if there needed to be more money to do that that would have to be done through an increase in the rate within some new requirements that that money, that the rate increased would go to the worker. And I think

you guys might have talked at the beginning and I know you were just alluding to some of the reductions that were proposed. Right now for the department to be able to ask for additional funds we are not really in a posture where we can ask to raise those rates or do something different when we're being asked to have to reduce our budget because we are not estimating to have, we're estimating to bring in less money. And so that doesn't mean that folks can't advocate for that if there is extra funding. What it means is for the department when we have to present our balanced budget it's difficult, it's not impossible. And we are working as we speak. I had a four-hour meeting yesterday around our entire Department of Health budget and all the things people are discussing. Ultimately that will lead to our Department of Health executive team making decisions which they present to the Division of Administration and then they present those to the governor and ultimately that's the budget that you see during the session. So that was a really long answer but I tried to cover some of the things I know I've been asked about over the last few years. But happy to take questions about any of that that I just said.

LAUREN WOMACK: No, thank you, Julie. That personally helped me a lot. Does anybody have any questions?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Committee member Ms. Aduli, she has her hand raised and then Ms. Dwyer.

LAUREN WOMACK: Cherie.

CHERIE ADULI: Thank you, Julie. Quick question. It just seems like we're always coming back to we don't have caregivers, we don't have caregivers, we don't have caregivers. Pay is always the problem. Is there a way to have, and I don't know what other states are doing, but would it be possible to have caregivers as state employees or create some kind of union where these caregivers are treated as like a state employee. They would receive access to affordable healthcare. They would receive 401K. It would cut the provider agencies out so all additional dollars would go towards funding the benefits for caregivers. Have we ever looked into a model or something like that?

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: So we haven't in Louisiana. Smaller states have tried that but to be honest they've moved away from it. That's a huge, huge fiscal ask and then there is also a huge risk on the part of the state and you're

growing our state employment substantially because even with, for example, we at one point in time had nine state operated intermediate care facilities where we did have those direct support workers that you're talking about that were state employees at those state facilities. We've closed all but two of them but the state is now responsible and has funds that have to go towards the state retirement for all of the staff who were there during the time while they were working. So is it possible, we would have to look into it. The fiscal ask for that would be much greater than even what it is for us to look for rate increases and there would be substantial risks on the part of the state. Because you're looking at usually around 16,000 workers.

I can also tell you that even in our state facilities where they do have some of those benefits they are still also having difficulty finding workers and being able to keep workers even with some higher pay and some of the state benefits. Unfortunately for those of us who have been with the state for a long time the benefits of being a state employee are not as attractive as they were I guess when you went into state employment say 25 years ago. So I think for those reasons.

Now in terms of is there a union, there is not a union that I'm aware of. That is something that direct support workers, I'm not sure, I don't really know much about that. I do know that there are multiple other states where the direct support workers do have a union that they are associated with. But I can't share anymore. I just don't have a lot of information about that.

CHERIE ADULI: I just don't know how to-- I mean, we don't have caregivers because they don't even make enough money to buy insurance off the exchange, you know what I'm saying. Like a lot of them don't have access to 401K or like there's no future for caregivers so it's easier to drive for Uber Eats or do something stupid instead of being a caregiver because the money's not there and we're not taking care of our people. My caregiver, I mean, God bless her, my son engages in dangerous behavior and it's really hard but I take care of my caregivers but not everybody can do that. I feel like there's just a shortage because we're not able to pay them what they're worth and I don't know how we get there.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: Yeah.

LAUREN WOMACK: Julie, I have a question as well. So

do y'all have the financials of providers, do they have to turn in their financials every year, like how much they pay on overhead, things like that? Is that turned into the state since they're, I guess, state contractors and things like that?

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: Yeah, so we do, there is a requirement that providers turn in a cost report every year. We've seen that there's not a lot of compliance with that but to be honest with you, the state hasn't done much with the cost reports. And so I think that's why folks have not turned it in. One of the things, and Brian may want to say more, so Brian feel free to jump in, we have, you know, you asked about the rate study and I forgot to go there at the end of my remarks earlier. The rate study is in process. Milliman is the vendor that's doing the rate study for home and community-based waiver services and Myers and Stauffer is the group that's doing the rate study for intermediate care facilities. One of the things that they do start with is cost reports. And so a letter just went out I think last month letting providers know that it is mandatory that they turn in the cost reports. We do have an ability to do fines and sanctions when people don't turn in those cost reports so we've let the providers know that they must turn it in or we will enact fines and sanctions. And when I am talking to providers or any of my staff are talking to providers we're letting them know the importance of that and reminding them that we will now have fines and sanctions.

And the reason for that is so that we can use that as a real basis for understanding what the rates is. It's a starting point. You know, Cherie, to your point it will allow us to objectively look at a lot of different things and be able to know in order to raise the rates of the workers and assume that there's a higher rate of pay then this is the exact amount that we would need in all of the other adjustments that would then happen. It's going to, the rate study will take a look at do we have differences in the price of providing care, the cost of providing care in rural verses urban areas. Is it different in different parts of the state. You know, providers in New Orleans tell us their cost of insurance is very different say than the cost of insurance for providers in Alexandria. So the rate study will look at all of that. The cost reports are a starting point, but yes, those are due I think the end

of November. It's either the beginning or the end of November. And we've been informed that they need to provide that to us. So we will have those from all of our home and community-based providers and that's in the Office of Aging and Adult Services and the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities.

LAUREN WOMACK: And do they need to turn those in yearly?

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: Yes, annually they have to turn those in.

LAUREN WOMACK: And Mr. Bennett, I was wondering if he could please speak. I was attending the staff meeting and there was some discussion about having it due in November but not sanctioning them until February. And I understand that this year is already set but would that be something that the council could advocate for because that would hold up this rate study is that it's due in November and then the sanctions would go out immediately. Not this year but next year. How would that look for your office?

BRIAN BENNETT: Well, the reason there's a delay in imposing the sanctions is the cost reports are due at the end of November. So we looked at doing it starting January the 1st but when we were talking to our contractor who's collecting all of those we just with the holidays they said they were going to need some additional time to prepare a list of who did not report back and who did because we have oh, gosh, I think with all the provider groups that were included I want to say it was well over 500. So they're going to have to go through all of those cost reports and then prepare a list for us. So that's why that additional gap is included between the deadline for submitting the cost reports and when we would start imposing penalties.

LAUREN WOMACK: Thank you.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Kathy has had her hand up.

KATHY DWYER: Thank you. To add to what Julie Foster Hagan said about the meetings and negotiating the 2021 rate increase. I was in all the meetings, the little, smaller meetings Julie referred to. The first one with the Provider Association and a handful of legislators and LDH administration. It started off where there was the assumption that most workers or majority of workers were being paid minimum wage, 7.25 an hour. That's how we arrived at a 9 dollar an hour floor. However, the analysis OCDD conducted that Julie referred to that was conducted

two months before the floor increase went into effect and the analysis of what the wages were after showed that the majority of workers were not, or the average wage for workers prior to that increase was just 8-dollars and 60 something cents or so much. Maybe 30 cents under the 9 dollars. So it really wasn't minimum wage.

So even though workers were supposed to get 1.75 so to speak on top of the minimum wage they only got roughly 30 cents on top of the average 8 something an hour. So that's where the second meeting came in that we discussed all that with a handful of legislators, the Providers Association, myself, Bambi and then there were a few other parents. Some that were both parent and board members of the Arc so there was a conflict of interest there. But anyway. So that's where we were discussing that it seems like the 9 dollar floor needs to be higher since we did not have accurate information when advocating for an increase in the wage floor until that analysis was done.

