

Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council
Executive Committee
January 29, 2025

CHRISTI GONZALES: Good morning everyone. We're having some technical difficulties with Zoom. If you could be patient while we're trying to fix that. Thank you.

Good morning everyone. The quarterly meeting of the executive committee for the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council will now come to order. Ms. Ebony, could you please call the roll for attendance.

EBONY HAVEN: Yes, ma'am. Ms. Jill Hano.

JILL HANO: Present.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Angela Harmon.

ANGELA HARMON: Present.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Brooke Stewart.

BROOKE STEWART: Present.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Renoda Washington.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Present.

EBONY HAVEN: And Ms. Christi Gonzales.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Present.

EBONY HAVEN: You have five and you have a quorum.

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

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

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

CHRISTI GONZALES: Thank you, Ebony. At this time I will read the virtual meeting protocol. Here are the rules and protocol. For committee members and members of the public attending in person please raise your hand to speak and wait to be recognized by the chair before speaking. To help the meeting run smoothly please keep side conversations to a minimum and comments related to the topic we are discussing. For those committee members who are attending virtually remember you must be on camera and have your first and last name showing to be counted toward our quorum. Please keep microphones muted unless called upon by the chair. Electronically raise your hand to request to speak and wait to be called on by the chair. For attendees electronically raise your hand to request to speak. Once recognized by the chair your microphone will be turned on. After speaking the microphone will be returned to mute. Also the Q and A is only to be used by those needing an ADA accommodation to participate in the meeting. Public comment will not be accepted by the Q and A except for those individuals who requested the accommodation. As per order committee members in person and virtually will be allowed to speak first. Public members in person will be called on followed by public participating virtually who have their hands raised. Comments in the Q & A and chat will be addressed last.

As with all hybrid meetings it can be difficult to keep track of all those wanting to speak in person and virtually. Please be patient with us. All comments and questions from committee members and the public may be limited should we run into time constraints so please keep that in mind. Also comments about a person's character will not be allowed. Finally, members of the public will have the opportunity to provide public comment before each vote and during designated public comment periods. Public members will be given one opportunity to speak for each agenda item and will be limited to two minutes. The chair may also use their discretion to determine if comments will be accepted outside of those times.

The next item of business is the approval of the meeting summary for the October 16th executive committee meeting which was distributed. The meeting summary will not be read unless a member request it. Are there any corrections to be made? If there are no objections the meeting summary is approved as distributed. Hearing none,

the meeting summary is approved.

The next item of business is an update of the 2025 legislative advocacy agenda. The next item is the consideration--

EBONY HAVEN: There's nothing in your packet.

CHRISTI GONZALES: I just wanted to make sure.

EBONY HAVEN: I can go over it.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Please do. I'm sorry.

EBONY HAVEN: Just give you guys an update on the advocacy agenda. So I know that we have some special guests here today so I'm just going to go over the process of how you guys got to the advocacy agenda. So every October the council votes on what they are going to advocate for for the next session. And so in October the council voted for two agenda items. The council solicits community input from our regional LaCAN membership. And LaCAN is our Louisiana councils advocacy network. All around the state we have our membership, our LaCAN leaders solicit input. And then our LaCAN leaders and Families Helping Families directors meet and they prioritize that community input to make a recommendation to the council.

So this year we did something a little different, or last year we did something a little different, where we created an additional ad hoc committee, the legislative advocacy agenda ad hoc committee so that the council could receive that input from the FHF directors and the LaCAN leaders before the October meeting where they had to take a vote. And we wanted to make sure we got public input as well. The legislative advocacy ad hoc committee made two recommendations to the council and the council accepted that recommendation and voted in October for the two legislative agenda items to include recurring funding for our Families Helping Families centers. That's the 500,000-dollars that we had advocated for for the last four years. And then the second item was to protect disability services. At the time when the council recommended that item we were facing a fiscal cliff and the budget deficit was about 400 to 700 million dollars. So the house appropriations committee asked LDH to meet with them to look at a 10- million dollar cut. And so the cuts that they proposed would affect individuals with disabilities dramatically. So the council did vote to add that agenda item to their 2025 legislative advocacy agenda.

However, the legislature met in November and they had

a special session and they did some tax reforms. The legislators voted to reduce personal and corporate income taxes. They repealed some tax exemptions and they increased the state sales tax by .55 percent. So I'll say the revenue estimating committee, who estimates whether there's going to be a budget downfall or not, they met in December and their estimates was that for next year for the FY26 budget we're not going to have a budget downfall. They've addressed it in the special session.

However, the administration is still looking at government efficiencies which will likely result in a reduced budget for LDH. Maybe not that 100 million-dollar budget deficit, but they are looking at government efficiencies. And so LDH and higher education, they're always on, those optional Medicaid services are always ones that they target. So we believe it's important to still advocate even though the budget deficit has been addressed. We believe that it's still important for us to advocate to the legislature to make sure that they're aware of disability services. Medicaid covers more than what they think. We want to make sure they know the impact that the disability community could face if there are cuts to the optional Medicaid services. Just kind of wanted to give you guys an update about that. We're taking like a different I guess outlook on it when we're presenting it at the roundtables. It's not going to be like they're on the chopping block. It's more going to be educating the legislators about what Medicaid services are optional, what Medicaid services our disability community uses. And just making sure they're educated and know that those decisions that they're making may have an impact on our community. Anybody have any questions?

