Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council
Legislative Ad Hoc Committee Meeting
October 15, 2026

BRENTON ANDRUS: If everyone that is online can put their cameras on please. Just a reminder if you are on the committee your camera needs to be on and we need to see your name. Ms. Allen. Ms. Chachere. She's not here. She's running a few minutes late. Mr. Doyle.

LIAM DOYLE: Good morning.

ANGELA HARMON: Ms. Harmon.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Chachere is signing in. Ms. Martin.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Pierce.

JACKI PIERCE: Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Mr. Smith.

ROBBY SMITH: Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Tanner.

JULIA TANNER: Good morning. Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Xu.

KAREN XU: Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Mr. Blunschi.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: So that is nine. You do have a quorum. Just for everyone else to know we do have folks at the table and online that are representing our agencies that are here. They are not official members of the committee so they don't vote but they are here to help provide information for you as you discuss various topics.

REKEESHA BRANCH: Chair, you have a hand raised. Ms. Brenda Cosse.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Ms. Brenda.

BRENDA COSSE: Good morning. Is this on YouTube also? I've been trying to get it connected. Thank you.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yes, it is on YouTube to view. We don't have a way to engage with people that are on YouTube but you can watch. There is a slight delay though from real time so it's possible that's what it is.

BRENDA COSSE: Okay. I see it now. Thank you.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Thank you.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: It is 10:09. Before we get started I want to remind you all of a few rules. 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, which would be me, before speaking. To help the meeting go smoothly please keep side conversations to a minimum and comments related to the topic that we're discussing. For those committee members who are attending virtually remember your camera must be on and have your first and last name showing to be counted towards our quorum. Please keep microphones muted unless called upon by the chair. Electronically raise your hand to request to speak and be called on by me. For attendees electronically raise your hand 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 for those needing an ADA accommodation to participate in the meeting. Public comment will not be accepted via the Q and A except for those individuals who requested the accommodation. As for order committee members in person and virtually will be allowed to speak first. Public members in person will then be called on followed by public participating virtually who have their hands raised. Comments in the Q and A 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 so please be patient.

All comments and questions from the committee members and the public may be limited to two minutes or less should we run into time constraints. 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 the designated public comment periods. The chair may also use their discretion to determine that the comments will be accepted outside of those times.

Before we begin our discussion of the community input ideas received and how to determine our recommendation for the council's advocacy agenda I will now turn things over to the staff so they can share a

bit about the committee's purpose and walk us through documents you have received in your packets.

BRENTON ANDRUS: All right. Well, thanks everyone for attending today and volunteering to serve on this committee. This is our third year that we're doing it this way just trying to make it a little more streamlined and easier for y'all to develop your advocacy agenda in October. So your purpose here today is to come up with a recommendation that is going to go to the council in October. So what you decide here today doesn't necessarily mean that is our agenda. It's just going to be your recommendation that will be voted on at the October meeting.

A few things to keep in mind. I did mention, and for those of that you maybe came in a little later I don't know if you caught that part, we do have some agency reps here to help answer some questions about some of the topics if you have any. In the room with us we have Melissa Bayham with LRS. We have Constance Alphonse with LSU Human Development Center. We have also online have Brian Bennett with Medicaid. Liam Doyle is on the committee but he's also representing GODA as well. We have Ashley Volion with Disability Rights Louisiana. And Bernard Brown here who's with OIDD. I don't think I missed anyone else. I don't think we have anyone here from education unfortunately. If someone is with LDOE that I don't happen to know your name and you are sitting as an attendee you can raise your hand and we'll move you over so you can chime in on some of those education discussions.

But before we get going, because I know Bernard has to leave by 11, so I'll try to give y'all your purpose really quickly and go through that. In your packet you have two documents. One is going to be guidelines for advocacy and that's going to kind of help you determine how you select what items you're going to advocate for this session because you want to look at things that are going to resonate with our advocacy group. You're going to want to pick things that are a statewide issue. So you're not necessarily going to want to look at something that might be an isolated issue or only in one area of the state. This is a legislative session so you want something that's going to be impactful for the entire state. You're

also going to want to try to decide are things that we're going over actually a legislative item. Whenever you look at a lot of, or whenever I look at a lot of the input that we have here it's not necessarily legislative. Those are things that can be handled through administrative advocacy, rule-making. So it's not going to be something you need to address by writing another bill or another law.

The other thing is do you as a council have the capacity. So number one, if you are a council member and this is not something that you yourself would advocate for you might want to consider that because this is your advocacy agenda. You also need to consider things about session. What kind of session are we going into. Is it a regular session. Is it a fiscal session. We are in an odd year so that is a fiscal session. So something that you need to consider there what does that mean. Pretty much if your issue doesn't deal with how the state makes money or spends money it's not a priority this session. Not as far as the legislature is concerned.

Each legislator can bring as many bills as they want this session as long as it deals with spending money, making money. So think about taxes, revenue, HB1 which is our spending bill, our capital outlay bill. Those types of things. They're going to address those things. They can only, and I think it's still five, I know there was a debate in changing the law and I can't recall if they actually changed the law. But they can only bring a certain amount of bills that deal with anything else. So you're going to see a lot of issues on the input list here that are very specific and not a funding issue so you're going to have to consider if that's something you tackle in this session do you have a legislator that going to bring that bill on your behalf because that's what it's going to take. Do you have a legislator that hasn't already committed their five bills to someone else or some other organization.

Also, think back on the past session. Think about bills that didn't pass last session or didn't make it through the process. A lot of times those legislators are already planning to bring those back so they might already have their plate full of bills that they want

to bring. So you might make a recommendation today that we realize we can't handle because maybe we don't have a legislator that's going to bring that bill so that's something you have to consider.

Another thing would be our scope and our mission. So the council we focus on very specific things and so if that is not in line with the mission or vision of the council we shouldn't be doing it. You also need to think of is this something that another organization is better suited to handle. Maybe it's something they're already addressing. Maybe it's something they've historically addressed. Or maybe it's a very niche subject and so we already have an advocacy group out there that handles that particular issue so maybe they're best suited to address that.

The other thing would be looking at your recommendation, the list of issues. What's too many. Do you want to be great at something or you want to be good at bunch of different things. A lot of you have sat on our planning committee so it's a similar conversation when it comes to your advocacy agenda items as well. If you try to fix everything you're not really going to be successful. So you need to try to narrow in on those issues that you think you can have an impact on and focus on those and be great at those and not have nine or ten issues that you want to address in the legislative session. Historically in the past we've done things between three and five. When you're looking at funding issues, which is primarily what this upcoming session is focused on, it's a lot easier to do on the higher end. Let's say five. If you're looking at five things you're trying to fund. If you're looking at creating a piece of new legislation you might want to look at the lower end of things because that takes a lot of time and effort from your part because you're a council member, most of you are, and you'll be advocating for those things and you would need to make sure you have the time and capacity to do that.

So that kind of gives you a little bit of your purpose, a little bit of background of the session that we're running into. As far as the budget that we're looking at the last information that I saw, and this would be as of August, I'm not sure if there's been any

updated forecast since then, we're looking at a budget deficit this year of about 540 million-dollars. So what that means in layman's terms is we don't have enough money to fund the state as we are currently funding the state. 540 million-dollars sounds like a lot. It is a lot. We've had deficits though that were over a billion before so if you look at it from that perspective maybe it's not as much.

What's driving that big number is, at least the best I understand it is, I believe it's the vehicle sales tax. So that was going into the state general fund, and I believe starting with our new fiscal year, that money is going to go into infrastructure where it was originally intended to go. So dealing with roads, bridges, things that DOTD is handling. The best I understood it it looks like there's really only maybe like an actual 2 to 3 percent deficit as far as what Louisiana is projected for income if you aren't factoring in that massive vehicle sales tax falling into a different pot of money.

So what does that mean. We just have to plan that we're going into a budget deficit. So keep that in mind when you're asking for money. The state is going to be not having a lot of money. You don't want to go in with an ask telling them I would like a hundred million dollars. Sure, everybody does. But we're 540 in the hole so what makes you so special. That's just what a legislator is thinking, right.

With that being said, going into this fiscal session I don't know what they're going to do. Will they say all right, maybe punt for another year this money doesn't go into that infrastructure. I don't know if they're able to do that. I don't know what the laws were surrounding to change that. But that's just a little budget info for you to keep in mind and consideration.

As far as how you should proceed you are the committee. Staff will chime in. State agency folks will chime in and help when needed. But for the most part this is a conversation between you all. You decide sort of what questions you want to ask and what information you might need to be able to determine what these issues are. I would normally tell you just start with that legal size document, start from your funding

issues, the number one and just go through your document that way. But since I know we only have Bernard until 11 I think what you need to do first is look at your funding issues that are home and community-based related. Then we need to jump over to the home and community-based topics after that so that way if you do have any questions for Bernard with OIDD he's available and he can answer or know if we need to try to get more information later. And we do have some stuff that overlaps kind of with the HCBS side of things, maybe some Medicaid stuff. But we do have Brian here as well with Medicaid who can usually answer a lot of those questions.

So that would be my recommendation and how you start having that conversation. First up is the big one that's a continuation from last year. Really from the past two to three years of our advocacy efforts which was dealing with rates. Just an update there. We did get some money. Was it 10.7 I think in state general funds during the last session to try and have that funding to start increasing the rates based on that rate study that was released by Milliman. So I don't know if y'all want to get an update from Bernard about what happened there, where we're at and maybe start the discussion around that topic. It's up to y'all. I'll shut up.

BERNARD BROWN: I didn't know if you wanted me to just start talking or just take questions?

BRENTON ANDRUS: If you want to maybe just give them an update with the rate study, kind of how session ended, what y'all were able to do and then through that conversation they can chime in with questions if they have any for you.