There were legislators at that second meeting that understood and agreed that the whole intent of the increase was to give workers the majority of the increase, however when those handful of legislators went back to the full house and maybe even senate to discuss it and get them to sign on the 9 dollar floor rate was used, wage floor was used. So there was some miscommunication there as to what the intent was. That's why the legislators could not increase it more than the 9 dollars. But if you also go back to the appropriations committee meeting that was held just a week or so ago you will hear the majority if not all of the legislators in that appropriations committee meeting saying number one, they will not let any of our services be cut. That we don't have, we as families and individuals with developmental disabilities don't have paid lobbyists, don't have paid employees to go advocate for like the providers and so forth, like the Providers Association has. It's just us as families having to advocate for what we need and we need better qualified workers and workers to get fair wages in order to attract those good ones. So they heard that. They even stated about fast-food workers making 15, 16 dollars an hour and that we need to pay more. So I don't think our legislators are against increasing the wage floor by another dollar. I honestly don't. You can go back and listen to that appropriations committee meeting to verify what my

understanding is. And that's what I've been advocating for out of the 18-dollars and some odd cents that I believe LDH could just increase the floor to 9.

You will also hear in previous appropriations meetings that even (inaudible) Secretary Harrington has made for LDH agreed our workers are not getting paid a competitive salary. That CNAs at hospitals start at 16 an hour. So he seemed to be supportive of that. It sounds like what everybody is saying in those meetings we had their support to do it, I think they just need us to remind them that we need this and we need you to stand by your word.

LAUREN WOMACK: Thank you.

SPEAKER: Hey, I have a question for Julie. I know that you would need, of course, the cost report analysis from all the Providers Associations but when you receive those is there a plan to look at the percentage deficit between self-direction and provider services in terms of like administrative overhead costs?

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: I'm not sure that I'm understanding the question.

SPEAKER: Okay. So, for instance, we know that self-direction cost less than going through provider services essentially. Would there be any analysis on why that is? Is there going to be a study on maybe why self-direction cost less administratively than provider services do? Like I said, I know you would need the cost reports to even begin to break into that analysis, but is there any plans to address the percentage deficit between self-direction and provider services?

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: I'm just struggling. You know, there's not the administrative overhead in self-direction that the providers have in that they-- so providers are required by Health Standards to have an actual physical location. There's a requirement that they hold workers comp and some of those other things are covered in self-direction. So I guess what I'm trying to understand, I'm not trying to negate what you're saying, I'm trying to understand what we would be comparing.

CHERIE ADULI: So there's been lots of discussions over the last few years how self-direction cost tremendously less than provider services and that's why a lot of families have been moving towards self-direction because they're able to provide their worker a more livable wage. So what I'm asking is is that, even though I know that provider

services have certain administrative offsets that self-direction employees would not have, is there a plan to look into that to maybe enhance the quality of Provider Association so that that is a more equitable comparison than self-direction workers being able to make I believe it's 16.30 an hour and I believe provider workers only being able to make 9 or whatever that looks like for them an hour? Because that's a tremendous deficit between those two and they essentially do the same line of work. And so, I mean, it's not my choice, but as a question like could it be feasible to do a study into have some analytics on why Provider Associations cost more than self-direction essentially, the data.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: We can take it back. I think the main thing though is self-direction has full access to all of the rate without any other considerations. I will share with you that what some states do is, in fact most states from when I talk to a group called Applied Self-Direction on a couple of topics they were actually kind of surprised that in our self-direction we give folks full access to the rate because what they told me is that what most states do is, so for example, once we have our rate study done we will know specifically sort of in an objective fashion what is the amount of overhead, what is the considerations around overtime, what are the considerations for pay, what are the considerations for billing, insurance, all of those kinds of things. What some, again, most states, I can't say all, what most states do is take whatever that cost is that goes, that the provider has for doing business and they actually reduce the amount that those in self-direction can use. So instead of 16.32, which is the portion of the 18.50 minus the workers comp and the tax and benefits and all those kinds of things. So that 16.32 is from that 18.50 rate minus those required things. And not all self-direction workers get that. Families can set their rate, right. But what some states do is say you can't pay the 16.32 in self-direction. You have to actually, you have a reduced amount that you can access because they take away the administrative costs portion of it and so we have not really explored that or talked about that. We did find out that that's how a lot of states address sort of that discrepancy because as you said self-direction is able to pay a lot more because there are no overhead costs associated with that. But we can take that away. We're doing a lot of work in

self-direction right now, looking at the program in its entirety but I don't know because there's not cost reports on the self-direction side how we can do that, but I've got some of my team members on, we can take that back. But I guess we do know objectively that the folks that use self-direction have access to the full rate to be able to pay their worker verses providers who have a lot of other costs that come out of the rate that's set the exact same. I don't know if that helped.

CHERIE ADULI: It did. Thanks, Julie.

LAUREN WOMACK: I just would like y'all to consider too, you know, how long that rate has been for people in self-direction. You reduce that rate now you're going to cut even more people that are willing to work because they've been paid at a certain rate as well.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: Yeah, I'm sorry. Please don't leave this meeting saying Julie's going to go do that because that's not what I'm saying.

LAUREN WOMACK: Yeah.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: I don't want to cause a panic because that's not what I'm saying. I'm just saying when we look at comparisons it's not really an apples-to-apples comparison I guess.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Julie, a couple quick questions. I know one of the potential cuts that was presented was rolling back that rate increase. Would the wage floor still remain at 9 dollars if that was cut or would the rule revert back to the minimum wage?

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: There wasn't really any specific discussion around that. However, at the time that we enacted the 9 dollar floor part of the discussion there was a concern expressed that if there's rate cuts, because there were rate cuts if you go back a few years back and we were in a deficit posture, there were rate cuts. Now this is a whole different administration, but at that time folks did say that if there would be rate cuts in the future that it would roll back on that 9 dollar an hour requirement. That would all have to be decided I guess by the current administration. But there had been discussion in the past about that if there were reductions in the future that that requirement would go away.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Got you.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: But I don't know. Those would all be things that we would have to look at.

BRENTON ANDRUS: And you may have mentioned it when you were giving a little overview about the rate methodology so I apologize if I didn't catch it. But coming out of that study are we going to get an idea of what we should be paying workers or we just getting an idea of what the rate should be?

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: There will have to be some considerations in terms of the wages. I'm not sure exactly how that plays out or how that will show up in the reporting of that. I'm just not sure. I know that what other states have done is used-- so in the rate there will be an assumption that the average rate of pay for workers is X dollars. And so I know that other states have used it to say let's just say we want to increase the pay for workers by 2 dollars an hour. Well, we then can put that 2 dollar adjustment into the formula that we have to be able to say this would be the fiscal note. This is the extra dollars we would need to enact this increase of the average. So there will be some assumptions I know around the average pay for workers.

We're all still really trying to understand the access rule and that 80 percent requirement because while it is clear that it says 80 percent of the rate must go to the worker there's also a lot of exclusions in there. There's a lot of discussion around blended rates and value-based payments and so we're still awaiting a lot of that guidance. But we do know that as Milliman is doing this for home and community-based services they will be looking at some of those different factors that go into worker pay. You know, some of our provider agencies choose to use bonus payments or incentives so their base pay may be only 9 dollars an hour because if you go into overtime that's where the concerns come in. It's not always about paying the 9 dollars an hour. It's what happens when overtime kicks in and now you're paying the worker as much as you're kind of taking in. So instead of raising their base pay some people choose to do bonus payments, you know, at the end of certain timeframes.

