

Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council  
Membership Committee  
October 11, 2024

JILL HANO: While we wait for the member to log on let's call the meeting to order. The time is 12:35 and it is October 11th, 2024. And this meeting of the membership committee is now in session. Ebony, can you call the roll?

EBONY HAVEN: Yes, I can. Ms. Angela Harmon.

ANGELA HARMON: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Christi Gonzales. Ms. Brooke Stewart.

BROOKE STEWART: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Lauren Womack. I know that she is attempting to sign on now. But you do have three and you do have a quorum. Oh, Ms. Jill Hano. I forgot to call your name. I'm sorry.

JILL HANO: I'm here.

EBONY HAVEN: Great.

JILL HANO: Thank you, Ebony. So rolling right onto the agenda is the review of the membership requirements. I know we have some requirements of our DD Act for membership. And Ebony probably has some stats on that, what we have and what we need. So Ebony, can you go over our membership requirements please?

EBONY HAVEN: Yeah, Jill. Actually, before I do that, Ms. Brenda Cosse has her hand raised. I don't know if you want to take her comment now?

JILL HANO: Okay. Ms. Brenda, you have the floor while Lauren's logging on. I see her trying to connect.

EBONY HAVEN: Hey, Ms. Brenda, can you hear us, can you talk?

BRENDA COSSE: Yes, thank you.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I see your hand is raised. Do you have a comment?

BRENDA COSSE: Oh, I'm sorry. Let me fix that. It has a red line through it.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Okay.

BRENDA COSSE: Let me lower it. Okay, there we go.

JILL HANO: Okay. So I see that Lauren is joined on. Okay, so Ebony, you're up with the council membership requirements.

EBONY HAVEN: Okay. So there are requirements based

off the state's demographics and so I have pulled up a document that I shared. It is online but I also sent it to the committee of the Louisiana state demographics. According to the US Census Bureau there are 32.6 percent African American or blacks. 7.3 percent Hispanics. 1.9 percent Asian. 62.6 percent white or Caucasian. And then if you look at sex in Louisiana 51 percent of our population is female, 49 percent is male. So our council demographics should mimic the state demographics.

And so for the council there are 17 community members. Right now with the members that were not senate confirmed and the two members that you all are going to replace you only have 12 members currently so I wanted to give you demographics on those 12 members. Right now the percent of African Americans or black members is 33.3. The percent for Hispanic is 8.3 percent. Asian is 0. And white and Caucasian is 58.3. So basically right now y'all's current membership is mimicking the state demographics. So whenever we're looking at members or applicants I would make sure that you guys keep, or the racial demographics, pretty similar to what you have right now with those 12 members because you're on target as far as race. Now whenever we look at sex for the current membership based on those 12 members we have 75 percent female, 25 percent male. So what does that tell you guys. You need some more males because we're not near that 49 percent that would match the state demographics for sex. Does anybody have questions about those demographics because if not we can move down to like location and area?

Lauren, can you hear us Lauren?

LAUREN WOMACK: I'm having difficulty. I'm going to sign onto a different computer.

EBONY HAVEN: Okay.

JILL HANO: So we need 45 percent males and we have 25?

EBONY HAVEN: Yes, that's what the council's current percentage is for males on the council is at 25 percent. You have any other questions, Jill, or anyone else on the committee? Or anybody else? I don't know if Ms. Brenda still has her hand raised so I'm not sure if she wants to talk. If you are allowing her to talk, Jill, she has her hand raised.

JILL HANO: Okay, Ms. Brenda, you have the floor.

BRENDA COSSE: Good afternoon. When you say mimicking the state demographics that means it doesn't have to be the

exact percentage but certain deviations?

EBONY HAVEN: Yeah, I would say that we should come as close as possible, Ms. Brenda. As close as possible as we can to the state demographics. That's what the feds are looking for. Is that we at least attempted to come close to what the census bureau says for Louisiana, that the council comes as close as possible to those percentages. Does that answer your question?

BRENDA COSSE: Yes, thank you.

EBONY HAVEN: You're welcome. Okay, so if there aren't any other questions about race or sex we're going to move down to the second portion that you guys had to take into consideration when you're considering new members which is location and area. So according to federal guidelines you all have to consider members that are in the north region, south region, east, west and central regions of the state. And then you also have to make sure you're taking into consideration rural verses urban. So according to the 12 community members that we have right now you all have two members in the southeast region. And when I say southeast that's New Orleans, Houma, Thibodaux, Covington and Mandeville and like those surrounding areas. You have eight members in the south-central region. That's Baton Rouge, Lafayette and those surrounding areas. Southwest region you only have one member in that southwest region, that's the Lake Charles region. You have zero members in Central Louisiana. That's the Alexandria, Natchitoches, Marksville and all of those surrounding areas. You have zero members in the northeast region which is Monroe, Rayville, Tallulah and those surrounding areas. And then one member in the northwest region currently. And that region is Shreveport, Mansfield and those surrounding areas.

