

Education and Employment (E/E) Committee Summary

July 20, 2022

5615 Corporate Blvd. Ste. 500B, Baton Rouge, LA 70808

LIVE Streamed Via YouTube

You can watch the meeting here: <https://www.youtube.com/user/LADDCouncil/videos>

You can view the meeting transcript [here](#)

Members Present: Nicole Banks, Melissa Bayham, Christi Gonzales, Mitch Iddins, Meredith Jordan, Hyacinth McKee (Chair) Bambi Polotozola, Mary Tarver Vivienne Webb and Phil Wilson

Members Absent: Brenda Cosse, Mitch Iddins

Staff: Marilee Andrews, Brenton Andrus, Rekeesha Branch, Amy Deaville, Ebony Haven and Hannah Jenkins

Others Present: Brenda Bares, Corhonda Corley, Nicole Flores, Lynsey Hebert, Ashley McReynolds, Charles Michel, Kelly Monroe, Davelyn Patrick, Susan Riehn,

Dr. Hyacinth McKee called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. A quorum was established.

MOTION PASSED: Motion to approve the [April 2022 E/E Committee Summary](#) made by Ms. Mary Tarver seconded by Ms. Nicole Banks without objection or abstention.

The committee received updates on the Council's advocacy efforts regarding Postsecondary Inclusive Education and Cameras in Special Education Classrooms from Council staff and Meredith Jordan on behalf of the Department of Education. Both items passed during the 2022 Legislative Session and funding was allocated for both. The Department is creating a Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) policy for the cameras to be presented during the August BESE meeting in order to get the funds out to the districts as quickly as possible.

Meredith Jordan also shared multiple updates on behalf of the [Louisiana Department of Education](#):

- The Department's summer initiatives including the Early Childhood Conference that will be held in July where the department will be presenting Early Childhood Inclusion - Make Magic Happen
- The [Teacher Leader Summit](#) where the Division of Diverse Learners released and previewed two new April Dunn Act resources: The April Dunn Act Self-Assessment Guide and The April Dunn Act: Parent Guide to Understanding the Law
- The Literacy Division has released a set of activities and resources to support teachers in providing targeted literacy support to struggling readers including reading modules for grades 4 - 8 educators
- The Department's IDEA grant application was approved and the amount received was over \$24M in funding to support initiatives. Louisiana's application can be found

Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council

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on the Department's [funding landing page](#). Other resources regarding IDEA funding include:

- [FFY22 IDEA Set Aside Application](#)
- [FFY22 Set Aside Project Descriptions](#)
- The K-2 Alternate Assessment Participation Decision-Making Tool will identify student eligibility to participate in an alternate assessment to LEAP. This tool will be shared with the committee for feedback before the August BESE meeting.

Lastly, Ms. Jordan shared updates on specific legislation that passed during the 2022 Legislative Session

Melissa Bayham shared updates on behalf of the [Louisiana Rehabilitation Services](#) which included:

- The Disability Innovation Fund Grant that funds the Project STEMA initiative which improves outcomes in STEM occupations for individuals in marginalized populations
- Rate Setting with the Rehabilitation Services Administration to get the rates updated and approved by the federal government
- Customized Employment initiatives continue with LSU HSC and the University of South Florida and they will be recruiting vendors and learning partners this fall to begin the next phase of the training
- Hosting a virtual disability job fair in conjunction with Healthy Blue on October 12th.

The committee also discussed in great detail the number of vacancies for Vocational Rehab Counselors within LRS and how low the pay is within Civil Service. There are also issues with compression and hiring new Counselors at a higher pay than current counselors. Due to these issues within civil service, LRS is experiencing difficulties with hiring voc-rehab staff which creates issues with getting services to people with developmental disabilities within LRS. This is also being seen within the Department of Children and Family Services and the eligibility determination for Social Security disability. The committee felt it necessary to take action and bring these issues to Civil Services' attention.

MOTION PASSED: Motion for the Developmental Disabilities Council write a letter to Civil Service expressing concerns regarding the starting pay and range for the Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) staff and disability determination staff with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and request an increase in the starting pay and range., made by Ms. Polotzola seconded by Dr. Wilson without objection or abstention.

Finally, the committee also received multiple updates on contractual activities including Seminars on Hiring Individuals with Developmental Disabilities (Activity 3.2.2), Louisiana Post-Secondary Inclusive Education Alliance (LaPIE) (Activity 3.1.1) and Customized Employment Training (Activity 3.2.1). Additional information about these activities can be found in the Council's quarterly [Status of Planned Activities Report](#) under goal three.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 PM by unanimous consent.