Some providers actually have incentives that help pay for their employees to go to school and so they're still really trying to flesh out and do considerations around how do you count those types of things where it might not be the base pay. There's still money that's going to workers, it's just going to them in a way that's different than the

pay. And then we have there is a national staff stability survey and we're trying to learn those things. So I think Cherie said earlier, like we do know that pay is important. I don't know that you'll find anyone who disagrees that we need to have some ability to pay direct support workers more, that we need to have some ability to have them better trained so that we can see more quality in the supports that we provide. But I think then it's some of the how do we get there.

There's also some research that's showing that while pay is important there's also other factors that need to be considered so we are trying to think about all of those things as well. I do know there's some states that are paying up to 18, 20-dollars an hour for direct support workers. Of course that's some of the northern states where the cost of living is a lot higher than it is here. But even where they are paying pretty high salaries, and in those states it's more than you make at Burger King, McDonalds or delivering for Uber Eats, but they still have the workforce shortage even with the pay. And so I think there's a lot of folks trying to figure out the question that was posed earlier, what do we do. We just all have to continue to collectively put our heads together to figure that out.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Kathy Dwyer has her hand raised.

KATHY DWYER: Thank you. Getting back to the cost report. I just want to make sure I'm understanding it correctly because Bernard Brown and I have had some email conversations about it as well. My understanding is those cost reports will be due November 30th per the rule and that February is when you'll start imposing sanctions on those who did not submit their report by November 30th, right? You're not going to allow between December and January for folks to send in reports and let them slide. The cutoff date is always going to be November 30th, correct?

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: I defer to Bernard and Brian on that. I don't know the exact correct answer.

BRIAN BENNETT: So Kathy, we haven't really worked that out yet. I think what the memo said is that we would impose monthly penalties until the provider submitted their full cost report. So I guess it just depends on at what time they submit it. For example, if they submit it January the 28th that might not be enough time for us to catch it but if they submit it on December the 1st-- I don't want to

promise anything because I don't know what the procedures look like yet for us gathering the reports together and putting our system programming in for those penalties. But I'm just saying I guess it depends on the timing of when they were to submit it. If they're a day or two later, maybe even a couple of days late.

KATHY DWYER: The rule is pretty clear. Bernard sent me the rule. The rule is pretty clear, November 30th is the cut off.

BRIAN BENNETT: Yes. So in that case they would get a penalty for-- and when we start February the 1st it's going to be based off of their January claims.

KATHY DWYER: Right. I just want to make sure that-- I'm a retired state employee. I worked for 25 years. I dealt with timelines with grants and contracts before. I've never heard of anybody giving anybody leeway with deadlines. Especially with the feds and contracts and financial reports. So since the rule is clear about November 30th I just want to make sure everyone is clear, including providers, that those reports have to be submitted by November 30th. If not there will be sanctions imposed. It may not be imposed right away, but they may be imposed in February.

BRIAN BENNETT: Yes. Yes, Kathy, I would agree with that. If they miss the deadline there will be a penalty.

KATHY DWYER: Thank you.

LAUREN WOMACK: Thank you, Kathy. Anybody else have a question or a comment? Do we have any other agencies?

BRENTON ANDRUS: No, I don't think so. Am I missing anyone? I don't think. Again, none of the agencies really had a formal presentation for you. It was more so they could just answer questions if you had any. But just a reminder, it is 3:10. So you're supposed to wrap up at 4. At this point I guess it would be are there any additional questions about any of the community input that was received? Otherwise you can start focusing your efforts on maybe some of the recommendations that you received from the leaders and directors if you want to consider those. You also have the opportunity to make your case if you feel like something else should be included in the agenda recommendation. And similar to what the leaders and the directors did, you should also probably determine what do you think, or not what, how many issues should the council tackle this year. And so, you know,

they had said three max but really focusing on any sort of cuts. I know there was a lot of conversation in the committees where the legislators were very supportive of disability services. I hope they remember that because it's easy to say that and not provide you the funding whenever that comes into play.

And also keep in mind there's been other years with a fiscal cliff where we have had a nice agenda that we have to disregard to combat any sort of cuts that come our way and that takes a lot of our time. So any other questions or any other discussion about any of the community input?

LAUREN WOMACK: Does anybody on the council want to share their thoughts about our agenda items or how many we should pick or which ones we should pick?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Looks like Constance has her hand raised.

LAUREN WOMACK: Constance.

CONSTANCE ALPHONSE: I really feel that we should recommend the ones that are focused on financials. A lot of the discussion, you know, we've heard about if it doesn't have the fiscal attached to it then it's difficult to implement anyway. So I definitely think trying to maintain what we have and make sure we're not losing anything. Specifically the LDH potential reductions and then the funding for the Families Helping Families centers.

BRENTON ANDRUS: As far as the document that I have on the screen here those are all of the issues that received the highest priority when the leaders and directors did their kickoff and so those were the issues that they ended up voting on. Some things, just to provide a little bit of background info on as far as the ending of the flexible family fund waiting list. That was something that was brought up but we tried that last year and we didn't get a lot of support around that. So I think that in part is also why they were not voting in favor of that particular idea. You can see the DSW pay raises are on there. That did not get a lot in favor mostly because there was discussion around the rate methodology, what would come of that and considering the amounts of cuts that were being proposed and the fiscal cliff next year they were concerned that the price tag for increasing any sort of a rate or raise would possibly derail that particular ask this year.

I don't recall the conversation about some of these. I apologize. So funding for support coordination to

address staff turnover and more training. I think some of that conversation was also on the chopping block for support coordination rates. And so it's one of those things do you want to keep the rates or are you going to try to do an ask for more money. Again, funding to decrease the shortage of SPED certified teachers. I know there are some things out there the department is trying to do that. But also, again, they were giving consideration to its funding. We're asking for more when the administration is saying we want to give you less. Increase in funding for the individual and family support program funding. So that is one of the programs that's offered through your district and authority. Well, essentially you can put in a request for funding for something that you need. It's given or assigned a priority. And there's a lot of flexibility with that program. A lot of times people have said it will pretty much do anything except buy a house and a car. That was added on at kickoff. We heard a lot about the IFS program last year when we were advocating for the flexible family fund program but a lot of the districts and authorities felt if you were going to try and increase funding that would be the program because you get more bang for your buck in that particular program.

The next one, expanding coverage for medical dietary needs through insurance. We're talking about things like thickened water. There was a lot of discussion around that as far as why that is not currently covered or what is or isn't covered. I don't know if anyone else has any information. I don't recall as to why they specifically did not vote for that one other than it's very possible there would be a price tag. Hearing aid coverage for adult waiver recipients through Medicaid. We had to get clarity on that one because I think it came in as just hearing aid coverage for adults on Medicaid but it was specific to the waiver population. Again, that would probably have a price tag on it. I'm not certain.

Let's see. Accountability system for support coordination agencies was on there. Amending Act 137. That was, if I'm not mistaken, passed a few years ago and basically I think one of the things was have a designation on your license if you had autism. Yes, and a component in there as well about police training. So post trained, you would be trained on disability matters. Part of that discussion was, I can't remember the parish, but there is

a parish that has a voluntary sign up, if you will, that you can put on file with your sheriff's office that basically says that this individual has a disability and so they were thinking about possibly can you amend that piece of legislation to require all sheriffs' offices or police departments to have such a list for folks to sign up for. Again, from the council's perspective that would not be something we would want mandated. We would be opposed to that. That would be something strictly voluntary. Some of the discussion around that particular topic is the council has monitored bills of that nature in the past but we've mostly been neutral on those types of issues.