So what does that tell us. We need to make sure that we're looking at applicants from the Central Louisiana region, like the Alexandria, Natchitoches, Marksville area. And we need to make sure we're looking at applicants who are from the northeast region, the Monroe area. We don't have any members in those areas currently. Which would also, I would say that the Central Louisiana region would also help us to have members that are in rural areas because we know that Central Louisiana is mostly rural. Does anybody have any questions about that? So that kind of takes care of your current membership.

So I'm going to go to the table that's at the top of this document and we'll talk about the seats that you're going to be filling today. So for Ms. Roslyn Hymel her term ended March of 22. However, we have had a very difficult time filling that seat. We had someone that could potentially fill the seat. It was a parent. Her name was Christina Bechtold but unfortunately I think she had some things that changed in her circumstances and she wasn't able to take the seat. So the seat was given to, I guess the alternate applicant, Ms. Renee Holt. But unfortunately Renee turned down the seat after she spoke to the governor's office. So we are back trying to fill that seat again today.

And then we also have the four members that were not senate confirmed. Ms. Melinda Perrodin, Missey Moore, Samantha Singletary and Ms. Mary Francis Avera. And then lastly, as you guys know, I sent out an email earlier this week that we had a resignation from Ms. Nicole Banks and she's a parent of a child with a disability. Ms. Melinda Perrodin, Ms. Missey Moore and Samantha Singletary are also parents. Actually, Ms. Melinda Perrodin was an immediate relative. And then Ms. Mary Francis Avera was an individual with a developmental disability. And you can see those areas or those locations where they were from. Ms. Roslyn was from the southeast area. Ms. Melinda Perrodin was southcentral, like Lafayette region. Missey Moore was northwest. Samantha Singletary and Ms. Mary Francis Avera, southcentral. And then Ms. Nicole Banks was southeast. So those are the seats that we're going to be filling today. As you guys are thinking about applicants I would just urge you guys to make sure that you consider the demographics and the location of where the applicants are from. So I did have a map that kind of makes it easy for you guys to see where we're losing members and where we actually have current members so I'm going to share that as well. Can you guys see that or do I need to make it bigger?

JILL HANO: Can you make it bigger?

EBONY HAVEN: Yes, ma'am. Okay, so the orange pins are where you have your current members. And I'm going to zoom out just a little bit for just a second, Jill, just because we have some people in Caddo Parish. You have one member and then you are losing a member there. And then most of our members, like I said, are in that southcentral region.

If you look at EBR like a lot of pins are there. But you are losing some members there as well. And then I would say the Iberia area, St. Landry, Lafayette Parishes, all of those are pretty much represented. If you go to Jefferson we have two members there and we're losing a member. I think Nicole was the member that we were losing there. And then we have one in Calcasieu. So as you can see, like I said earlier, we don't have any members in northeast region nor the central region of the state. So whenever you guys are looking at applicants we need to make sure that we are considering those applicants that are from those regions. Does anybody have any questions?

JILL HANO: Lauren.

LAUREN WOMACK: (Inaudible).

EBONY HAVEN: Can you hear me, Lauren? It's a lot of static. We didn't catch anything you said. It's a lot of static on your end. We can hear that you're saying something, it's just very distorted. We have another hand raised, Jill, while Lauren is working through her technical issues. Ms. Brenda Cosse has her hand raised.

JILL HANO: Okay, Ms. Brenda, you're recognized by the chair.

BRENDA COSSE: Thank you. So did the council members who weren't senate confirmed, is that how the imbalance was created?

EBONY HAVEN: Are you talking about as far as the regions go, Ms. Brenda?

BRENDA COSSE: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: No. I mean, as you can see, so the red pins are the members that are being replaced. There are no red pins in Northeast Louisiana nor in Central Louisiana. So it's not that the members that were not senate confirmed is causing an imbalance. It was already there. Does that answer your question?

BRENDA COSSE: So we had an imbalance since the last membership meeting?