BERNARD BROWN: Got you. Yeah, so as you know you guys and some of the provider associations worked to get about $6.7-million or so on the DD side and another 3.5-million or so on the aging side into HB1 to fund a partial rate increase. That partial rate increase accounted for approximately 32 million or so total and accounted for 32 million or so of the 102 million-dollar-- I might be getting my numbers wrong. That went towards part of what was recommended in the last Millman rate study, right. And those went into effect October 1. What I can tell you is that we did,

meaning OIDD and OAAS, we did put a placeholder in our budget request for FY28 for the Millman rate increase study that is going to be redone late winter with an expected completion date of somewhere between late January, early February. It's not in enough time to go into the executive budget with the full recommended number hence why we put the placeholder in there. And from what I've last heard is that it did make it in, the placeholders made it into LDH's budget. Next steps on that it goes to the administration for inclusion into the executive budget that's presented to the governor. Will it stay in I can't make any assertions. I don't know. But I do know that it was approved, the placeholder was approved in LDH's budget so that's good news. So I'll stop there and see if there's questions.

ALAINA CHACHERE: Hey Bernard. You said the rate study was going to be redone around January you said?

BERNARD BROWN: Yeah.

ALAINA CHACHERE: 27? January 2027?

BERNARD BROWN: Yes. Well, it's going to be redone between now and then. So let me back up and give a little more detail. Remember the rate study, the original mini rate summit that we put on back in January. We talked about some of the assumptions and there were concerns from all parties around the assumptions. And what we deduced that to was actually the lack of cost reporting in part. So less than or about 50 percent of providers submitted cost reports, maybe less. But one of the pieces of the feedback we got from the providers is that the cost reports didn't fully reflect the cost and expenses of provider service. So Milliman worked with Myers and Stauffer and providers in small workgroups to redo the cost reports to be more inclusive of costs that wasn't captured, restructure how things were categorized and they put that out for providers to use for their annual cost reporting which started in September and providers have until the end of November to complete. So once we get those completed cost reports those will be sent to Milliman to be included in the redoing, the updated annualization, and the updated analyzing of the rate study. So the anticipation is somewhere late January, February we'll have an updated rate study along with updated recommended numbers based on the updated data

that they receive from those cost reports. That's why we're saying we're waiting for the updated one.

ALAINA CHACHERE: Okay. Thank you.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Yes, ma'am, Ms. Elliot. Go ahead. You have the floor.

MYLINDA ELLIOT: Good morning everyone. I'm so sorry, Bernard, I always have all these stupid questions but I really, really want to understand. So I have two. I don't know what that means, a placeholder.

BERNARD BROWN: Great question. How can I explain this. So this last budget cycle, right. When we submitted our budget as an agency and when the state submitted their budget, when the governor submitted the executive budget it didn't include any mention of a rate increase. So what advocates like yourselves and like provider associations had to do was go and advocate for money to be appropriated by the legislature. With it going into the budget what it does it's included for consideration on the frontend so it doesn't require you guys to advocate for an audience. It will be in the budget assuming it makes it into the final executive budget version, right. So it makes it easier. So instead of y'all saying we need a rate increase and the legislators are like well, it's not in the budget. It's hey, we're here to support this budget item that's in the executive budget. You understand what I'm saying, Mylinda? It's less of a climb. It's still a climb but it's not as steep as last year and the other years because it's contemplated. And if it makes it in it will be for the legislature to consider keeping it in or cutting it. Do you understand what I'm saying? So the conversations will be different. Is that helpful?

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Yes, ma'am. Ms. Martin.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: Hey Mr. Bernard. It's Christina. So is the placeholder anticipated to be the full amount of the rate study request?

BERNARD BROWN: The prior request?

CHRISTINA MARTIN: The request that they come up with I'm assuming once they redo the rate study.

BERNARD BROWN: No, we can't. The placeholder is based off of the prior rate study. We didn't want to guesstimate. We couldn't, honestly. At a minimum it

will be, from the last time I saw it, it's slated at the prior rate increase.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Do you know how much that ask is?

BERNARD BROWN: No, I'm sorry. It will be the difference between what was appropriated last year and what's remaining per the last rate study. So it's the difference.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Got you. So it's not a partial of the difference. It's still that whole figure minus the 10.7. Okay.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: Bernard, you said you didn't know what the amount was from the last rate study, correct? But it was estimated at about 103 million?

BERNARD BROWN: It was a little more than that. The reason why I said I didn't know was because, just a whole rundown, the total cost from last year's rate study was 166 million. But that's state general fund and federal match. The reason why I'm saying I don't know the exact number is because there's a formula that goes into calculating that match that I don't know off hand and I didn't want to misquote or misstate anything. So what we asked for in our budget is the actual state general fund portion because that's the only thing that matters to our legislature. The whole dollar amount matters but for the purpose of budgeting that's the state's portion that we're responsible for.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I know Bernard didn't want to commit to any numbers but just for the folks in this room our ask last year was 53.6-million state general fund because we tend to focus more on the SGF. It was 53.6. We got 10.7. So if you put this on your agenda, which I think you should but that's just me, you would be looking at that difference. We'd certainly work with Bernard. Like he said, there is a formula to follow so it might not be 53.6 minus 10.7 but we would be able to work out that number.

My other question for you though, Bernard, is more of a-- I have two questions though actually. More of a strategy question. If we anticipate something might change based on these cost reports would it be in your opinion I guess more so how the department would present the information to determine if we would follow in line. Communicating with legislators based on old numbers knowing that numbers are going to change should

we look at more of an ask as opposed to doing whatever that remaining number is. Should we look at hey, we know it's coming. It will be here by February so we try not to create confusion. Like is there any anticipation the ask would be reduced. I guess that's what I'm trying to figure out how maybe the committee would want to approach language of what that advocacy item is going to be. If we know that we have a number we're working with now and we know it's going to change whether for the good or the bad as far as how much in a few months. And you can say I don't know. That's fine.

BERNARD BROWN: Yeah, I don't know. Like I don't know how you guys want to move on that from a strategic standpoint. That would be unfair for me to say to be honest with you. But I will say that you guys plan to advocate as a top priority based on your documents so you're going to advocate for it in any instance, right. So I will say just to continue to pay attention to REC, which is the Revenue Estimating Committee. I think the next one is in December. So just keep your ear to the ground on the budget process and really pay close attention when the governor presents the executive budget to the legislature sometime in February. And then that would kind of, in my opinion, shift not necessarily your talking points probably will change the amounts depending on what happens between now and February. But the general talking point is still y'all want to advocate for the rate increase, right?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Right.

BERNARD BROWN: So I think you keep it there and stay flexible as things change through the process.

BRENTON ANDRUS: So for the committee that's something to consider. Your ask may have to change based on those updated dollars. But my other question for you, Bernard, I thought about it last night and I didn't have a chance to go back and look at the rate study before the meeting. In addition to rates the council has been very proactive in trying to make sure that we see higher wages for direct support workers. In the rate study, so knowing that we're going to have to go back and that the rates might be adjusted based on these cost reports, do you remember that 11.48 or whatever it was recommended for the wage floor if that

was based on labor and statistics or if there was any component tied to the rate. Because I'm just wondering if that is going to change based on cost reports or if that is more a general sort of cost-of-living situation here in Louisiana we think that field should be paid X amount of dollars?

BERNARD BROWN: Shoot. That's a great question Brenton. But I will tell you when we talked to Milliman there were several assumptions that went into that portion for the minimum wage rate. And if you look at the weight of buckets in that report that's published now the way they're set up there's a minimum wage component to that rate that was built, that rate build out and then there was also a salary and related benefits component too. So if you're looking at it holistically I would combine those but to answer your question directly, Brenton, is that I know labor statistics information was used. They also looked at other states and other like jobs in the scope of duties and used some of that data to help build out what the minimum wage recommendation should be. Yeah, it's a lot of different components.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I didn't know if they directly tied into the rate at all or not.

BERNARD BROWN: Not necessarily but ironically it came up actually a little above what's in the access rule around the 80/20. If you look at it in total cost going to the direct support worker it's above 80 in total.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I know we had that conversation I think at the council meeting, one of them, about the 80/20 rule that you also need to factor in benefits not just straight hourly pay. There's a lot that goes into what that 80/20 rule might actually look like.

MYLINDA ELLIOT: For some reason my audio gets cut off every once in a while. Another dumb question. The last rate study took forever for us to get or to be public or something. What's going to make it quicker this time?

BERNARD BROWN: Do you remember the last time, Mylinda, we were building it from scratch. Well, not we. Like Milliman and providers and families and all those different folks and workgroups we built this model from scratch. So the model is developed. That

was the biggest lift. Once we got the model in place and the considerations and assumptions that we wanted from a shareholder, stakeholder perspective, once those are in now the model is developed. So now it's literally like update it with new data, hit the refresh button, validate it. Do these things to make sure everything is accurate and on the up and up and then produce it. That's why we're pretty confident that we can get this turned around in 90 days or so.

MYLINDA ELLIOT: That's great. Okay. I'm good. Thank you.

BERNARD BROWN: And you don't have dumb questions Mylinda. Stop it.

MYLINDA ELLIOT: Yeah, sometimes as I get older I realize the less I know. But thank you.

REKEESHA BRANCH: You also have a hand from Mr. Darren.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Darren.

DARREN KATTAN: I did hear some testimony last year at I guess the House Budget Committee and now I'm understanding a little bit more about the process and I understand that the governor's budget has a lot to do with this. And at the time it seemed like the governor-- I guess here's my first question. How could this not be prioritized when so many people showed up at that House Budget Committee? For yellow shirt day it was crazy, right. And then like for every other line item on the budget there was almost nobody or maybe once person. Is the governor just simply not aware of how many people this affects? I think his big initiative is this LA GATOR thing. I feel like this is all part of getting in front of him and saying look, before you publish your budget you might want to rethink how many people this particular issue actually affects. It's not just a disabled person. It's like their families and all the caretakers and everybody employed at all these agencies. It's a lot. So I'm wondering how do we get more of this budget allocated in his mind prioritized because obviously all he cares about is getting reelected. How do we do that and is that even within the scope of what we're trying to do here as like a committee because to me that seems like the first gate.