And then I think the other two they did not vote on because through discussions they ruled those out from moving forward. You'll see on there the strengthening of laws and oversight. I think there just wasn't a lot of information around that. And then amending Act 400 was a conversation. But that particular legislation just went into effect August 1st, I believe. So we would be making a determination on amendments to a law that's only really been in effect for a month. And not having data or anything to be able to support why that change would need to be made in that particular piece of legislation. Also knowing that as far as the amendments to those two pieces of legislation you have to find a legislator that's willing to utilize one of their five options to bring your amendment or to bring to the legislature. So again, those gray are the actual official recommendations that were sent over for your consideration. Again, they recommended three at most. So the top three were the most highly rated and then followed by that camera discussion.

JILL HANO: Can you make it bigger?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Sure can.

LAUREN WOMACK: Can we do a bathroom break?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Sure.

LAUREN WOMACK: Just five minutes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Okay. That works. It is 3:22 so if y'all want to recess just for a minute. So let's say recess until 3:30. That gives you 7 minutes, 8 minutes.

{Break}

LAUREN WOMACK: Okay, everybody, we're back.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Let me make sure that we have a quorum. Let me just do a roll call real quick. Ms. Aduli, we still

have you?

CHERIE ADULI: Yep.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I see Constance.

CONSTANCE ALPHONSE: Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Hano. Yep, there you are. Mr. Rocca.

TORY ROCCA: Here I am.

BRENTON ANDRUS: And then of course I see you, Ms. Womack. So you do have a quorum so we can proceed.

LAUREN WOMACK: Okay. Does anyone want to discuss maybe we can start with the things on the screen. It's the 2025 legislative kickoff advocacy agenda recommendations.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Tory has his hand up.

TORY ROCCA: Just for starters, I don't know how helpful this is, but I do agree with keeping the number of items we choose to advocate for limited. Three sounds like plenty to me. Just because even during a normal legislative session that can be a challenging thing to get to three items and throw in all the effort that you need behind it. I would also, as Brenton pointed out, this is a fiscal session coming up. Basically from start to finish two months of calendar days. So April through really June. So there's not a ton of time to advocate for things.

I also do think that even though the legislators on the appropriations committee were pretty much uniformly, based on all those who spoke, opposed to the proposed LDH cuts we do have to keep our eye on this. We should probably keep that on our agenda, opposing the cuts that are proposed to address the "fiscal cliff". We don't know what this upcoming session will look like. Even if it does happen we don't know if legislators are going to renew the .45 percent sales tax that's rolling off so we probably do have to keep an eye on that and keep that on our list of things. And I think we should keep it to three is a good idea. I don't know how helpful that is, but that's the input I have at this moment.

LAUREN WOMACK: Thank you, Tory. I agree with your input wholeheartedly. If not to make that our only issue this year. Actually for the fact that we know what's coming up. We don't know how many times we're going to have to go to the capitol. And we don't know how many other times we may have to go help other agencies that affect our people with disabilities. So that's just my feeling on the issue.

The other thing that stands for me is I know the funding for Families Helping Families centers, we've done that, we've done that last year and we had trouble finding enough people to testify. And that's also an issue. And I feel that, I was actually on that committee, and there was an issue with one of the Families Helping Families and I'm concerned about maybe drawing unwanted attention. Honestly that's why I'm concerned about drawing unnecessary attention to these issues. Like especially when they're looking at cutting funding. That's just my feelings on the agenda items that are up.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Just a couple of things. Just kind of going back to the three-item recommendation. Certainly it's going to depend on what you're advocating for. So last year we had three items on our agenda and we burned folks out. I'm not saying don't put three, I'm just saying that's another consideration when you're thinking of what it is on the agenda and knowing how many alerts and yellow shirt days and things that we would try to do. But what I really wanted to mention was just for those that maybe weren't around in the last fiscal cliff whenever we have been talking about cuts and this particular sales tax that may or may not be continued or whatever the tax reforms are. Our approach has been different in session and we weren't necessarily at appropriations in health and welfare, in education. We were focused on ways and means and revenue and fiscal affairs. Those are our typically priority committees for us. But whenever it comes to potential cuts, because we do not have enough revenue coming in, we tend to focus on those committees. Those committees tend to meet a lot. We tend to have a lot of alerts for those committees. A lot of yellow shirt days for those committees. And our ask is usually not don't cut this service or don't cut that service. It's generally across the board we don't want cuts and then the people that are providing testimony really have an opportunity to speak to a multitude of services that impact them as opposed to one or two things that we may have on agenda that's very specific.

And so that really-- I'm confident. We did have one alert this past session where we talked about cuts and there were names I've never seen before. There were, it was probably the largest alert response that we had. There were names I haven't seen in years because when you start

talking about things like cuts or things going away that really gets people motivated. So I do think, as far as that particular agenda item, we should be okay as far as being able to get people out there providing testimony. You know, something as simple as if you're repealing these rates we could go down a long rabbit hole what that means to someone on a particualr waiver. And you get lots of people that would try to come out and educate ways and means. Because house appropriations knows. Health and welfare knows. They know these things because they talk about these things on a regular. But the tax guys they don't know about disabilities services. They don't know what it means to you. I'm not saying all of them. I'm sure some do. But for the most part that's not their focus so it takes a lot of effort around that to try and educate.

I do know we've spoken with a few other advocacy groups, they're not necessarily, I don't think they've established their agenda yet either, but I think they're not really looking at funding issues similar to kind of what was alluded to previously of we do have more than we would be asking for but they're telling us to operate on less so those things kind of conflict each other.

And then for Families Helping Families, you know, if you are advocating for those potential reductions and saving services I would imagine if we find out that our budget essentially is cut and we don't have funding for them that information about FHF centers would probably be included in our alerts and we would ask for people to come out and share testimony that would be willing to do that. So in a roundabout way it would probably get thrown in there. So that's just my 2 cents.

LAUREN WOMACK: And then looking at the numbers like on LDH reductions, I mean just the number of recipients if you add them up how many people that will affect should those programs be cut and providers, you know. I just think it would be a really unifying topic and we would have a really good turnout. That's where I am. If anybody disagrees please..

BRENTON ANDRUS: We do have a public comment as well from Jackie.

JACKIE: Yeah, so I think it should be considered with the save services that a lot of those things, I'm new here, so a lot of those things we just fought for and we won so it means something to our legislators. So I believe that

that would be a nice argument especially since some of those things just came through. We have the Families Helping Families funding. With Families Helping Families we do provide information, referral, education, training, parent support, peer support and we also support LaCAN. And aside from that we're assisting families with their educational concerns with the special education programs. We're helping them navigate the disability system. We're helping them with the transitions from moving out of Early Steps into the school academic avenue. And again, out of that into adulthood. So we're providing these services to all the disabled with all the disabilities. I don't even know how to say it. We do it all. We do provide it all. So the funding for Families Helping Families would be greatly appreciated.

LAUREN WOMACK: What are your other funding sources besides the council?

JACKIE: Each of our centers has separate grant programs through other organizations. With my center we have one through a PIP program. We have our Early Steps OCDD program that we are going to be losing next year. We have the behavioral family health, the Bureau of Family Health contract as well and then the state Department of Education. So our center is one of the smaller centers.

LAUREN WOMACK: Do y'all do any individual fundraising because I know some centers do?

JACKIE: Well, I am new so getting into this and learning the ropes and everything. I'm actually doing a lot of grant writing because that's something that is easier for me to manage. So we are all working on different things to help our funding. Region five is actually having a fundraiser today. They're doing a golf tournament today. So there are several fundraisers throughout the state on behalf of Families Helping Families. And we actually just participated in the Saints 50/50 raffle where we went out to a Saints game and we sold raffle tickets. That was an exciting experience for us and it's going to bring in money to our centers.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Just for clarity, the Early Steps contract, that's for all centers that have a contract. It's not just yours.