CHRISTI GONZALES: The next item is the consideration of the council ad hoc committees. Currently the two ad hoc committees are the diversity, equity and inclusion ad hoc committee and the grievance ad hoc committee.

EBONY HAVEN: So if you guys look in your packets we do have a list of all of the DD Council standing committees and our ad hoc committees. We wanted to kind of talk about this today with the executive committee because the diversity, equity and inclusion committee, that committee was established to basically create a position for the council which you guys have done. And they also wanted the council to undergo DEI training which the council did. The

staff has completed the training as well. And so we wanted to, we feel like the mission has been accomplished for that particular committee. So we're recommending that that committee be dissolved. And so we just wanted to bring it to the executive committee because we feel like the mission and the goal of that committee has been accomplished.

JILL HANO: Just to give y'all some background since I'm now apparently the senior member on the council. But neither one of the committees had this pre-Covid.

EBONY HAVEN: No, the diversity, equity and inclusion committee met I want to say, I know at least 2023.

JILL HANO: Okay.

EBONY HAVEN: We completed the trainings in 2024. We feel like the goal of that committee has been met and so before we took it off we wanted to just make sure that the executive committee was in agreement and that you guys don't feel further need to continue.

CHRISTI GONZALES: So that's just with the diversity and the grievance?

EBONY HAVEN: No. So the grievance is different. Jill is absolutely right. That particular committee has not met since prior to Covid. So I know when we're having some transition within our council staff as far as the executive director and we were advised by our technical assistance to make sure that finding an executive director was a priority. So all of the committees had to be put on hold so that particular committee has not met since Covid. And they did not accomplish their mission which was to come out with a grievance policy for the council. So I do believe that that particular committee needs to stay but as you can see the stars by the members' names represent members that are not a part of the council. And just being that that particular committee has not met since prior to Covid I would suggest that you revamp it, seek new volunteers for that particular committee. And I'm also recommending that they don't meet until after legislative session.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Any other questions? At this time we will entertain a motion to recommend discharging the diversity, equity and inclusion ad hoc committee.

BROOKE STEWART: I make a motion to remove the diversity, equity and inclusion and ad hoc committee.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Is there a second?

RENODA WASHINGTON: I second.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Is there any discussion from council members? Any public comment?

ERICK TAYLOR: (Inaudible)

CHRISTI GONZALES: The objectives that they had put together for that committee have all been completed. But we can put a committee together anytime we feel the need for it.

So the question is recommending discharging the diversity, equity and inclusion ad hoc committee. Ms. Ebony, will you go ahead with a vote.

EBONY HAVEN: So a vote of yes would be to discharge the diversity, equity and inclusion committee. A vote of no would be not to discharge. And then you can abstain. Ms. Jill Hano.

JILL HANO: Yes.

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

ANGELA HARMON: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Angela Harmon, yes. Ms. Brooke Stewart.

BROOKE STEWART: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Brooke Stewart, yes. Ms. Renoda Washington.

RENODA WASHINGTON: Yes.

EBONY HAVEN: Ms. Renoda Washington, yes.

CHRISTI GONZALES: The yes votes have it and the motion passes. Do you want to go ahead with the grievance one?

EBONY HAVEN: I recommended that you keep the grievance ad hoc. I recommend tomorrow during the full council meeting you ask for volunteers so we can continue that committee. We can still reach out to the members that are listed here to see if they're still interested in participating. But like I said, it's been a while so I'm not sure if they're still interested or not.

CHRISTI GONZALES: The next item of business is the quarterly executive director evaluation. Everything was positive. We talked with Ebony. We got feedback from the items from the retreat.

EBONY HAVEN: So I can answer questions. Jill, we're working on revamping the survey. So I know you're thinking of the survey that you got the last two times. So Christi this time asked for feedback from the executive committee instead of sending the survey because we're actively revamping the survey based on the policies and procedures that you guys passed at the October meeting.

JILL HANO: Okay. But the only thing I would ask for feedback on the retreat.

CHRISTI GONZALES: That was the thing that we wanted to do that we needed to approve.

JILL HANO: Okay.

CHRISTI GONZALES: Anything else, Ebony?

EBONY HAVEN: I don't have anything. If you guys want to discuss it.

CHRISTI GONZALES: It was wonderful. We did get some feedback and we will address that.

CHRISTI GONZALES: All right everyone. We're having technical issues.

EBONY HAVEN: So all the announcements that I have are the--

CHRISTI GONZALES: Thank you very much. Is there any other further business? Hearing none. If there's no objections we will adjourn the meeting. Hearing no objections the meeting is now adjourned.