BERNARD BROWN: Great question Darren. I think

that's directed more to this committee than me to be honest with you man. DD Council for the last 11 years I've been involved in this community have been at the forefront of driving legislative change. So this is what you guys do well. I hate to punt it back to Brenton and Ebony but it really is I think why this group was formed and why DD Council is so effective in Louisiana.

One last point on that is that you all, and I mean the advocates on this phone along with the provider associations, along with LaCAN and all the other entities, there's been years where everything was cut in the whole state and the only two areas they can cut but DD got rate increases or actually got money because how effective you guys are at this. So I just say keep it up man. Keep doing what you're doing and having these discussions and strategizing with Ebony and Brenton on how to get this through. That's really all I can add to it. Brenton did a great job at the beginning talking about the projected deficit. Those are things y'all have to be creative around. But I give you hope because like I said, and Brenton you know this and the other folks that's been around, we've cut millions and millions of dollars and DD actually got money appropriated to them.

DARREN KATTAN: Does the governor make his budget in a vacuum? Who is helping him do this?

BERNARD BROWN: So the budget, just at a super high level, I'm not an expert at this, the way it's developed each agency puts together their budget. It goes to the commissioner who's the Division of Administration. One of their main roles is to manage the executive budget. They get together, go through everything, compile a version of the budget for the governor to review and then they go over with the governor schedule by schedule. I forgot how many schedules there are, but there are a lot of different schedules. They go through schedule by schedule and figure out what's going to ultimately be presented to the legislature. Now keep in mind, like he presents it the legislature has to take that document and make it and balance the budget with the requested things in that document because unlike other states Louisiana is constitutionally required to have a balanced budget

each year meaning we can't have a deficit. So I understand your position but just from a legal standpoint it's a tough job to balance a budget. Federally they got a trillion-dollar deficit. If we could do that too here it would be great but every session they have to leave that session with a balanced budget.

DARREN KATTAN: I guess my question is more about taking an incremental approach. Like there's certain gates to this. Happy that we now have a reserved spot or whatever you called it in the governor's budget. We didn't have that last year because that was the confusing part for me was when I went to the committee they were like this wasn't even like on the budget. I was like how is this not on the budget. The rate study was published months ago. That was frustrating. Now I understand. I don't know what happened but the governor didn't even know about it basically. Fine. Now the governor is going to know about it so now we're there. I'm starting to understand the process. Where are we in the process now. How do we optimize it. And then once it gets out of the governor's hands it goes to the House Appropriations Committee. And it goes from there to the rest of it. Like whose cage do we have to rattle at every point to make sure that we're not forgotten about, you know.

BERNARD BROWN: Everybody but mine. Don't rattle my cage. I'm just joking. I'm sorry.

DARREN KATTAN: I understand that you guys are the cage rattlers.

BERNARD BROWN: No, I'm making light. You rattle all the cages man. That's advocacy. You want this money and what you guys do y'all go to every level. Y'all go to the commission. Y'all go to the legislators. You go to Rep McFarland and Senator McMath and senator-- what is his name? I'm blanking on his name. From Metairie. He's the finance chair, president of the senate. Cameron. Cameron Henry. You go to the governor's office. You talk to Liam. You advocate on all those fronts. That's the superpower of y'all group and that's what y'all usually do.

DARREN KATTAN: I'm new to this, right?

BERNARD BROWN: I appreciate it man. All valid questions.

DARREN KATTAN: All right. Thank you.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: I have a question but I don't know who to ask. Who's responsible for making sure these agencies have the information for all these changes being made? Who's on their backs telling them okay, you have till October to get this done? Who's doing that?

BERNARD BROWN: About the cost reports?

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Yeah.

BERNARD BROWN: So we changed the rule, I think it was the year before last, to put punitive, well, to really enforce the punitive measures that are already in the rule. So just so you're clear if a provider agency does not turn in the cost reports by the November 30th deadline per the rule there's a 5 percent withhold of their claims, of their monthly claims each month they fail to submit that cost report. So while 5 percent doesn't sound like a lot on its face but that's 5 percent each month and if you have monthly claims totaling 4, 500,000-dollars a month that's a huge hit. And that's in statute and that's what we started enforcing last year to make sure providers turn in cost reports because the completion rate was so low. And a long-winded way to answer your question, we as LDH we have a requirement to make sure they turn them in and we have been enforcing that since last year. And I think we've collected several million dollars. I don't know the number but we collected a good chunk of change from delinquent providers.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Thank you.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yes, sir.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Liam, go ahead.

LIAM DOYLE: I just wanted to talk a little bit about some of the points that Daryn made. From my perspective as executive director for GODA the reason why I volunteer for this committee is to work with y'all and kind of understand what your legislative priorities are. So when it comes to session and things like that I'm able to advocate on behalf of some of your goals and make sure that we can kind of work with you from an administrative standpoint. So yes, we are very aware. That's why we're here. We're here to listen and we're here to kind of help where we can. So as was mentioned talking to us is a really good thing.

Doing things like this is a great way once you finalize these goals and figure out what your priorities are I can then step in and say from an administrative standpoint what can we work and be boots on the ground on both sides and kind of carry things forward as much as possible. So that's one of the things in terms of why I'm here one of the really important things that we want to be able to do is support these initiatives as much as we can. Just wanted to add that.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Thank you.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Just for the committee as a reminder I know we only have Bernard for a few more minutes so if y'all have any more questions about that first one that we started with, which would be the rate increase or anything else under the home and community-based topics that you had questions about or needed some info I would say raise your hand and get those questions out now while we still have Bernard.

JACKI PIERCE: So my question for you Bernard is what is the federal match to the state funds?

BERNARD BROWN: That's a Medicaid question. It's usually between 65 and 67 percent. So for every dollar of state money it's about two and half, three dollars of federal money that's matched to that. That calculation is updated annually and it's based off of your state financial-- I don't know. It's based off your state-- go ahead Brian.

BRIAN BENNETT: It does vary state by state and it does change every year but for the current year it's about 68 percent. And that can vary based on, because I don't want to get too far into the weeds, but some people that are enrolled in Medicaid we get a higher match rate for them but the standard match rate across the board that we typically use is about 66 percent. So let's just say if something cost a dollar to fund 68 cents of that dollar would come from the federal government and then the remaining portion of that dollar, I guess 32 cents, would come from the state.

JACKI PIERCE: Thank you.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Questions, comments, concerns?

BERNARD BROWN: If y'all have additional questions I'm going to try really hard to hop back on and I'll let y'all know if I can hop back on. I'll try to see if I can get some folks from my office to cover as well

in case there's other things that may bubble up.

BERNARD BROWN: Okay. Appreciate that Bernard. Thank you. If y'all have no more questions for Bernard right now I would say just continue down your list.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: This is just a logistical question. I'm sharing this document. I just want to ask the people that are on a computer, and maybe the people in the room, I know the people in the room have it printed, this legal sheet document. But I'm sharing it on the screen also. I know it has a lot of information so I don't want to zoom in. I'm sharing it right now. That way y'all can see the whole table. But would it make more sense for me to zoom in on the text or do you want me to just leave it like this? This is just more for what is convenient for everybody that is viewing it. I don't know what would be best so y'all let me know so I know what's better for viewing for people, specifically the ones online.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Also for those online it is linked in our agenda on our website if you want to pull it up on your own if you need to zoom and look at it as well.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: I was only sharing it like at first when we first started talking about it. Once we started asking questions I stopped sharing it. But if you want me to leave it up I can. Again, this is more the technical, logistical part of it. I don't know what the preference was. Y'all just let me know if you want me to keep it up. What's preferred? I'm hearing nothing so I'm not really sure what that means. So I can just keep it like this. If it changes let me know. Whatever works for y'all. It is linked on the agenda. It's the second linked item. It's also on the website if you wanted to pull it up on your own computer screen. And then the people in the room it's in your packet. The colors look weird on the screen if you're in the room. They both look yellow but there is a green and a yellow.

BRENTON ANDRUS: One thing I didn't get to do because I really wanted to pivot so y'all could get into asking any questions for Bernard while he was here was just to kind of explain that document to you which has all the issues. Which by the way, I think what you're doing, Stephanie, is great. Just kind of when we first hit that issue pull it up and then minimize as

we go through the discussion. So anything that is highlighted in green or yellow was something that rose to more of an important sort of topic than things that are not highlighted. So what we did this year was we have our community input meetings. Some of you in this room attended yours, which is great. I appreciate it. I know some of the folks I see online were in attendance. That's great. That is what our LaCAN leaders and FHF centers go out and do for us every summer. Usually a July/August timeframe to collect issues that are important to the communities or issues that are important to someone in that community and bring that information back to us.

In previous years this was a much longer document because we'd get hundreds of issues and we would have to look at them. So what we asked them to do this year was once you have these discussions within your region use those same meetings before everybody leaves to whittle that down to only a handful of issues. Sort of within your region do what you have to do here today. Figure out what's the most important of all these issues so that way you're not trying to prioritize 150 issues. Once that information comes back it goes into this nifty document that you see here. We send that out to our Families Helping Families directors and LaCAN leaders to go through, look at those issues because they are our boots on the ground as far as the council. They kind of bring back information to us about what's going on in their communities and we ask them to rate these issues. So in total that would be 18 people. We do tell them though that if you as a LaCAN leader and your FHF director agree you can submit one rating form back. You don't each have to do one on your own. So in total this year we got ten rating forms. And so to determine if it was a priority basically more than half had to say this is a priority issue. So that's the ones that are highlighted in green. So more than half of those people. Six or more said this was very important and rose to the highest priority. If it's in yellow only about five people have said this was an important issue. So it wasn't more than half. It was right around the halfway mark or a little less. And if it is not highlighted as we mentioned it did not rise to that level of priority or

agreement within the regions.