JACKIE: Correct, across the board.

LAUREN WOMACK: We have to make a decision. I feel really weird, like I don't want to be like the tyrant of

the committee.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Constance has her hand raised.

CONSTANCE ALPHONSE: Yes, I think I would say it, and I guess I said it before we got there, but I think I said similar things to what Tory and you shared. I do think that the funding has to be the priority. And so I appreciate the additional information on that. And I think Tory brought up some good points that I didn't mention about it being a fiscal year. So we're very narrow in kind of what legislators are going to be able to sponsor and just like other and not knowing like you said. So my two would be the LDH and the funding for Families Helping Families but I know it was shared that will probably get wrapped in anyway so LDH definitely makes the cut though.

BRENTON ANDRUS: So those top two issues are your particular focus?

CONSTANCE ALPHONSE: Yes.

LAUREN WOMACK: Does anyone have a third one that we want to discuss?

JILL HANO: FHF I think.

LAUREN WOMACK: Okay. Maybe we can split it into two questions and then is that if we're going to do two or one?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yeah. I think the big thing would be you have to decide how many things you want to advocate for and then y'all have to decide what those things are. Jill, is your hand raised or you're stretching?

JILL HANO: Yes, sir. Brenton, can you like in five seconds or less explain like what the purpose of this abuse and neglect oversight issue is? Like I know there's an audit that I plan on reading, but what is the purpose of this going to be on what are we hoping the outcome to increase fines for abuse? Like can you just talk a little about like why this specific issue.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I could, but I see Mylinda Elliot raised her hand and I think that came out of her region, maybe some other regions. But let's see if she wants to maybe chime in. Did you have some comments for Jill's question?

MYLINDA ELLIOT: Yes. There was a report from the legislative auditor about, part of it was about abuse and neglect in the ICFDDs. And if you remember in our state the ICFDDs include the group homes. And about how the companies, the agencies were so late in turning in information or didn't turn in information properly and one

of the legislative auditors-- and I mean, they are people, right. So one of the legislative auditors suggestions was to go back to the legislature and ask them to increase the fines because obviously the fines aren't scary enough to convince the agencies to do what they're supposed to do. And that's where that came from.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yeah, there's essentially a timeframe that they have to report these incidents and you're not following that timeframe, you get a fine.

MYLINDA ELLIOT: And they're not reporting them properly.

LAUREN WOMACK: So do we have anybody here that could speak to that?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Well, we kind of briefly hit on it earlier but I think Julie had mentioned that Health Standards is probably the one that provided a comment on that and so she may not have any additional information. I don't want to speak for them if you have input on that.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: I do not. I've reached out to Health Standards to try to get more information.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Thanks, Julie. And thank you, Mylinda. We have Christina and then Ms. Kathy Dwyer has her hand raised.

CHRISTINA: I just want to express a concern. I am from region one and ten. Everybody kind of knows a little bit collaboratively what happened there. And my concern with FHF funding is around me having testimony and having testimony that is positive and equitable. So that was kind of my comment to allude to that is that those requirements are mandatory for us as LaCAN leaders to have testimony, compelling testimony and things like that of that nature for our issues and that puts me in a very difficult situation.

LAUREN WOMACK: Could you elaborate on that? I'm sorry. I'm new. If you don't feel comfortable, that's fine.

CHRISTINA: Is that something you want to elaborate kind of on now essentially a little bit?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yeah, if you want.

LAUREN WOMACK: If you don't feel comfortable, that's fine.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Give us the cliff notes.

CHRISTINA: So I resigned as LaCAN leader. I became interim director for FHF NOLA. I was there for two weeks

and then reobtained my position as LaCAN leader because the equity of that center was no longer at operational standing. And there is a lot of speculative, I'll say just for right now because anything formal hasn't been charged or pressed, misappropriation there. And so there's also been a huge influx of calls of no one being at the center to take like GNO, I actually got a call from GNO who does not fund with the council and I cannot like ask them for testimony essentially at this time. And so they're getting influxes of calls because no one's answering the phone over there, but we're all under the assumption that they're still in good operational standing from the SOS website and can continue operations. But on the realistic side of that that's not what's happening. And so without going into too much further details, which you guys will get more information on that, it is just going to be honestly ridiculously hard for me to obtain any positive testimony from region one.

LAUREN WOMACK: I appreciate that. Thank you.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Kathy also has her hand raised.

KATHY DWYER: Thank you. Regarding increasing the penalties for ICFDDs, which includes group homes, I would, if that's something y'all choose to do, I would definitely suggest that you pull up the current rules, laws or policy and see what the current penalties are if they're not laid out in the report. And then have recommendations ready for the legislators because I don't think we want to go advocate for something and not give them any idea of what we expect. I definitely agree that would be something to address because it's been a problem forever, to be honest. It's just now come to light because families, advocates have requested legislators for that audit. And as Julie has indicated OCDD has no oversight over that. That is strictly under Health Standards. So you would need to be working with Health Standards as well in order to gain their support on that. Actually, it was Health Standards that didn't follow up on a few things too so there needs to be some cleaning up a little bit, if I'm not mistaken, with Health Standards. But that's all I'll say about that.

I also am going to ask that y'all reconsider the increase in wage floor for direct support workers. I'm not sure why there were 15 who opposed it. I would be interested in hearing the reasons behind that since that definitely affects families and individuals with

disabilities. It has been a longstanding problem and was a priority last year but got pushed to the side. So I would encourage that be considered.

LAUREN WOMACK: Thank you, Ms. Kathy. Mylinda.

MYLINDA ELLIOT: So I wanted to make it clear that Kathy isn't the only one that's wondering why we aren't doing the DSP wage floor index increase. Okay, I'm probably getting the words all wrong. Because there's a lot of families that are interested in that, at least a lot of families in my area were. And while I understand that the LaCAN leaders and even possibly some of the executive directors, had to have been some of the executive directors, are concerned about asking for money in a session where we're already being told about cuts, we didn't used to be scared. What we're doing right now we are talking about it being reasonable and talking about, you know, collaboration. We didn't used to be scared. When we were getting waiver slots we were told many, many, many times historically that there wasn't money for waiver slots. That it was going to be hard to do it. That that was too many waiver slots to do at one time. And we have millions of dollars that are in waiver slots now. I just really take, I really worry that the big thing against it was well, we don't really want to do anything because this is a year that they're talking about cuts. But that's it, Brenton.

LAUREN WOMACK: Thank you.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I was just going to give a clarifying point. That was some of the discussion, but there was also a discussion of waiting to see what would come of that rate methodology as well. But you have Christy, Christina and Ms. Kathy's hand is raised again. I think it went back up.

LAUREN WOMACK: Can we limit public comment to three minutes because we still have to vote. I want everybody to be able to talk before we vote, but I just want to make sure everybody gets a chance.

BRENTON ANDRUS: And there is comment that we have to take before you actually do a vote so there will be another opportunity but those are the folks.

LAUREN WOMACK: Who would like to go first?

CHRISTY CURTIS: Just really quick, the DSP wage increase was discussed in legislative kickoff and I think we came to the consensus, like Brenton just said, that we have, what's it called, the methodology and we were hesitant to go in asking for that kind of funding this

coming session. We can, we do know that as far as that issue goes our members are ready to testify to that. We can get testimony for that issue. My only, I know FHF funding is needed, we just, I struggled last year to get testimony. And I was in Partners in Policymaking and a board member from my center was in Partners in Policymaking and that helped me convince her to get testimony. But that was the only testimony I had. That's just my concern with that issue. But whatever y'all decide on I'm ready to run with it.