EBONY HAVEN: Yes, ma'am. We can only, the membership committee is at the mercy of who applies to the council. So they probably did their best to choose applicants that were spread across the state, but we may not have gotten any applicants from Northeast Louisiana or Central Louisiana. So they probably just did the best they could based off the applicants that applied last year.

BRENDA COSSE: Thank you.

EBONY HAVEN: You're welcome. I don't know if you're able to speak now, Lauren?

BRENTON ANDRUS: You may just have to call in on the phone and then we can pull the phone over and you have your video.

EBONY HAVEN: So while Lauren is working on her sound I'll go ahead and share the applicants that we received. These are our self-advocate applicants and we received nine applications total for self-advocates. One of them I was unable to get in contact with a family member or the applicant. I had some follow-up questions that I needed to ask before an interview could be conducted but I had a very difficult time getting in contact with either a family member or the applicant themselves so they were not interviewed. And that is the person that is highlighted in yellow. So we had a total of eight eligible applicants. And I hate to say that that person wasn't eligible, I just was not able to confirm his eligibility.

So if you want to look at demographics for those eight people, or really the nine, we have seven white Caucasians and we have two African Americans. We have eight males that applied and one female self-advocate that applied. So those are our self-advocates. And then we can go to our parents. We had a total of 13 parent applicants that applied. Two were actually ineligible. Those two parents that applied their children were old enough to advocate on their own and so they were actually referred to Partners in Policymaking because they felt like there should be a step before their child applied for council membership. So I encouraged them to apply for Partners in Policymaking. So the demographics on the 11 parents that were left are seven white Caucasian, Four black or African Americans. There were three males and eight females. And the reason why I have this parent applicant's name highlighted is because he actually applied for both Partners in Policymaking and council membership and after I called him and had a discussion with him he decided that he didn't want his application to be considered at this time because he would rather be a part of the 2025 Partners in Policymaking class.

And then lastly, we had one parent applicant that would meet the criteria to fill the institutional facility seat. And demographics for that parent is Asian and she is a female.

JILL HANO: I think we should, since that spot has been open since 2022, I think that should be the first recommendation we look at.

EBONY HAVEN: And if you're looking at her scores she scored very high on her interview. She got a seven and that's out of a total of eight. The highest score she could have gotten was an eight and she got a seven. So it seems like she did really well on her interview. I don't know if there's any discussion from the person that interviewed her or if you guys have any questions.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Lauren, I think if you unmute your phone then you can speak and maybe it won't be so distorted.

EBONY HAVEN: Try to talk now, Lauren.

LAUREN WOMACK: Can y'all hear me now?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yes, you'll just have to turn the volume down on your phone. Either on your phone or your computer or we'll get an echo.

LAUREN WOMACK: I'm so sorry. I don't know why it does this. I interviewed her and I think she's wonderful. She actually immigrated into the country. She has very good insight into the struggles of cultural barriers that face families, of Asian families that have to deal with developmental disabilities. She was able to speak to how the system was supposed to be working for her son and had been working until Covid and then kind of through circumstance, and lack of help at home, and she is a single mother she had to institutionalize him and he is definitely not getting the services that he should be getting in the institution. She had met LaCAN leaders. And she hasn't been in Partners in Policymaking. I did mention that to her. I don't know if she would prefer to do that. She works for the state. And she really feels like this is like her calling and her mission now that she understands a lot more that she would really like to participate. And I think we would be lucky to have her either this year or any other year. So she was one of my favorite candidates that I interviewed. And she actually came to the meeting. I invited her and she's here. I really feel like she will participate, which I think is very important. Another one of my people that I interviewed seems like he would be really good but what I kept getting is the dates of when he can participate it kind of felt like he came up with excuses of oh, I'm busy that day or I have other obligations. And that was kind of like a red flag there

of if they are going to be able to follow through with the commitment. That's it.

EBONY HAVEN: Thank you, Lauren. So Jill, do you want the committee to consider making a motion now on this seat or do you want to wait until after you all consider all the applicants?

JILL HANO: Whatever's easiest for y'all. I don't know. Like we can motion one at a time so we'll have the names written down.

EBONY HAVEN: Okay. So do you want to wait and do that at the end whenever you guys are making all the recommendations?

JILL HANO: Okay.

EBONY HAVEN: All right, great. So I know that you all have to consider all of the applicants now, the ones that were interviewed. And I went back to the self-advocate page just to make one comment before you guys consider going into executive session. The person that is highlighted in yellow, that person, once again, I was not able to confirm eligibility so he was not given an interview. And then the person in blue, Hunter Reno, he didn't complete an interview. I'm not sure why. I don't know if Angela or Brooke want to offer some-- I don't know if he didn't return the call or if you guys had trouble getting in contact with him.