You also see the columns that say number of regions reporting the issue. We say we want to focus on statewide issues so you'll see two columns there. How many regions reported this as an issue and how many of them think it's a statewide issue. Those are important columns to look at. One if it's a regional issue. The more regions that say this came up at their community input meetings has more weight than maybe if it only came up in one region.

And then a statewide issue is based on the ratings that our directors and LaCAN leaders did. They think this would apply statewide, an issue that's statewide. Same with legislative fix. They felt this would be something if it has a checkmark that you we could fix at the legislature. Now one thing that I want you to be aware of whenever you look at those columns there, statewide issue, legislative fix and a priority to some extent. That is all subjective meaning that is just kind of how they feel. We may not have the data to support that. There's not enough time to do those things by the time we get to this committee. For instance, you may see something, I see it a lot where that's checked, a legislative fix. There's already a law about that. They're just not following it. We have to figure out why the implementation is off. Those are kind of things to keep in mind whenever you see those checks it's important to consider that but also know that it's okay if you don't necessarily agree with that as well because it's all about perspective and how you think and approach it. That's part of the conversations that you have here, not only looking at these issues but drilling down on those issues as well about what you're going to do.

For instance, when you get to education you see some very broad issues. Basically blow up the system. It's not working. You really need to target what it is that you're trying to fix. You can't just do this grand change. So yeah, I didn't get to do that. Now I did. Continue. Your next item is Families Helping Families funding. Just an update that we have for y'all there we did get our budget request back. We did ask for the whole 1,007,517-dollars which is what our state general fund is. And so for those of you that

may be new online, those of you who are new in here our council operates off of two pots of money. We have a state general fund that is strictly used for our contracts with Families Helping Families centers. We don't use those state dollars for anything else. And then we have our federal money which is how we operate. That's how we pay staff. That's how we do everything in your plan. That's how we do our activities. That's our contracts for all of our other initiatives. So whenever we get a state general fund cut it will impact your FHF centers. It does not impact you as a council. That is federal. What happens at the federal level is what impacts y'all whenever we've talked about that at other council meetings when we were 12,000-dollars less or whatever it was. That's our federal dollars. So we didn't put in our budget request and we did ask for the funding that we had this current year that we're operating in. So we're thinking about next year what you're voting on budget wise.

We currently have no cut just too be clear. Everyone is fully funded as they were. But the budget that they're going to consider in this upcoming session they cut us by 250,000. So we have 750,000. It would be about a 28,000-dollar cut for each center. It doesn't sound like a lot of money because we talk about millions all the time but that's a lot money for the centers.

EBONY HAVEN: I don't want to confuse anybody but we have to base our budget request on our existing operating budget. So our state general funds our existing budget is the 1,007,517. So I did have to request in our budget request to DOA but LDH only approved 757,517. So they took out the 250. So we'll see what DOA comes back with but I will say I'm sort of hopeful because all of the Families Helping Families money was included in HB1 this year as opposed to previous years where some of their money was in the supplemental budget. So DOA does not recognize the supplemental budget and we have to go and advocate for that funding year after year. But since it was included in HB1 I'm hopeful that DOA may just give us the full amount. But we'll have to determinate that when the governor's budget is presented in February.

BRENTON ANDRUS: So I guess for right now for all

intents and purposes we're 250,000-dollars short for the FHF centers. The other thing that was listed there it says recurring funding. This kind of rolls over from previous years where we were trying to find a mechanism to be able to make that funding reoccurring so we wouldn't have to ask every year and deal with this cut. So just to let y'all know we can drop that because there is no way to make FHF money reoccurring. They are not state government. They are not state agencies. They are willingly entering into a contract with us and we are willingly using whatever money the state decides to give us to contract. There is no mechanism that I can find in my research over the years to guarantee that this money is there every year. So this is just going to be processing. And that's unfortunate because I know the centers want to bank on knowing what their budget is going to be every year but I guess you can't bank on any state money or any state contracts. That's just unfortunately the way it is. They're considered an MGO sometimes which is a nongovernment organization. A little bit different than when you're dealing with MGOs in the budget. There's no way to make it reoccurring is what I'm trying to say. So at this point if that is something you decide to advocate for you're just trying to get that 250,000-dollars back. Any FHF questions from folks since we're on that topic? Talking about it for years. Y'all should be able to give us the whole presentation I'm sure.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Go ahead Ms. Elliot.

MYLINDA ELLIOT: So the 500,000-dollars that we got, the Families Helping Families centers-- I worked for Families Helping Families centers for anybody that doesn't know. The 500,000-dollars that all of the centers shared for years and years that showed up wasn't recurring? Am I using the wrong terminology?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Technically, yes. So you're talking about the 507,517 which is what the centers were getting for many years and then it got cut in the Jindal Administration to like 300,000. Technically it is not recurring. It has just been our operating budget that we would request every year and they would give it to us. And it's worked out great until we started getting this extra 500,000-dollars that's

always been the struggle to keep that funding. It's also an administration kind of thing depending on the priorities, right. With some administrations we've been able to get that request the following year then some not so much. But it's never technically been recurring. It's just always been a request that has been honored.

MYLINDA ELLIOT: There isn't a better word. Okay.

EBONY HAVEN: Yeah, Mylinda, we have to request it every year. Every year LDH, we have to request it with LDH. So Brenton is right. It's not recurring. It's just that we've been having trouble getting the additional 500,000 to be a recurring thing every year. But I will say this, the legislature has been very supportive of the Families Helping Families centers every year that we've advocating for that additional 500,000-dollars. And I just think that that speaks to the advocacy, again, going back to sort of Darren's questions. The governor has his priorities but there are three branches of government for a reason. And so we target the legislature because the governor has his priorities but you guys have priorities too, which is why we're here today to figure out what the council's priorities are so that we can go and advocate to the legislature to add that additional money that may not be included in the executive budget.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Yes, ma'am, Ms. Christina.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: More of a question. There's absolutely no way, I just want to make sure I have this right in my brain, there's absolutely no way to get the FHF's statutory recognition to get them recurring funding?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Not that I know. It's a nonprofit.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: So in order to get that statutory recognition you cannot be an MGO essentially?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yeah. And in fact over the last couple years I guess we've kind of changed, or at least I have changed and have asked y'all to kind of make sure folks are clear that this money goes into the council's budget because it raises a lot of red flags for your legislators when we go to advocate for a nonprofit to get money because they're really targeting MGOs with this administration. And so we have to make

sure they understand it's not really for their purposes and that initial understanding the money is not for FHF. It is to come to us and then we will use it to support FHF. We put it in our plan so it's in writing and it's approved by the feds so you know we're going to use that money for FHF. But yeah, so we've kind of had to change that messaging.

And kind of similar to what Mylinda was saying. Every year we change it a little bit because we always keep asking this question, like allowing agencies to just get the same amount of money they had to walk around talking about this is a standstill budget so why can't we do it. We adjust how we say things and how we're asking for things each year based on what they're telling us. So last year DOA said you're short 250 because that 250,000-dollars you got was in the supplemental budget and not HB1. So a lot of advocates and our leaders last year worked really hard to get legislators to understand the entire 1,007,517 needs to be in HB1. We got it in HB1 and it's still (inaudible). So obviously what they told us last year didn't matter. So yeah, our messaging has to tweak a little every year so we get more information. But yeah, I have not found a path for them to get funding directly.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Ms. Bayham.

MELISSA BAYHAM: So I know Centers for the Blind gets funding from schedule 20. I don't know what that means. I can find out exactly what it means. I know my fiscal person talks about it because they use it to match a grant that they get from us. I don't know exactly what that means but I know Centers for the Blind they get money through schedule 20.

EBONY HAVEN: Do you know what departments are included in schedule 20?

MELISSA BAYHAM: That's what I'm going to have to find out. I think I'm telling you the right number. All I know is they have priority in schedule 20 and so when they get their funding really depends when their number is up. But I will find out more for you.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yeah, it's just listed as other requirements. So yeah, because it looks like you can do some local things there. If let's say that is something that can be done it removes the council out

of the equation. So what they would do is take our money and just directly appropriate it to FHF centers which could get a little squirely because that could be you might get this amount, you might get this amount, you might get that amount.

EBONY HAVEN: Again, we have to request the money every year so we're not required. They do give us the 507,517 for some reason every year. It's the additional 500,000 that we've been having trouble getting. But they're not required to give it to us.

BRENTON ANDRUS: We did not have any state funds until, oh, gosh, obviously I wasn't here, and someone might be able to correct me, but it might have been like late 90s or whenever we first got that appropriation in the 507. Centers used to get our federal dollars. We never had state general funds that I'm aware of. And then we were told by the feds that we cannot not support the centers with our federal dollars which is then how we got our state general fund allotment. But if there’s a way to go through the schedule 20, however they're doing that, that would remove the council from the equation based on how I understand things. Y'all would have to handle the paperwork and make your requests and make your pitches as to why you need the money. And then report back based on whatever the legislature is requiring MGOs to report out on. It sounds like it might not also be guaranteed annually either.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Yes, ma'am. Go ahead.

SPEAKER: So I was just looking it up and it seems for the schedule 20 it does go in the other requirements but you have to have a source for it and for the Center for the Blind they get slot machine proceeds is how that money is funneled through.

BRENTON ANDRUS: You would probably have to create something. I'm not going to share my opinion on it but there are thoughts both positive and negative from people about tapping into funds for recurring funds mostly because if your funding source dries up you no longer get deposits. I know that has been a concern mentioned to us and also a concern that we've had with the NOW funds specifically that there are recurring payments for services coming out of that fund which is concerning because when we go into years such as the

one we're about to go into where we are projected a deficit unless there is a surplus money doesn't go into the NOW fund. Which means you're paying for a recurring expense but you're not adding money into that fund which means what happens when everything goes away. It means that service is done unless you find another source. So you have those things to think about as well. I guess that would be another option. But yeah, if you get funding outside of the council we're kind of out of it at that point. Any other FHF questions? I guess for maybe the committee for y'all to decide, Mr. Chair, if we are in each section do you want to go just down the list or do you want to handle greens then yellows then whites? How do y'all want to go through this? I feel like it gets a little quiet.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Does anybody have any suggestions?