SPEAKER: And to echo off of what Christy said, the only reason why it was concern about the DSW wage floor increase was because not only is the methodology being created but we know at least three years of fiscal cuts that they could potentially get greater each year as we go along and how would we sustain that for one. But also because I didn't want to prematurely give an amount that was lower than what the methodology may reflect. You see what I'm saying? My daughter needs a waiver. My daughter needs a worker. I am one of those individuals who is affected by this, but I also want us to do it in a way that we can get it done. We don't have to keep asking the legislature, you know, every two, three, four years for this. That once that methodology is created that we have the data and analytics to substantiate what the wage floor should be. Because I did some, just a couple more minutes, I did some own personal research and Florida is one of the lower paid and they may make 15 dollars an hour. So if we could potentially get our workers 15 dollars an hour, and I know that in hindsight that's not fixing the problem today, but I think it would be better to substantiate it over the long run than it would to be a short fix. Which is why I didn't vote for it, but I would be more than happy, there is testimony, like all of the things for it and it is a very big meet.

BRENTON ANDRUS: The last hand we have raised is for Ms. Kathy.

LAUREN WOMACK: Ms. Kathy, three minutes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I missed Kelly's.

LAUREN WOMACK: Ms. Kathy first, I guess, because I called her first.

KATHY DWYER: Thank you. And I appreciate everyone saying they would support it if that's what everyone agrees. I just want to clarify or correct some things. As

Mylinda mentioned before when we had waiting lists for waivers we had to go year after year asking for waiver slots. It wasn't all done in one swoop. So I don't think the reason for having to go back year after year is something that should hold us back.

As far as the methodology study, as Julie said, that would tell us what our reimbursement rate should be and hopefully what the wage floor would be. But we still have to come up to whatever the federal rule is going to require, the access rule. In six years we're still going to have to come up to that. And as Mylinda had so nicely mentioned during the State Advisory Committee meeting that you don't want to all of a sudden increase the wage floor 4 or 5 dollars at a time to meet the federal access rule. You probably want to do it in increments. So this is what we at least need to start to now which is why I proposed the motion at the last meeting, which is my last meeting as a member, because I know we have to start working towards that. And that's what I think we all need to do.

And they may tell us no. And as Mylinda said, budget crunch years never made us afraid. I'm going to be 70 this Sunday and I cannot remember when we were ever afraid to ask for something just because of what the budget outlook looked like. If we truly believe our loved ones need these services we can't let those budget scenarios, budget shortfalls make us step back and act as if they're not as important. We need to make sure we stand up and show everyone these are important regardless of what the budget looks like so they need to find a way. And I know our legislators understand that so don't let the budget shortfall stop you if you truly believe our loved ones deserve better services you need to stand there and say they do no matter what the circumstances is.

LAUREN WOMACK: Thank you. I appreciate your comment.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Kelly's hand was raised and then it went down. I don't know if she still has comments?

LAUREN WOMACK: I'm going to ask for a motion at this time. If someone on the committee wants to make a motion that we start the vote or we're going to propose the legislative agenda. Whichever issues they would like to work on on the legislative agenda and then we can vote on it.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Jill?

LAUREN WOMACK: Jill, what do you propose?

JILL HANO: Oh, crap. The FHF, the fiscal cliff and the abuse and neglect funding or fines.

LAUREN WOMACK: Does anybody second?

TORY ROCCA: So I wasn't clear on what the third item was. Jill said the abuse and neglect but it all sounded like funds.

JILL HANO: No, I said fines.

TORY ROCCA: Sorry, it's been a three-hour meeting. My knee-jerk reaction on the LDH fine increases sounds like a good idea, but as Kathy Dwyer and others have pointed out we don't necessarily know what the current state of the fines are and I don't know that I understand that issue well enough to make a recommendation on that.

BRENTON ANDRUS: It could potentially be something-- I know Julie said she had sent some messages out to Health Standards. I don't know, it could be something you could hopefully get more information about by the time we have council meeting and then maybe you can consider it then if you're not comfortable now. That might be a happy medium. I'm not sure.

TORY ROCCA: That strikes me as a reasonable approach. Initially knee jerk it sounds good, but I don't know if we know enough about it at this point.

LAUREN WOMACK: I don't think I can propose, but what I was thinking was, and I don't know if anybody else agrees, can I just say that? Is that we just do the fiscal next year as our only primary issue. So I don't know if anybody wants to make that motion or agree to that that we can do a vote.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I guess first you have to address is there any second to Jill's motion because if there's not a second--

LAUREN WOMACK: We didn't get it. Is there a second to Jill's?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Would there be a second to include in your recommendation funding for Families Helping Families, addressing the fiscal cliff and increasing fines for ICFs? Okay. So does anyone else have a motion they would like to present? Unless Jill wants to make a friendly amendment that people would go for?

LAUREN WOMACK: Jill, go ahead. I'm sorry.

JILL HANO: So can I change mine? Do the friendly amendment, like let's not do the ICFs abuse and neglect, Tory, and can we do the policy to require cameras to be

included in all self-contained classrooms?

LAUREN WOMACK: Do we have a second?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Doesn't sound like it.

JILL HANO: Well, then I don't know.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Does anyone else have a motion then that they would like to-- Tory?

TORY ROCCA: I move that our agenda be addressing the fiscal cliff, the potential LDH reductions and funding for the Families Helping Families centers and to get more information about increasing fines on ICFs so we can address that at a later date.

CONSTANCE ALPHONSE: Second.

LAUREN WOMACK: So there's been a motion made by Tory Rocca, seconded by Constance Alphonse that the following issues be considered by the full council for inclusion in its 2025 advocacy agenda. Funding for Families Helping Families and fiscal cliff/LDH potential cuts. And to obtain more information about increasing the fines for ICF which may lead to an additional advocacy item. Is there any discussion?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Tory is that about right? We might have to clean up the language before it goes to the council to fine tune that last piece.

TORY ROCCA: That is just about right. That works. Thank you.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Cherie has her hand raised.

LAUREN WOMACK: Cherie.

CHERIE ADULI: Okay, so we're not really addressing the caregivers in these items, is that correct?

BRENTON ANDRUS: In this motion it would not, no, ma'am.

CHERIE ADULI: Tory, is that your intention to not include the caregivers?

TORY ROCCA: My intention is to include the things that I just said. It's not anything about wanting to exclude caregivers. I too want a pay increase for caregivers of all kinds, both for DD waivers and adult waivers. For probably some sensible reasons the community survey came back with that not being prioritized.

LAUREN WOMACK: My thought process is a lot of the funding that we already fought for they can repeal one of their rate increases on this potential Louisiana Department of Health (inaudible) ask more and personally that kind of worries me that we could go advocate and get a big cut. Is there a way you want to state it, Cherie?

BRENTON ANDRUS: The motion is already seconded. So when it comes to a vote she can vote against and then if it dies she can put another motion out to include that issue if that makes sense.

LAUREN WOMACK: I'm sorry, Cherie, go ahead.

CHERIE ADULI: I didn't say anything else.

LAUREN WOMACK: Your hand's up.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Any other committee members have any comments? If not we'll go to public.

LAUREN WOMACK: Public comment?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Kathy Dwyer has her hand raised.

LAUREN WOMACK: All right, Kathy.

KATHY DWYER: Thank you. Just for clarification Tory said that that document that was shared showing I guess votes for or against was community. I thought that was just votes by the LaCAN leaders and whomever else in the meeting, not the community. We know what the community wants.