ANGELA HARMON: I know Brooke reached out to him a couple times and she didn't get a response. It may have been three times. I do know twice at least. That's why we didn't have an interview with that person.

EBONY HAVEN: Okay. So I just wanted to say that before we moved maybe into executive session for you guys to discuss all of the self-advocate applicants and the parent applicants. Jill, I don't know if you want to entertain a motion to go into executive session at this point?

JILL HANO: Can I get someone to make a motion to go into executive session?

BROOKE STEWART: I make a motion to go into executive session.

JILL HANO: Okay. A second?

LAUREN WOMACK: I'll second.

JILL HANO: Okay. Well, then it's moved by Brooke. Seconded by Lauren. So we will now go into executive session.

EBONY HAVEN: Okay. And just so the committee knows,

I'm going to email you guys the link for the executive session right now. I just emailed it so you should receive it shortly. And for those that are attending we will be back on this link as soon as they exit out of executive session.

BRENTON ANDRUS: And if I'm not mistaken if you click on the current link it will probably just have you in a holding pattern until we start up this link again so that can help identify when they're back in session.

{Executive session}

LAUREN WOMACK: Yes, I got in touch with Christi just now. She said that she was able to contact Chelsea. She liked Chelsea. The other two she contacted multiple times and was not able to get on the phone. And she forgot to call Robert so she is going to reach out to him this afternoon. And then I told her that she can contact you and y'all can discuss if maybe we'll consider him as an alternate, whatever we want to do about that. I just wanted to give y'all that info.

EBONY HAVEN: Thank you, Lauren. Jill, do you want me to just call the roll again for the record?

JILL HANO: Okay, yes, ma'am. Thank you.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Angela Harmon.

ANGELA HARMON: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Brooke Stewart.

BROOKE STEWART: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Christi Gonzales. Ms. Lauren Womack.

LAUREN WOMACK: Here.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Jill Hano.

JILL HANO: Nope.

EBONY HAVEN: All right, you have four and you have a quorum. So Jill, I don't know if you want to give like just an overview. I can pull up the spread sheet again.

JILL HANO: Okay. Yes, please. And just have those participating live, those on YouTube, just a recap. Like we were in executive session and have some really good candidates to recommend for the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council membership. And for those of you online who may not be aware, but with the new leadership in Louisiana the governor is requesting the council submit ratings for each open seat we have on the council. So we have our list and it's narrowed down to what we're sending to the governor's office.

With that being said, is it time to make a motion, Ebony?

EBONY HAVEN: Yes.

JILL HANO: Or how do we want to do this?

EBONY HAVEN: Yes, you guys can make motions. At this point if you guys want to start with the institutional seat. And Brooke has her hand raised.

JILL HANO: Ms. Stewart, you're recognized by the chair please.

BROOKE STEWART: Okay, so since we're starting with the institutional seat. So for the open institutional seat I would like to recommend the only applicant, Zheng Xu.

EBONY HAVEN: Yes, I think that's how you pronounce her name. I'm going to pull up the motions.

LAUREN WOMACK: I second.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Lauren seconded.

JILL HANO: Okay. Thank y'all, ladies. Okay, so moving right along.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Any discussion?

JILL HANO: Oh, any discussion?

BRENTON ANDRUS: If there is any.

JILL HANO: Abstentions? Okay, so the motion passes.

EBONY HAVEN: Wait, Jill, we have to take public comment.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yeah, you have to ask for public comment and then do a roll call vote.

JILL HANO: Any public comment?

BRENTON ANDRUS: I do not see any hands raised. So no, ma'am.

JILL HANO: So now onto a roll call vote.

EBONY HAVEN: Yes, ma'am. So a vote of yes would be to recommend Ms. Zheng Xu to the institutional seat. A vote of no would be to not recommend her. So as I call your name vote yes or no. Ms. Angela Harmon.

ANGELA HARMON: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Christ Gonzales. Ms. Brooke Stewart.

BROOKE STEWART: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: And Ms. Lauren Womack.

LAUREN WOMACK: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: Okay. It passes by three yeas, zero nays and zero abstentions.

JILL HANO: Okay. So the next-- what do y'all want to do now? The self-advocates? Okay, so I'm thinking that

we just need one motion and whoever makes the one motion can motion all four names at once. So thumbs up, thumbs down, is that cool?