ALAINA CHACHERE: So the green says they were rated high priority based on more than half or six plus ratings. Can we start with the green? I'm not saying that we don't really need to consider them but if they don't have a legislative fix, unless it's one that somebody really wants to talk about, do we need to discuss it as a committee because that's what we're looking for, right? I don't know that we need to go down every single one. That's just my opinion.

BRENTON ANDRUS: You could say y'all don't want to talk about a single issue on this paper and come up with your own stuff. That's also the thing. You can have your own thing that you could pitch that's not on here and y'all could do that.

ALAINA CHACHERE: But I guess considering the input from the community is important.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yes.

ALAINA CHACHERE: Can we just start with the green?

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Absolutely.

BRENTON ANDRUS: It looks like your next green one would be increase funding for accessible transportation.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: I'm just going to go back to what Alaina said. Are y'all going to talk about it because if there's not a legislative fix like that one is green but there's not a legislative fix. Again, that's just my question for y'all.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Yes, ma'am, Ms. Jacki.

JACKI PIERCE: I would say if there's no legislative fix let's get through everything that does have a legislative fix and if we feel that we need to come back to something that does not have a legislative fix we can do that at the end of the meeting and just get those priorities taken care of.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Yes, sir, Liam.

LIAM DOYLE: I will say this is something that is very much on our mind here at the capitol because as Julia and I have been doing our roadshow transportation is one of the largest issues that we face across the state. There may not be a legislative fix yet but I still think it should be an absolute priority to consider. Again, we can go through things with a legislative fix and then come back to this. But definitely something that is a priority for the statewide community for sure.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: I guess I just have more of a comment. During our discussion we talked about how transportation was regionally based so I think the legislative fix hook up is more around how do we address this as a whole statewide verses just regionally for it to be a LaCAN item. So if you have any insight on that, Liam, please share because it has come up in lots of conversations so it's very important. But we just don't have a legitimate way to make transportation or transit statewide. Everything is pretty regionally based so I think that's the kind of catch on that.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Ms. Tanner.

JULIA TANNER: I'll let Liam answer your question but I just wanted to piggyback on what Liam is saying that we are actively having large conversations with the roadshow. But also Liam and I and our team we've been talking about what can we do. And Christina, that's a good topic of conversation because we have talked regionally what can we do but also how can we blanket that across the whole state and how can we help and what does that look like. And that might be a conversation that we open up to talk with you guys about.

LIAM DOYLE: Yeah, I would have to agree with that. Right now I would say maybe the approach would be creating a statewide effort to do that so you do have

the regional transportation funding but also something that is a blanket for across the state would be really beneficial as well. What that looks like right now I don't know but I know from my perspective that's something of everything on the list we want to make sure we definitely find a solution to. And if we can help with that we're more than happy to do so.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Just while you're on transportation. Even though there's not a checkmark about a legislative fix I think you do have some possible options. I don't know that they are funding related. I know it says increase funding. As multiple people have mentioned our transportation system is very decentralized. You can't just say give DOTD 10 million-dollars and expect changes. But there are possible things you can look at. Based on my research there's a lot of questions for DOTD so it may not, I don't know about the feasibility for running to the legislature this year but there are some things you can consider if it comes back around and y'all want to come back to it.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Yes, ma'am, Stephanie, go ahead.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: I'm sorry. I was just thinking about this also. I know that transportation in the council it comes up year after year and it is one of the, I'm thinking about like our five-year planning because I kind of staff the planning committees and so for the 2027 plan I know that we took transportation study off of the plan in order to focus on the childcare curriculum and the research for that but I think that it was understood that the transportation is just kind of on the back burner for right now and is going to be for the next year or two. So it may be, and again, this is just my thoughts, it might be in this committee or the council's, I don't want to say best idea or best thought or whatever, to maybe have a study of the transportation information to then bring to the legislature to say this is the information we have before requesting any kind of funding or whatever the ask may be. And again, this is just partially non-staff member Stephanie but also staff member Stephanie that is in charge of the planning committee kind of thought process.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: I would think, just to echo off

of what Stephanie said, in my opinion the best method to that madness would be to ask the legislature to form a task force to research into what would be the best ideal way to look at transportation from all perspectives because in Louisiana we know we have some really rural areas so there has to be a lot of consideration on how they would also access that transportation as well. So I think a task force, in my opinion, would be the best way to approach that.

ALAINA CHACHERE: I feel like I was on that committee and I remember what we discussed and it was Ashley from Disability Rights who had also mentioned at that meeting if we were going to do a study that we would involve Disability Rights and DOTD. There would need to be multiple players on the table including Disability Rights for that. And I remember it being put aside just because I think we had other things that were more pressing at the time.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: I think also it was just such a big-ticket item that we wanted to make sure we had all the information and the funds available to really put forth our best effort to actually completing it and completing it well.

ALAINA CHACHERE: It's not something we can do alone. So if everybody wants to get on board with it and participate I think it is something that's feasible for us.

STEPHANIE CARMONA: So I did just want to let this committee and anybody in the audience and the public know kind of like a little bit of background on that transportation of what the planning committee did talk about previously. And maybe the thought of holding off on it and why it may be in the best interest for now to hold off on it or maybe pivot a little bit around that transportation idea or input not that it's not important but more so to try to get more information to present a more unified idea to make sure that we have everything available to present to the legislature. So that way when we do present it it's like oh, okay, I see everything here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: If y'all are sticking with green and legislative fix you would jump to your education section. There are two there. The first one is halfway down. Strengthen accountability for special

education noncompliance followed by protecting school day access for Louisiana students with disabilities. The one just below that school day access one is in yellow and you can essentially lump those two together. It seems like the one in green is the problem and the one in yellow is the solution. Passing or talking about a piece of legislation. My opinion is those two go together I think.

ALAINA CHACHERE: The shortened school days, I don't know if this was region four that reported on that. I was sick and unable to attend. But if we didn't report on it this is an issue in our region as well. I don't know which region this came from but I have heard of that being an issue in our area as well. Schools just shortening the school days and the impacts not knowing really why. It's because they can't necessarily in their words like manage and provide care to the students so therefore they're shortening their days. Not necessarily what's best for the student or their families.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Yes, ma'am, Ms. Christina.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: I have a personal testimony for that. So before we pulled Renee out and homeschooled her in Jefferson Parish so it is most definitely-- I don't remember exactly which region this came out of. Probably region nine because It's been a huge issue there if I had to take a guess. However, it is happening at every region. My daughter was a student in Jefferson Parish. When she first started school they used to want me to come get her early to the point where I actually just put it in her IEP so I wouldn't get in trouble for truancy or anything like that. And then I spoke with an advocate friend of mine and she was like Christina, what are you doing. I wouldn't even sign her out so they would get paid for her entire day while she was at home and I was teaching her and I didn't even realize it because sometimes even as an advocate when it's your own personal stuff it's different, right.

And so the following year, or excuse me, at the following IEP meeting I took it out and then from there it was a slippery slope into other things. And ultimately which wound up in her being homeschooled. So it's something that definitely needs to be

addressed. I actually talked to a news reporter not too long ago about this. That's like where they start, right. If your kid's in public school and you won't come pick them up early and you're like hey, you're denying my child FAPE. They need to be here for the whole day. It then turns into disciplinary referrals, or potential neglect, potential abuse, potential elopement, things like that to where that parent eventually gets so frustrated they pull their child from school from what I have seen in my two regions.

Now Orleans is a little bit of a different setup because they have an all-charter association so you're not necessarily deemed to go to your community school. You have more flexibility around school choice. However, they were under a consent decree for a long time for not providing special education services appropriately so there's that too. They were just recently released from that. And so there's a bunch of underlying factors. However, yes, from personal testimony and from hearing other community members from the public it's a huge issue.

JACKI PIERCE: My concern with this is that there might not be a legislative fix. This is a noncompliance issue in the grand scheme of it and this school, the Department of Education has a dispute resolution process that families are supposed to be using to file complaints against schools related to these specific things. I've had a lot of issues with this. This is my wheelhouse. I was a special education teacher. And we get lots of calls at Bayou Land that families are complaining about this very situation where their student is being removed. It's not being documented. And I always tell them ask are you suspending my child because they have to document that and they have certain protocols and procedures that they have to follow with each removal that's taking place.

We have some schools they don't put it in writing but they say they don't have the staff. They can't handle the child and that's noncompliant. So families should be filing complaints against the schools. Or I'll say don't file complaints, call your local Families Helping Families center because we are contracted with the Department of Education to provide

that specific type of advocacy. But again, I'm not sure that there's a legislative fix to this. This might be something that we have to go to the state Department of Education. We need to go to BESE to fix these implementation issues.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: Just to piggyback. I was going to wait until we got to that item but since you brought it up, Jacki, a lot of these education items fall under the noncompliance. They are already federally or state regulated however they're not just being followed. So in my region when we had our community input the discussion, because this noncompliance came from three regions, but mine was one of them. When we had the discussion around the noncompliance it was like providing penalties. Whether that penalty was a fiscal penalty like OIDD and the governor's office does with provider services or whether that penalty looks like being on a corrective action plan or however that looks it was deemed necessary through BESE or whatever advocacy avenue would be taken for that. That would sum up a lot of those issues, right. Because if you are noncompliant in allowing ABA, if you are noncompliant in full school days, if you are noncompliant providing FAPE then that would be reflected and you would have a penalty for that. And I was always raised to appreciate something more when you have to pay for it, raise it, put some equity into.

And so right now it's like okay, take cameras for example. You might have a camera in the self-contained classroom. The camera breaks. They don't change it for six months. There is no penalty for them if they don't change it for six months. If they are sending 20, 30 kids home there is no penalty for that. So I think it's more about the accountability issue of holding the laws that we already have in place accountable and making BESE, and possibly the legislature if we took it on, make them, make them follow rules, you know. Because the rules are already there. They're in place. They're just not being followed for the most part. And there's no penalty if they don't.