TORY ROCCA: I may have misspoke. I was referring to the legislative kickoff advocacy agenda recommendations document. The document that is highlighted in gray. I was referring to that when I said community. I may have misspoke. I was speaking generally. My apologies.

KATHY DWYER: Okay.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yeah, so it was on the community input. It just wasn't voted on by the leaders and directors in their particular recommendation of issues.

KATHY DWYER: Right, but now there's a lot of good information provided at today's meeting so I would hope that information would be considered.

LAUREN WOMACK: Thank you. We're going to do a vote.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Would you like to do a roll call vote?

LAUREN WOMACK: Yes, please.

BRENTON ANDRUS: So this is a vote on the current motion which is to recommend the following issues be considered by the full council for inclusion in the 2025 legislative advocacy agenda which would be funding for Families Helping Families and the fiscal cliff, addressing the fiscal cliff and potential cuts that LDH may sustain with an additional subset to obtain more information about increasing fines for ICFs which could lead to more advocacy around this issue at a later date. So a vote yes would be in favor of this particular motion. A vote no would be against this particular motion. So Ms. Aduli.

CHERIE ADULI: No.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Aduli, no. Ms. Alphonse.

CONSTANCE ALPHONSE: Yes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Alphonse, yes. Ms. Hano.

JILL HANO: No.

BRENTON ANDRUS: No. Mr. Piontek is not here. Mr. Rocca.

TORY ROCCA: Yes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: It is 2-2 so, Ms. Womack, you would be the tiebreaker in this situation.

LAUREN WOMACK: I hate to do this, but no.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Womack, no. So motion fails by a vote of 3-2. So at this point--

LAUREN WOMACK: I need somebody to make another motion.

CHERIE ADULI: I'll propose a motion. The same thing that Tory just said except we're going to include the caregivers.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Now caregivers, are you looking at just an increase of wage floor or are you talking about an increase of rates? That's usually a question we get from the department when we're trying to work with them.

CHERIE ADULI: So my increase is directly for the caregivers, not for the agencies, right. Like I don't want to keep paying agencies. I want caregivers to take home more money. So however we need to word that.

BRENTON ANDRUS: It looks like Tory has his hand raised.

TORY ROCCA: I do have one question. When you talk about DSW pay raises for caregivers, are we talking about raises just for people doing work on DD waivers or also on adult waivers.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I apologize. Before anyone chimes in we have to get a second. So we have a motion on the floor by Cherie. Do we have a second for that motion? No second. Okay. Do we have another motion? Tory, I don't know if you still had comments?

TORY ROCCA: I don't know if it's relevant now, but if we are looking at the pay raise item I would like clarification on whether or not that would be just for people who are doing work on DD waivers or both DD waivers and adult waivers because we did have a few years ago if you recall an issue where just DD waiver pay was increased and adult waiver pay was not increased and that does make it harder to staff for the adult waivers. And the DD Council supported the legislation but initially we did not

think that it was just going to apply to DD waivers. The intent was that it would apply to both DD waivers and adult waivers but then the (inaudible) legislative process when the actual, I think it was the New Opportunities Waiver fund and the funding couldn't go to adult waivers so it created or exacerbated the pay disparity. And I just want to make sure that if we do end up selecting that issue we don't do anything that would exacerbate or create a pay disparity between workers who are getting paid to work on DD waivers or adult waivers.

CHERIE ADULI: I agree.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yeah, I do think in previous years it was across the board they were looking for a wage floor increase. There was usually a rate increase also tied to it. At least in my time here. I'm not speaking for whatever happened before a decade ago. But at this point it's this committee that's providing a recommendation to the council so we don't have to necessarily go through this entire process again at our October council meeting. So we still need a motion. It is 4:24. I'm sorry, I know the meeting was supposed to end at 4. We'll know for next time we need more time. Anyone willing to put forth a motion? We have one motion fail and three that did not get a second.

JILL HANO: Can you put the three, the fiscal cliff, the FHF and the DSW?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yeah, so the first motion was just funding for Families Helping Families, addressing the fiscal cliff, increasing fines for ICFs. That one we did not get a second. The second motion was funding for FHF, addressing the fiscal cliff and working on that policy for cameras in classrooms. That did not get a second. The third motion that actually failed, we did take a vote, 3-2, was strictly just for funding for Families Helping Families and addressing the fiscal cliff and potential cuts. That failed. The other motion was for funding for FHF-- yes?

JILL HANO: Can I second to Cherie's motion?

BRENTON ANDRUS: I suppose so. If you still want it to be made. Y'all need to just hash out that DSW wage floor increase statement.

JILL HANO: What was the specific language that was during kickoff?

BRENTON ANDRUS: It just says DSW pay raises of a dollar, 2 dollars or 3 dollars floor increase.

JILL HANO: Obviously the language backfired last year.

Hello?

BRENTON ANDRUS: We hear you.

JILL HANO: We're just going to repeat and run into the same issues we did for this legislative session.

LAUREN WOMACK: That's my feeling.

JILL HANO: Is Julie still on?

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: Yep, I'm here.

JILL HANO: What is your, can you offer any words of wisdom to this? Your thoughts from OCDD's perspective.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: So honestly like I can't really tell you, I cannot, I'm not allowed to give kind of comments for or against or one way or the other. So if you have a question for me I can answer and give you guys factual information, but I do have to be careful that my comments are not perceived as me being for or against anything that you guys are recommending legislatively.

JILL HANO: From your office if we made the DSW wage floor increase an advocacy agenda, from your perspective or from your like perspective being your job, like what type of feedback do you think your office and state agencies like we would get? Like I'm not asking this, because in my head I'm trying to not ask you something you can't answer, but it's not coming out that way. I don't know. Would this warrant pushback like it has in the past?

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: So last year my understanding of the original recommendation that came from the group was that there should be, that there would be a fiscal ask for additional money and that the state would need to somehow give that 2 dollars to the worker and that the money wouldn't go to the provider but that the money would go straight to the worker. So it wasn't pushback on or commenting on the recommendation, it was just a statement that we, and I mentioned this earlier, that we as the state agency don't have the ability to give money directly to the worker.

JILL HANO: That was it.

JULIE FOSTER HAGAN: Yeah, it would have to be either-- and so we would need this clarification. So we would just need clarification in terms of would the advocacy and what folks were asking be to change the current rule that sets a 9 dollar wage floor to increase it to some other with no rate increase. Or would the ask be for a rate increase and as a result of that rate increase an increase in the wage floor because one would have a fiscal note tied

to it, one would not have a fiscal note. But it would likely still be reviewed by all of the committees because while it wouldn't have a fiscal note for LDH, it would have a fiscal impact to our provider agencies. And so as it moved its way through the legislative process you would likely still need to, it would likely need to be heard in front of your health and wealth fair committees and in front of your appropriation committees in order for it to move forward. So does that help give some factual information, Jill, to that?

JILL HANO: I think so. Okay. Well, can I make a motion?

LAUREN WOMACK: Yes.

JILL HANO: Can we do FHF and the fiscal cliff?

LAUREN WOMACK: So you want to leave it at those two, Jill? Is that your suggestion?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Are you trying to combine one and two or just another motion?

JILL HANO: Tory's motion but take out the wage floor increase.

BRENTON ANDRUS: So just your motion would be the funding for FHF and the fiscal cliff/LDH cuts.

JILL HANO: Correct. Never mind.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Don't pay attention to my scrolling. I'm just trying to look for language to make it easier for me to get you another motion on the screen.

CONSTANCE ALPHONSE: I second Jill's motion.