BROOKE STEWART: Yes.

JILL HANO: All right. So can someone make a motion and tell us who we recommend for our self-advocate members.

ANGELA HARMON: I would like to make a motion for the self-advocate Ayden Blunschi, Jude Boynton, Frank Macaluso and Ms. Gwen Hilliard as an alternate.

BROOKE STEWART: I second.

JILL HANO: Thank you. Motion made by Angela. Motion seconded by Brooke. Any objections? Any abstentions? Public comment?

BRENTON ANDRUS: No hands are raised currently.

JILL HANO: Can we take a roll call vote?

EBONY HAVEN: Yes, ma'am. I'm still writing the motion so just bear with me. Ms. Angela Harmon.

ANGELA HARMON: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Christi Gonzales. Ms. Brooke Stewart.

BROOKE STEWART: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Lauren Womack.

LAUREN WOMACK: Yes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: That's three yeas.

EBONY HAVEN: Who seconded the motion? I'm sorry.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Brooke.

EBONY HAVEN: Brooke, okay.

BRENTON ANDRUS: So three yeas, zero nays. Your motion passes.

JILL HANO: Okay. So can we move onto the parent applicants? Oh, never mind. Sorry, Eb.

EBONY HAVEN: Jill, you're the chair, you can move on if you're ready.

JILL HANO: You're still typing.

EBONY HAVEN: Oh, that's okay. No worries. I was going to share that motion with you guys just so you could see it on the screen. So Ayden, Jude and Frank to fill the individuals with disabilities seats, the individuals with developmental disabilities seats on the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council with alternate Gwendolyn Hilliard. Made by Angela, seconded by Brooke. Passed with three yeas, zero nays and zero abstentions. And then I will pull up the spread sheet one more time and we can go to our parent applicants. The ones in orange.

JILL HANO: So I need a motion for the parent applicants that we will recommend to the full council and then probably the governor. So can someone make-- Brooke, is your hand raised?

BROOKE STEWART: Yes, I'll make the motion.

JILL HANO: Okay.

BROOKE STEWART: So for the open position of-- this is parent advocate?

JILL HANO: Yes, ma'am.

BROOKE STEWART: We would like to recommend to the full council Alaina, Latoya, Dr. Meda and Danielle.

EBONY HAVEN: So Brooke, I think Alaina was the alternate, right? Do you want to say Latoya, Lamartine, Danielle with Alaina as the alternate?

BROOKE STEWART: Yes, please.

EBONY HAVEN: Okay. I'm going to stop sharing and pull up the motion.

BROOKE STEWART: Thank you. Yes, that's correct.

JILL HANO: So now can I get a second?

ANGELA HARMON: I'll second it, Jill. This is Angela.

JILL HANO: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Harmon. Any abstentions? Or any discussion? Brooke? Okay. Any abstentions? Any public comment, Brenton?

BRENTON ANDRUS: No, there is none.

JILL HANO: Okay. So now can we do a roll call vote, Ebony?

EBONY HAVEN: Yes, ma'am. Ms. Angela Harmon.

ANGELA HARMON: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Christi Gonzales. Ms. Brooke Stewart.

BROOKE STEWART: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: And Ms. Lauren Womack.

LAUREN WOMACK: Yes.

JILL HANO: Okay. Thank you, guys. So motion passes. And these names also will be sent to the full council and possibly the governor. Ebony, my agenda's gone but okay, so any announcements?

EBONY HAVEN: The only announcements that we have are that the council meetings are next week, the 16th and the 17th with the executive committee starting things off at 8:30 on Wednesday and we go till 5 with the education and employment committee and the full council meeting from 8:30 to 3:30 on Thursday.

JILL HANO: Okay. Well, I guess-- Ebony, I feel like

I'm doing something wrong. No new business?

EBONY HAVEN: No, I think you guys took care of everything.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Public comment.

EBONY HAVEN: Yeah, I guess if you want to ask for public comment.

JILL HANO: Is there any public comment?

BRENTON ANDRUS: No, ma'am.

JILL HANO: All right. Brooke, are you raising your hand?

BROOKE STEWART: Oh, no, absolutely not.

JILL HANO: Okay. So if we can I would like to adjourn the meeting by unanimous consent. Brooke, did you have an issue? Do you want longer?

BROOKE STEWART: No, no, no.

JILL HANO: All right. Well, then I hereby adjourn the meeting at 3:04 p.m. I will see you all bright and bushy tailed whenever that meeting is.