SPEAKER: So I guess kind of what Christina was saying I don't understand how this would be a legislative fix at the state level because federally we

have IDEA and Section 504 that protects students from inappropriate shortened days so I feel like this is more of an accountability issue and not a legislative fix issue.

JACKI PIERCE: And going off of that what we're seeing for the sake of what the schools are doing, what we're seeing happen often is a lot of times the schools are having IEP meetings to adjust the school days, to shorten the school day claiming this is their least restrictive environment. That is what happened to you. So claiming this is their least restrictive environment. And it is an IEP team meeting decision taking place. And parents don't always agree with it but unfortunately the rest of the team feels that that's the best case for these students so that placement gets changed. And I'm saying this for the sake of people who are listening in and the people in this room. If that happens to you file a due process. You have ten days to file a due process and that orders the state put. That they cannot change, legally change the placement of each student until that due process investigation is completed. I'll get off my soapbox.

ADRIANNE BURNS: I have a five-year-old autistic son in kindergarten and I kind of echo I think what Christina said. I'm actually thinking of homeschooling because I'm scared to send him to school because something that happened recently was they literally lost him because he's an elopement risk. And I told them that he wanders. He'll bolt. He straight up gets up and runs because he gets bored and just different things. And they lost him. He was going to the bathroom by himself was too much of an impulse control like to come back to the classroom. He started wondering that way and they finally got him a bathroom buddy and he just ditched that bathroom buddy and he actually wound up by the carpool lane where the gate ends up opening up and it was near the end of the day so grandpa was actually picking him up because I was doing physical therapy and so grandpa got out by the fence and…

CHRISTINA MARTIN: You cut out Adrianne.

ADRIANNE BURNS: My four-year-old daughter is also here and she's also autistic. And so she flagged down a cafeteria person and they took Gabe but the school

didn't realize that he wasn't a good Samaritan. They just thought he was a random person and they never told us. And so like we called a meeting and they were like what is this about. And so I'm thinking of homeschooling. Sorry if that's like a long story. Because it is shortened to where it's like scary because they're not-- yeah, anyway. I apologize if that's a little off topic but wanted to share that.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Thank you. Yes, sir.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I was just going to say one of the, I don't know if it was this topic or somewhere dealing with one of the education things, and as people are already saying that's why it is hard to deal with these education issues because it is more noncompliance than it is a legislative fix because there are so many laws out there dealing with our education system. But at least on paper there is a mechanism to financially penalize schools for noncompliance with special education issues. LDOE has that authority. That would be more like-- it's not necessarily a fine I don't think, at least what I could tell. Like oh, you owe us 10,000-dollars because you did this. It's just more withholding funding or maybe suspending some funding.

What I don't know because I am not the education expert is I don't know what triggers like what's excessive, noncompliance. What would trigger a financial penalty. The other thing you have to consider when you start talking about schools is where they are going to penalize the system for kids that need services. That's where they're going to hit you. I don't think it's going to look like oh, you won't be able to have a secretary at this time or something. I think you're going to end up seeing-- well, I don't know. There might be some concern that it's going to impact services that the school does provide as opposed to maybe some other mechanism. But just to put that out there because I think maybe a lot of folks don't realize that but on paper there is a mechanism for LDOE to impose funding restrictions or whatever for noncompliance. Maybe even upwards of like 50 percent. I'm trying to look at it now but it's really hard to skim but BESE and LDOE have the authority.

JACKI PIERCE: So with the State Department of Education they do have their complaint process. That

complaint process is going to investigate a very specific situation. In other situations where you have IDEA that's being violated, noncompliance with IDEA with those federal laws they have the Office of Civil Rights complaints that you can file and what they do is they look at patterns within school districts. So that could be something else too. Like another avenue to take. But there are procedures in place for these topics that are on here. And again, these really aren't legislative fixes. This could be something that we have to go to BESE, to the Department of Education to really get anything accomplished. And I will say this too. If we don't give them the opportunity to make these corrections and we're just going, I don't want to say barking at the legislators' tree, what good are we really doing. The legislators are going to go to the State Department of Education. They're going to go to BESE. I say go up that chain of command if these are going to be some topics that we're going to address. But again, they're not legislative.

ALAINA CHACHERE: Yeah, I guess, I don't know, from a parent perspective, and this might be an unpopular opinion, but some of the noncompliance that you hear about is neglect. If we were doing it as parents we would be facing criminal charges and having our children taken from us. So why is it-- yeah, I don't know that we should go like burn the Department of Education down but there's a serious problem. Five-year-olds are getting out and thankfully it was his grandfather who found him. That's why mine is not in public school because I can't trust that he won't be neglected. He has no voice. I don't know. I just have a major issue with that. Not to be emotional. There just has to be some sort of solution where these complaints and things that we're filing doesn't guarantee that they're not going to be neglected in the process of it being investigated. Like maybe some people don't have time to sit through the investigation process is what I'm saying. Why is there not a better way. I don't understand.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: In my case because abuse and neglect was involved and there is no lawyer within a million miles for me to hire the school took the choice to drop everything that they considered to be negligent

on my daughter's behalf. So the NDR requests, all of the behavioral reports, everything that they had originally established they decided to take those back. So they basically-- it's a very sticky situation I will say. And at the end of the day if I was to continue with due process with no lawyer the school would have just told me oh, well, this is on you if you don't want her to come back to school because we offered to drop everything and drop the NDR and all these things, correct.

And it is very hard not to get emotional about because I spent many, many days thinking I was going to burn in hell for some of my thought process of what was happening to my daughter. However, something has to be done about it. You're absolutely right. I don't know if we have the mechanism to do so. However, there's very strategic ways that if the person knows how to advocate for themselves or can go past the burden of proof law or can do these things, right, that they will then rebuttal with something else. Like oh, no, your kid didn't do anything. Now if you don't want to go to school it's all your fault. But how am I supposed to, in my situation, put my daughter in an environment where I know for 100 percent fact she's going to be neglected and abused. Robby, you're from our area. They let her get out. She was almost on West Esplanade. Those people don't even follow the speed limit when the school zone light is on much less when the school zone light is not on, right. And so it was a very dangerous situation. And you're absolutely right, had I brought my daughter to school with gouges on her face, had I brought my daughter bruised from top to bottom they would have called CPS on me and I would have had more trouble than I knew what to do with.

However, they are getting away with this, I'll just say for lack of better words, because of the mechanisms that they use get around the system essentially. So in my case because I took it all the way to the legislature and was trying to file a bill they then were like almost immediately afterwards oh, no, Renee didn't do anything wrong. So you don't want her to come to school it's your fault. And so that is something else that needs to be addressed because it's happening multiple places in different types of

scenarios. The shortened school days, the this, the that, the MDR, the ten days of suspension. Like all of those things go into the bigger pot of noncompliance but I don't know necessarily if LDOE prioritizes that. I don't want to say yea or nay. However, I haven't heard of any districts getting any type of penalties for noncompliance. However, (inaudible) reporting to so if the school is not reporting that these critical incidents are happening, it's like if it's not documented then it doesn't really happen. Because let's be honest, unless your kid has a bruise or a bump and you notice it and they'll say something they're not going to write, nine times out of ten, an incident report about it. And so some of those things go under the radar as well.

So as Jacki said, I don't know what the legislative fix for it is but it's definitely something that BESE and the LDOE need to look into because it's multiregional and happening at a rate that-- I mean, Renee is ten. I haven't been in the game very long, but it's happening at a rate I haven't seen in the whole entire decade she's been alive. Currently within the last couple of years for sure. It's always been there but there's been a huge uptick in the last few years of parents like Adrianne, because she's from my region, where their kids just aren't safe at school and we talk about that at a lot of our meetings. And if our kids aren't safe at school then we're left with two things. Most of us can't afford private schools and if your daughter is like mine there is no private school in the Greater New Orleans area who is not potty trained and has behavioral aggression so we don't have that option. And so we get left with the homeschool or deal with what you got at your community school.

Orleans, like I said, it's a little different. You can do child search and kind of figure out what charter works the best for you if there's an opening. However, Jefferson, St. Bernard, Plaquemines are not like that. And those are the three parishes, if I have to be honest, not that I don't never hear anything from Orleans, but Orleans I am less inclined to hear these things from. Not that they're not happening though. I want to put that out there. When they don't have that school choice and that child is forced to go to the

community school and the district will not do a reprieve for that child to get into another school it can become a very dangerous situation for both the parents, the teachers involved, etc. The teachers just don't have the appropriate resources but that's not their fault. That's on the district and LDOE to provide those resources for them. I'm off my soapbox now. Sorry.

JACKI PIERCE: The only other thing I want to add is if situations like that happen file a police report. Get that documented through your whole law enforcement agency. Report it. I understand there's a piece of paper that has that information. And the schools are mandated reporters. Report them. You have a right as a parent to make those reports as well. Make that report. That's going to go through a state board. I don't remember what it's called but it's not through the Department of Education. There's another investigation that takes place. That's it.

REKEESHA BRANCH: I believe Ms. Karen has her hand raised.

KAREN XU: (Inaudible).

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Yes, ma'am, Ms. Burns.

ADRIANNE BURNS: I'm so sorry. I got distracted when I began the story and I forgot to put an ask in it. So the thing is the school is like we don't have any paraprofessionals. We just don't have the staff. It's literally three kindergarten classes and there's no, I don't believe there's any teacher aides. There's just three teachers for three classes. Which is insane to me for kindergarten because they're full classes. And so they were like we just don't have the staff to be able to cover that. Like the paraprofessional or what not that they could pull. And I just keep looking for-- my son was in Reach Center for Autism and it was amazing but it's only in clinic. The school takes ABA therapists with them but they need to be available. That's the big thing that I think is affecting a ton of people. Availability of ABA therapists because they're just not there and they don't have the availability. That was what I was hoping to enact for my son.