LAUREN WOMACK: So I guess we would go ahead and call roll. Let us know when you're ready.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Okay. So there is a motion on the floor. Any discussion? Okay. So we will do a roll call vote. Oh, I'm sorry. We have to do public comment first. It's been a long day. I have to stop sharing in order to go to the page. Do we have anyone here that wants to make public comment? So Ms. Dwyer is our only public comment.

KATHY DWYER: Thank you. Okay. Now I'm confused. I thought Jill put forth a motion to add DSW to those two and y'all were waiting on a second but trying to get the correct language. The correct language as I would suggest be raise the wage floor for the DSW from 9 dollars to 10, 11 or 12. But at this point I would suggest 10 even though they deserve more but given the fiscal cliff I'm willing to be conservative on that. And now I didn't hear her say-- I don't know.

SPEAKER: Kathy, you're right. She was in agreement and then she went back and just did the first two.

KATHY DWYER: I just hope everyone understands this well enough in order to make these decisions--

JILL HANO: (Inaudible).

BRENTON ANDRUS: I think Jill was trying to clarify her motion but I don't think you heard us when we were trying to call on Jill.

KATHY DWYER: No. I wasn't finished talking.

BRENTON ANDRUS: We were trying to get clarity for your statements.

KATHY DWYER: So do I have the floor or I don't?

SPEAKER: Jill has an internet issue you, guys. I see her popping in and out.

BRENTON ANDRUS: We were just trying to get clarity from Jill if the motion was just for the FHF funding and fiscal cliff or if she had something-- the way I understood her was she was going back to that original motion but if I'm wrong then so be it.

KATHY DWYER: Okay. I know Julie is very limited on how she can explain things, but I'm more than willing to answer questions too given my intimate involvement in all the meetings with Julie so that people can understand it in layman's terms.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Jill, are you still there by chance? Okay, I think she is calling someone.

LAUREN WOMACK: We don't have quorum now or?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Technically you don't because Cherie's camera isn't on. There you go. You do have a quorum. I mean, you do have a motion that is on the floor but I guess it was called into question as if the correct motion. And I don't think we have Ms. Hano on to be able to clarify her particular motion. So at this point do we have anyone making a motion for this committee to send to the council?

CHERIE ADULI: Should I just make a motion to include all of these and the council will decide which ones they want to push forward? I think that seems to make the most sense since we can't seem to agree?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Oh, wait, Jill, you are back. Did you want to clarify your motion or statements?

JILL HANO: (Inaudible) went back on my word. I didn't.

BRENTON ANDRUS: It's all right, Jill, take your time.

JILL HANO: I'm sorry.

BRENTON ANDRUS: You don't have to apologize.

JILL HANO: (Inaudible) to not do the wage floor and I don't know.

EBONY HAVEN: Jill, if you want to tell us your motion again-- can you put the motion back on the screen, Brenton. Brenton is going to put the motion back on the screen again and Lauren will read the motion. If this is your motion you can let us know yes or no. If this is the motion that you wanted.

LAUREN WOMACK: If it's not, tell us what you want and we'll make sure it's correct before we vote, okay?

JILL HANO: Okay.

LAUREN WOMACK: Jill's motion was to recommend the following issues be considered by the full council for inclusion in its 2025 legislative advocacy agenda. Funding for Families Helping Families and the fiscal cliff/LDH potential cuts.

JILL HANO: Yeah.

LAUREN WOMACK: And then Constance, was this seconded, was this the motion that you seconded?

CONSTANCE ALPHONSE: Yes, it was.

LAUREN WOMACK: Just want to get that on the record. So now we will do a roll call vote.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Do we have any more public comment? Ms. Kathy has her hand raised.

LAUREN WOMACK: At this time, Ms. Dwyer, we are not going to take your public comment. We have someone here first.

ANGEL MCGEE: I am going to come sit down for a second. My name is Angel McGee. I'm the LaCAN leader for region nine. I don't know if I can recommend maybe stopping voting, stopping the meeting and let the council finish up maybe the four items because I think there's a lot of emotion and I don't think it's fair for her to kind of think about what she wants to do at this time. I just find that somebody needs to intervene and just stop at this point so she has some moments to kind of collect where she wants to go with her motion. So there's just not a question of it later.

LAUREN WOMACK: Jill, would you like to do this? I don't want to force you to do anything. I want it to be your decision whether we continue or not. You're muted.

JILL HANO: I'll continue.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Okay.

ANGEL MCGEE: Perfect.

LAUREN WOMACK: Thank you though.

JILL HANO: Don't post this video. Like I don't want (inaudible).

LAUREN WOMACK: Is there a statement we can say parliamentarian wise that we don't have to continue with the comments on record, we don't have to continue with public comments?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yeah, I mean, so far all of our public's had a chance to at least chime in once so at this point it is up to you if you continue because we are over time. Technically known as call the question but it is up to you that we have gone through and solicited those initial comments--

LAUREN WOMACK: Thank you everybody for their input but for the sake of saving time I would like to call the vote.

JILL HANO: I'm sorry, Lauren.

LAUREN WOMACK: Please don't apologize. You're one of the most persons that participate.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Lauren did call the question so we do need to take a vote now. If you vote yes you would be agreeing to recommend that the council consider including two issues on its 2025 legislative agenda. That would be funding for Families Helping Families and that would be addressing the fiscal cliff and potential cuts that LDH may be facing. So a yes would be in favor of this motion. A no would not be in favor. So call the roll, Ms. Aduli.

CHERIE ADULI: No.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Alphonse.

CONSTANCE ALPHONSE: Yes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Hano.

JILL HANO: Yes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Mr. Piontek is not here. Mr. Rocca.

TORY ROCCA: Yes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: That is three in favor, one against. So motion passes 3-1.

LAUREN WOMACK: Announcements and public comments. Please note that our council meeting will be held-- do I need to do public comment? Please note our council meeting will be held on October 16th and 17th. It will be here at the council office. You can also go to the council's website and register to participate virtually. A link to the meetings will be sent after registration. All

documents as they are received will also be added to the council's website. Does anyone else on the committee have any other announcements to make?

And then these are just our recommendations to the committee. I think that's important to note. These aren't the ones that are automatically. This is just what we talked about today. So I think a lot of really important issues, I agree with Cherie, that things that we need to get the total council input. But for the sake of remedy I think that we did a great job today. So thank you all for your participation and thank you. Do we have any public comments?

BRENTON ANDRUS: To my knowledge we didn't get any in writing but Ms. Kathy does have her hand raised.

LAUREN WOMACK: We'll give her three minutes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Okay.

KATHY DWYER: Thank you. I want to apologize especially to Jill. Nothing I said was intended to offend you, Jill, I swear. I was at first confused what the motion was. And then I know just from my own personal experience because it took me a long time to understand how all this worked that the language can be confusing and I was just simply offering my help. It hurts my heart that I hurt you. And at the same time I don't appreciate people insinuating that I hurt her feelings. It was not intentional. And I don't appreciate the council not giving me a chance to say that sooner instead of letting that drag on. It is a very passionate issue for Jill, for me, for everyone and I don't think anyone plans on hurting anybody's feelings. I needed clarification as to what the motion was. I knew from my own personal experience it's very complicated and I just offered help. It was not meant to insult anyone and I take offense with anyone saying that I insulted anyone.

LAUREN WOMACK: Thank you, Ms. Dwyer.

BRENTON ANDRUS: There is no other public comments.

LAUREN WOMACK: If there is no other public comments it is 4:50 and the meeting is adjourned. If there is no objection? Tory, you have an objection? No, okay. Meeting is adjourned.