

Council Meeting Summary

January 29, 2026, 10:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M.

4354 S. Sherwood Forest Blvd. Ste. 200

Baton Rouge, LA 70816

LIVE Streamed Via YouTube

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

View meeting transcript [here](#).

MEMBERS PRESENT: Patti Barovechio (OPH/CSHS), Melissa Bayham (LRS), Brian Bennett (BSHF), Michael Billings, Ayden Blunski, Jude Boynton, Alaina Chachere, Liam Doyle (GODA), Jill Hano, Angela Harmon, Cherie Kelly-Aduli, Frank Macaluso, Lamartine Meda, Tory Rocca (DRLA), Robby Smith, Brooke Stewart, Erick Taylor, Renoda Washington (Chair), Garry Williams (OAAS), Karen Xu

MEMBERS ABSENT: Cheri Crain (GOEA), Pasqueal Nguyen,

GUESTS PRESENT: Constance Alphonse (LSU/HDC), , Bernard Brown (OCDD), Adrienne Burns, Brenda Cossé, Kristie Curtis, Stacey Denham, Amanda Diagre, Erin Downing, Mylinda Elliott, Nick Fears, Nicole Flores, Icesiss Guy, Tina Haines, April Hampton, Lynsey Hebert (Transcriptionist), Chanel Jackson, Nicole Learson (Parliamentarian), Danielle Ledet, Christina Martin, Ashley McReynolds, Kelly Monroe, Bambi Polotzola, Patrice Thomas, Damon Vincent, Ashley Volion, Lauren Wells (LDOE), Ester Wilson

STAFF PRESENT: Brenton Andrus, Rekeesha Branch, Lauren Brown, Stephanie Carmona, Ebony Haven, Bridgette Talley

Renoda Washington called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m. with a quorum present.

The [October 2025 Meeting Summary](#) was approved by unanimous consent with corrections.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – Renoda Washington

Ms. Washington welcomed and wished everyone a Happy New Year. She also gave reminders on decisions made during the October 29, 2025 Executive Committee meeting, and updated the Council on meetings she attended during the 1st quarter of FY2026. Lastly, she encouraged members to adhere to deadlines, respond to emails from staff timely, and come adequately prepared for meetings.

Executive Committee – Angela Harmon

For more information, please see the [summary](#). The Executive Committee discussed the next Council meeting retreat and the new Council meeting schedule, but could not agree on recommendations to send to the Council. Therefore, those items were discussed with the full Council and recommendations were made.

MOTION: The Council Retreat be held July 2026 made by Alaina Chachere, seconded by Jill Hano.

MOTION TO AMEND: The Council Retreat date be changed to January 2027 made by Angela Harmon, seconded by Erick Taylor. **Motion passes without objection with 19 yeas and 0 nays or abstentions.**

AMENDED MOTION PASSED: To have the Council Retreat in January 2027 by Alaina Chachere, seconded by Jill Hano. **Motion passes without objection with 19 yeas and 0 nays or abstentions.**

MOTION PASSED: To adopt the new Meeting Schedule and Dates as presented with the option to change as needed made by Geary Williams, seconded by Mike Billings. **Motion passes without objection with 15 yeas, 1 nay, and 3 abstentions.**

The Executive Committee had two recommendations for the Council's consideration. The committee reviewed the Code of Conduct policy drafted by Council staff to ensure expectations are clear and meetings run smoothly and effectively. Additionally, the committee conducted the Executive Director's annual evaluation by using survey results from the full Council. Based on the feedback received, the evaluation was very positive.

MOTION PASSED: The Executive Committee recommends the full Council accept the proposed Code of Conduct. **Motion passes without objection with 19 yeas and 0 nays or abstentions.**

MOTION PASSED: The Executive Committee recommends a 3% raise for the Executive Director. **Motion passes without objection with 16 yeas, 0 nays and 3 abstentions.**

The Council's new 5-Year plan (2027-2031) was sent out for a 45-day public comment period. The Council received several comments which were provided including a page summary.

MOTION PASSED: To adopt the Five-Year (2027-2031) plan as approved in October 2025 made by Jill Hano, seconded by Brian Bennett. **Motion passes without objection with 18 yeas, 0 nays and 1 abstention.**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT - Ebony Haven

Ms. Haven highlighted items in the Executive Director's Report including:

- The 2024 Program Performance Report (PPR) for Federal Fiscal Year 2025 (FFY25) was submitted December 17th.
- The House passed an appropriation for FFY26, and all DD Act programs, including our DD Councils, were level funded.
- Region 4 currently has a LaCAN leader position available. Self-Advocates and family members living in the Acadiana area are encouraged to apply.
- LaCAN Leaders are planning regional legislative roundtables in collaboration with their Families Helping Families Centers and members are encouraged to attend.

- Leadership from the Human Development Center (HDC), Disability Rights LA (DRLA) and the Council reintroduced the DD Network during the “Speak Up, Stand Up” 3-day virtual summit.
- The Council’s new website launched in October
- Be on the lookout for New Member Orientation and quarterly Self Advocate Training

BUDGET REPORT - Ebony Haven

Ms. Haven highlighted information in the 2nd quarter (FY26) Budget Report including:

- Operating expenses in October and December increased due to multiple invoices for the Xerox machine and National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities dues.
- Also in IAT/Acquisitions, a credit was given in October due to the Office of Technology Services charging for phone lines tied to our Main St. office. The quarter ends with a net credit of \$97 because of that refund.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ACT 378 SUB-COMMITTEE – Bambi Polotzola

The Act 378 Sub-committee did not have any recommendations for the Council to consider. The committee reviewed FY26 2nd quarter reports for programs within the Office of Behavioral Health, Offices for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities and Aging and Adult Services/ Arc of LA. All reports can be found linked in our committee agenda on the Council’s meetings [webpage](#) if you would like to review. For more information on the committee meeting, please see the [summary](#).