But then I also did ask about the carpool lane. I asked if they could keep that gate shut until carpool lane opens and they were like but somebody has to leave

and they've been there since 5:00 a.m. so I don't know, that's a pretty big ask. Because it was like right by Jefferson Highway. Like Jefferson Highway down River Road. So I was a little bit stunned by it. It was recent so I'm still kind of sorting out my thoughts. Anyway, I just wanted to share those two other things. I apologize if it was off topic. Thank you. But the ABA therapists, we need those. Thank you.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: I just think that it boils down to we don't pay people enough. If we pay the teachers what they're worth. If we pay the paraprofessionals what they're worth we can retain them and they would be more inclined to do their jobs the right way. And that would start, it's not the ultimate fix, but that would start, not that that's a DDC issue, but that is the issue is that I'm a paraprofessional, I make 10-dollars an hour and I have a kid who's beating me up. I'm more inclined to not respond appropriately because I'm not appropriately compensated. And while that's not right and while it's not fair it is the way the world is and that's the reality of the situation. Sorry. I'll get off my soapbox now.

BRENTON ANDRUS: You're good. I just had a couple things for y'all. One, it is 12:03 and you are due for a lunch break. Before we break though I just wanted to provide a little bit of guidance. One would be if you look at that main topic strengthen accountability special education noncompliance and just isolate it to the noncompliance piece what we've established a lot of this is implementation and noncompliance. There are so many laws and bulletins out there and administrative rules that tells what everybody should be doing. The question is how do you get someone to actually do it or where they're falling behind. Which is unfortunate that we didn't get any of our education folks here on the call because they could talk a little bit about what guidance is provided. Not only verbal guidance if someone calls LDOE for feedback but what documentation is being provided that we can actually look at and see what information is being provided to them.

Because I want, if it is an implementation issue, and we run into this many of times especially when it came to cameras, especially when we were doing restraint and seclusion a law is passed, a rule is set,

whatever it may be and this is what the local education agencies have to follow. They all have their own attorneys and they all interpret the law differently just like every legislator interprets the law differently. Just like we all interpret the law differently and that's why we're in this mess. Not even just with education, everything. So it would be nice if they were here.

I would remind you all I don't know off the top of my head which council members in here are online and actually sit on the education committee. You have a mechanism through that committee to be having these discussions. We try to figure out what the guidance is, where it needs to improve, what we can actually partner with LDOE on, what we need to advocate within that committee to bring things to SEAP, what then needs to go to BESE. We have an education committee to address these things and every council meeting what happens in that education committee, we just report out on what they report out the next day. Same goes with LRS or anyone else that we do reports. You're asking in your committees for them to report on Wednesday what they're going to report to you on Thursday. This is where the topics need to be addressed because now you're sitting in this committee looking at all these education issues because they're all tied into one thing. They're all leading to dissatisfaction with special education, noncompliance or an implementation issue. So what you're really doing is trying to decide which one of these rise to the occasion, right.

My other thing is we're hearing a lot of great testimony is essentially what we're hearing. In this committee right now we're hearing a lot of personal testimony and that's great and I appreciate that. Your job right now is not necessarily to keep providing testimony. It's to drill in on what it is that you're actually trying to do. We've established that there is a problem and you keep talking about there is a problem but we need to get to the solution part if you are going to try to address all that. Whether it's a directive and the education committee needs to start handling this or whatever that may be.

And again, even if you're not on the education committee and something like this is very important you

need to make it known in your council meetings when Dr. Wells is giving her report you can ask those questions. Whenever we're having council meetings you can bring it up what you want on the next agenda at the education committee. I'm sure, just looking at Melissa, I'm sure she would love to take a back seat in committee one day just so we can handle just education one day if that's something y'all want to do. Or vice versa we can give her the floor and address LRS issues if you have those. But use those committees for this work because what you're doing in your committee while it's nice, you're feeling the need to take over what your committees should be doing in council meetings. You should be in here deciding you know this is an issue and I think we need to do X, Y and Z to address that issue. Not just recycle our testimony over and over. That being said, if Mr. Chair is ready--

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: By all means, let's take a break.

BRENTON ANDRUS: For those of you that are committee members and our agency reps we did provide you with lunch. So I think it is 12:07. Do y'all want to say come back at 12:45? We can recess till 12:45.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: We'll recess and come back.

{BREAK}

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Okay it is 1:02. Hope everybody had a good lunch. Brenton if you would do a roll call please.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Sure. Ms. Allen. Ms. Chachere.

ALAINA CHACHERE: Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Mr. Doyle.

LIAM DOYLE: Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Harmon.

ANGELA HARMON: Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Martin.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Pierce.

JACKI PIERCE: Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Mr. Smith.

ROBBY SMITH: Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Tanner.

JULIA TANNER: Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Xu.

KAREN XU: Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Mr. Blunschi.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Here.

BRENTON ANDRUS: So that is nine and a quorum. Technically eight. Liam when you have your camera on then you will officially be a part. But you do now.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Thank you.

BRENTON ANDRUS: So y'all were discussing education.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Now we can continue with our yellow highlighted spaces. Fully fund Louisiana Rehabilitation Services, LRS. Ms. Bayham.

ALAINA CHACHERE: I just wanted to know how it was going with the funding that y'all received. I know you kind of reported that previously but haven't heard it in a while.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Sure. And I did not bring exact numbers but I will give you an idea. So just to kind of give some quick numbers in terms of budget in terms of what we expect next year and then what we've been doing. We were able to get 2 million extra of state general funds this last session. Thank y'all so much. The session prior to that we got 4 million. So just to let you all know what I'm being told by my administration is that, these are the terms they used, but 4 million is baked in. So even though both the 4 million and the 2 million's in the executive budget we still to a certain extent have to justify keeping the 2 million in there. But not the four. So just to kind of mention that. So I don't know when, obviously none of us know what the governor's budget is going to look like. However, potentially you won't see that 2 million, you will only see the 4 million, is what we're being told. So the numbers that I gave you, Brenton, are assuming we get all six back. Just wanted to mention that.

BRENTON ANDRUS: And that's around 5.9-million?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Correct.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Assuming that 2?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Right. Now we have been able to, with the additional funding, in order to spend additional funding in VR you have to have rehab counselors because rehab counselors are the only people who can determine eligibility and plan services. So our priority has been really trying to staff up. So we are up in terms of the number of counselors. I think

we're around 73 right now which is really not up as much as I would like it to be. We still have a lot of vacancies. So the hiring process is just very long in state government but then in addition to that we are still losing people. We're always going to turnover staff. We're too large not to turnover staff. But that has slowed down quite a bit so I'm really excited about that.

We also have been able to get approval from my assistant secretary to hire job appointments. And so what job appointments do we only have a certain number of positions we can hire. They call it TO in state government. And that allows us to hire over what our TO is but we still-- they're four-year job appointments. And our plan with the job appointments is as that natural attrition happens we will be able to move job appointments into permanent positions. So we kind of have a better system in place now in terms of being able to quickly put more people into those TO slots once we get positions filled. So we're definitely up in the terms of number of rehabilitation counselors we have. We're also-- we're up in everything. Our expenditures are up. Our number of customers are up. Our authorizations are up. So we're definitely trending in the right direction. Like I said, it's a slower process than any of us want it to be. It's a great thing. We have a lot of new staff but learning VR is very complex. If you think about the services that individuals for this population receive you have to remember we serve individuals with all disabilities so it's a very complicated job.

But recently I'll say in the last two months I've been all over the state just visiting my regional offices, met a lot of the new staff face to face and we have some really great people we have been able to hire. We have increased our counselor pay, our entry level counselor pay to 21.04 an hour, where it was several years ago it was 14.25 and went up to 17.18 and finally we've got it at least to 21.04. So that has helped tremendously. So we're able to recruit better talent with that salary range than we were before. So does that answer your question? We're going in the right direction for sure.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Ms. Pierce.

JACKI PIERCE: I have two questions. You said 73. How many would it be for you to be fully staffed?

MELISSA BAYHAM: That is kind of like a moving target. I don't want to say a moving target, but at first we were kind of just focused on how many TO slots do we have. Now that we've been able to get some more support and a better understanding of job appointments that's kind of expanded that. I'm going to tell you in just a minute how many we're trying to hire. But we would need at least another, off the top of my head, probably at least another 15 counselors. It's kind of like what's realistic verses, you know-- I'm sorry. I never know what kind of questions y'all are going to have. But luckily this room has big Wi-Fi. It's a beautiful thing. So in terms of the TO slots we currently have 10 vacancies and for the job appointments we have, that's a new thing, we have 16 vacancies. So 22.

And we're also going to hire some job appointments. I'm going to tell you what it is and why it's significant. We're also going to hire receptionist positions. So over time we have lost a lot of positions and in particular that administrator coordinator position, which is the receptionist for our offices. When they left we weren't allowed to backfill those positions. And it really has caused a lot of difficulty for my staff because people are having to cover the front desk. As it is I'm short on rehab counselors, I'm short on rehab counselor associates and then they're spending all their time at the front desk. So we're also going to hire that position as well.

JACKI PIERCE: My second question for you it's going to be a lot easier I promise. I have a better understanding because of how you explained it to me years ago. Can you explain to everyone the federal match.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Sure. For the people that like dollars and for the people that like percentages I'm going to do both. We have a 78.7 percent federal match or 21.3 state match. So in other words for every dollar we receive in state general fund we receive $3.69 in federal funding. So the feds allocate a certain amount per state. It's some complicated formula that has to do with your population and all

that stuff. And so they allocate a certain number to Louisiana. Our numbers are 73, 74 million. But in order for us to draw all of that down we have to have state matching funds. So the state matching funds for our current federal allocation is right under 20 million-dollars. So right now we get right under 14 million which is why the number that I had given Brenton is around 5.9-million. So that would get us to the full match. Does that explain?