SELF DETERMINATION/COMMUNITY INCLUSION COMMITTEE (SD/CI) – Jill Hano

The SD/CI Committee had one recommendation for the Councils consideration. The committee received a lot of great updates from the Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD), Medicaid, and the Office for Adult and Aging Services (OAAS). The committee discussed activities to recommend to the 2027 Planning Committee to be included in the 2027 Action Plan for Goals 1 and 2. Due to time constraints, the committee was unable to discuss updates on the non-contractual and contractual activities under Goals 1 and 2, but updates can be found in the [Status of Planned Activities](#). For more information, please see the [summary](#).

MOTION: The Self-Determination and Community Inclusion Committee recommends the planning ad hoc committee consider the following activities for inclusion in the Fiscal Year 27 Action Plan and offers this recommendation to the full Council for consideration:

- Increase in funding for Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) in the amount of \$15,000
- Training to focus on talking to kids and adults with I/DD on health and exercise. (ex. exercise, dietary recommendations, etc.)
- Create a resource guide by compiling emergency plans for parishes, especially as it relates to individuals with I/DD. Partner with other organizations to distribute the parish plans and work with families on how to create own plans.
- Curriculum on disability history created and shares with schools and in the home
- Continue funding for People First trainings
- Voting Training for individuals with I/DD

MOTION TO AMEND: To include an Activity for Goal 1 on voting training for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities made by Jill Hano, seconded by Ayden Blunschi. **Motion passes without objection with 19 yeas and 0 nays or abstentions.**

AMENDED MOTION PASSED: The Self-Determination and Community Inclusion Committee recommends the planning ad hoc committee consider the following activities for inclusion in the Fiscal Year 27 Action Plan and offers this recommendation to the full Council for consideration:

- Increase in funding for Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) in the amount of \$15,000
- Training to focus on talking to kids and adults with I/DD on health and exercise. (ex. exercise, dietary recommendations, etc.)
- Create a resource guide by compiling emergency plans for parishes, especially as it relates to individuals with I/DD. Partner with other organizations to distribute the parish plans and work with families on how to create own plans.
- Curriculum on disability history created and shares with schools and in the home
- Continue funding for People First trainings
- Voting Training for individuals with I/DD

Motion passes without objection with 19 yeas and 0 nays or abstentions.

The Council recessed for lunch at 12:06 p.m. by unanimous consent.

The Council reconvened the meeting at 1:13 p.m. A quorum was established.

COMMITTEE REPORTS CONT'D

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT (E/E) COMMITTEE – Brooke Stewart

The Education and Employment Committee had one recommendation for the Councils consideration. There was no representative present for the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE). However, the committee received updates from Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) and staff. The committee discussed activities to recommend to the 2027 Planning Committee to be included in the 2027 Action Plan for Goal 3. The committee received updates on the non-contractual and contractual activities under Goal 3 which can be found in the [Status of Planned Activities](#). For more information, please see the [summary](#).

MOTION PASSED: The Education and Employment Committee would like to recommend the planning ad hoc committee consider the following activities for inclusion in the of the Federal Year 2027 action plan and offers this recommendation to the council for consideration:

- Create information/training on how Social Security works so that people with disabilities can work and be compensated fairly
 - Business highlight of vendors and employers
- Trainings/seminars for vendors on employment and how to support people with developmental disabilities
 - Business highlight of vendors and employers
 - Benefits of hiring people with disabilities
- Pipeline for recipients of SSDI/SSI that want to work full time to transition from those services

- Job fair sponsorship/funding
- Training on benefits planning
 - Who to contact, etc.
- Proving support and trainings for early childhood for children with disabilities
- Transition in the K-12 space, building in the supports specifically for the moderate to significant needs starting in middle school grades

Motion passes without objection with 17 yeas, 0 nays and 1 abstention.

STANDING COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS:

[Disability Rights of Louisiana](#) – Tory Rocca

[Governor’s Office of Disability Affairs](#) – Liam Doyle

[Governor’s Office of Elderly Affairs](#) – No representative

[LSU Human Development Center](#) – Constance Alphonse

[Louisiana Rehabilitation Services](#) – Melissa Bayham

[Office of Public Health: Children’s Special Health Services](#) – Patti Barovechio

[Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities](#) – Bernard Brown

[Office of Aging and Adult Services](#) – Gearry Williams

[Bureau of Health Services Financing \(Medicaid\)](#) – Brian Bennett

[Department of Education](#) – Lauren Wells

Erick Taylor provided a public comment sharing appreciation for the set up and preparation for the Council meeting.

Ms. Washington asked members who are interested in participating on the FY27 Action Planning Committee to contact Ms. Haven to express interest. Council staff announced the next quarterly Council meetings in April 2026 and reminded members their 2025 Financial Disclosure forms will be due on May 15th. Members were also asked to complete their Council meeting survey via paper or using the QR code.

The DD Council January Quarterly meeting adjourned at 3:19 p.m. by unanimous consent.