JACKI PIERCE: So to simplify what you said the full allocation would be 20?

MELISSA BAYHAM: So 20 million, it's right under 20 million, but approximately 20 million is what you need to draw down the whole federal.

JACKI PIERCE: Which is 74 million. So if the state invest 20 million-dollars they will give 74 million in return?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Correct.

JACKI PIERCE: Okay. Thank you.

MELISSA BAYHAM: There's one other thing. One other thing that we're trying to do because we have to have people to serve people. We're also doing staffing contracts for preemployment transition services. And I can't remember where we were the last time we met here. We recently have finished, it's all been approved, our third staffing contract. We have one in New Orleans which is Families Helping Families. One in Shreveport which is Easterseals. And now we have a third in Baton Rouge and that's Arc of Louisiana. So what that does it gives us three staff people per region of those three regions to help coordinate and provide those preemployment transition services so that allows my counselors to be able to focus on the VR side and those contract workers to focus on the preemployment transition services side.

JACKI PIERCE: And I do want to make a point to everyone on the committee. With the DD Council one of their planning priorities is the employment services and everything and LRS plays a whole role in providing those employment trainings. They'll help with tuition for programs statewide like the Bridge to Independence program, all the LAPIE programs. And they help those people, once they have those trainings, they help them acquire gainful employment. They have job coaching and

all those various programs. So I think this would be a wonderful investment of the state.

ALAINA CHACHERE: I agree.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Yes, ma'am, Ms. Elliot. You have the floor.

MYLINDA ELLIOT: I believe I asked this maybe in a past council meeting and you didn't have the numbers there in the report. I know that y'all cover the entire state and help everybody with a disability but how many of the people that you're helping have developmental disabilities or what percentage and has that percentage gone up with the increased funding?

MELISSA BAYHAM: I think we report those numbers in our quarterly report.

MYLINDA ELLIOT: I couldn't find them in the quarterly report.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Well, we don't do any comparison from any reporting period to any reporting period. But I thought we did report on the number of people with developmental disabilities that we were supporting.

BRENTON ANDRUS: In your report that we have for the upcoming meeting in October on page 7 it says open VR cases by type and it just listed there-- it doesn't say like in a large category. Just developmental disability I think it breaks it down.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Right. So there's certain disability types in our case management system so that's the only way I can report it. And there is some margin of how a counselor is going to code something and so this is the best listing that I can give in terms of the disability types that we're serving.

MYLINDA ELLIOT: I honestly can't figure out a better way to ask at this point so thank you.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Two questions I had. One, it was kind of in line with what Mylinda was asking but more so if this was something that the council decided to advocate for do y'all have a mechanism like where you could generate a report easily outside of just going back to all old reports and counting upwards to show if there's been any increase or decrease since funding from the 6 million to the extra 2 million to show any sort of upward trend?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Yes. I mean, we definitely-- we do this every month and I know definitely my financial

person state fiscal year to state fiscal year we definitely have those numbers.

BRENTON ANDRUS: And I mean if that’s something we advocate for we can hash that out, but that is a dataset that we can pull out to at least give to legislators?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Right. So I'll give you an example. I just got our first quarterly report for state fiscal year 27 and year-over-year expenditures were up 3.5 million. Client service expenditures were up 2.1 million. Year over year VR applications were up 9.69 percent. So that kind of thing?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yeah. And if there is a way to look at it based on those disability categories.

MELISSA BAYHAM: I don't know how easy that's going to be in our case management system.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Got you. Okay. My other question was budget wise I know the 2 million I know y'all requested it. Do you have a roundabout idea of when you would know or would you know before the governor goes to present his budget, which I would imagine is probably in February maybe. Would you know before then if it's included? Just thinking about an advocacy approach of we would obviously go with the 5.9 but we have that contingency of the 2 million from last year that is there. So we could work with you on numbers and what your request was to have that. Okay.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Ms. Julie.

JULIA TANNER: Is there a way to report how many individuals are served by LRS?

MELISSA BAYHAM: Say that one more time.

JULIA TANNER: Is there a way of tracking how many individuals that have gone through LRS are now gainfully employed? Because I know legislators would want that number because that's kind of in our spill when we justify it but if we could have like a concrete number of this is how many that we are serving and this is how many that have gone on to have employment that would help us.

JACKI PIERCE: A return on investment.

JULIA TANNER: Exactly. The ROI.

ALAINA CHACHERE: Also, I think it would be helpful to know what the waiting time is for individuals who are calling in to justify the need for more funding for

your staff and stuff too. If we could know like when an individual calls how long is it before, what is the process like for them before they're at the end of it and they're pursuing vocational rehab or whatever it is they request and what that looks like.

MELISSA BAYHAM: It will vary regionally.

ALAINA CHACHERE: Just like an estimate, I guess.

MELISSA BAYHAM: I'll see what we can get. When a referral, like it doesn't tell me, like we input a referral, there's a date and then obviously the application date but I believe that would be a manual process to determine (inaudible).

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Yes, ma'am, Ms. Elliot.

MYLINDA ELLIOT: Thank y'all. I thought about it a little bit more. So I guess one of the other things (inaudible) is I'm one of the LaCAN leaders and I want to advocate for LRS to be able to get state dollars to bring down the federal dollars for employment for people with disabilities. But the families that I work with continue to come to me and tell me that when they go to LRS to apply for services and they have an adult with a developmental disability that they're having difficulty getting services. And I'm trying to proactively imagine a way that I'm going to have a discussion with those families about helping advocate for more money for LRS is going to turn into a better outcome for people with developmental disabilities and I'm having difficulty with that. If you could help me with that I would greatly appreciate it. I like data but yeah, if you could help me with that I would greatly appreciate it.

MELISSA BAYHAM: Sure. It's interesting we actually met this week to talk about, I think we're going to talk about this later potentially, a potential employment first initiative. But in some of the discussions that we were having one of the things that we have struggled with since Covid, if I had to pick up a time period, is we in LRS have lost a lot of our vendors. So LRS for the most part we don't directly, in terms of my staff, find jobs for people. Our vendors, which we call community rehab programs, do. And so we have had a great reduction in the number of community rehab programs available to us. And especially programs that have the experience and

expertise needed to serve individuals with the most significant disabilities. So what often happens is people come to LRS and we connect them with the providers that we have but then they're not always successful getting employment from those providers for different reasons.

I'm sorry. I thought of several different things while you were talking, Ms. Elliot. But one thing we have for many years for many different reasons struggled with recruitment and retention of rehab counselors. We're finally getting to the point where we're recruiting some really good counselors. And I think I mentioned this earlier. The process takes longer than I would like it to. I really wish that we would hire people and it would just be great but we are in a period among half my rehab counselors are new. Like two years at most they've been with LRS. And so we don't have a lot of seasoned counselors. So we're growing up counselors right now. And so that's where you're going to get the complaints because they're still learning and growing. We're providing training to them but you still are understaffed. We are trying to hire 16 rehabilitation counselors. So we're trying is what I'm trying to say.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Yes, ma'am.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: To echo Ms. Elliot's point in my region specifically we do have a new vendor at our FHF center so that should hopefully figure some of that out. However, and I share the same sentiment with Mylinda, I believe all of us as LaCAN leaders we want to definitely make sure that LRS gets their funding that they need to be functional. But what we're hearing from stakeholder feedback when we're in the community is like in my instance, I'll use as an example, I was at Magnolia at an event and I was talking to a lady from a Mardi Gras crew who has a son who's IDD, about 22-23 years old. And I think part of it is in my area, and I don't know if this goes for any other region, is the places that our kids are often sent to are not compatible with their needs.

So I'll just say this individual was put at Goodwill with people who are parolees. And this person was violently functioning autistic and it could have been a situation where now if he has a meltdown or

something he's in there with a bunch of parolees. His family didn't feel comfortable with that situation so they asked them if there was any other avenues they could take to get him employed and LRS told them no. And so it was like a hard stop for his family there. Now he works at his family's dry cleaners because they could not gain meaningful employment.

So that's kind of what I'm seeing in my region is that we go through the process, we do the vendor process, everything, but when it comes to actually doing the transitional employment or the preETS what have you the situation that some of our DD individuals are in their families aren't necessarily comfortable with. And so is there something that we could do perhaps with some extra funding to address that as well. I know it kind of depends on what businesses are willing to partner with LRS to do preETS and what have you. However, I think that sometimes our population specifically can be put into some compromising positions like that one and then they don't have another avenue. So that makes them less inclined to want to advocate for LRS. So that was just kind of a surrounding concern.

MELISSA BAYHAM: I absolutely understand. How do I explain this. LRS has not gotten its funding, which if I think about it, when I say we haven't received our funding this is what the federal government says this is what a VR program needs, we have not received our full federal allotment since 2008. So you have a situation where an organization has been operating in a deficit since 2008. So we are very thankful for the funding that we're getting now but if we don't continue we're just going to, like we have to have time to build up on that or we're going to backslide. Like we're dealing with that length of time of not having the staff and not having the funds that we need. So I absolutely understand and hate that people are having bad experiences but we really are moving forward.

I can tell you our Baton Rouge region obviously is across the street from us so I see them the most often. At one point I would go in that office and we barely had any people. Now they're full. I think I have 19 counselors there. I haven't had 19 counselors there in a really long time. So we're on the upward but if we

start losing funding again then we're just going to backslide. It takes a bit-- like you have a system where we lost a lot of vendors because at one point we were on order of selection, we had a waiting list. We didn't have as many customers. Even though we're not on order of selection now, we don't have a wait list now, we don't have enough people to go into outreach. So you have less people being referred to vendors and so they can't support staff for employment services.

And we also talked about this week the fact that a lot of people who naturally went with vendors for supported employment services, like the IDD population specifically, now a lot of them are going into the comprehensive transition programs like at Nichols. Which is great so we talked this week about maybe trying to better connect our vendors with the CT programs so that they can get the business that they need to be able-- we need to staff up, they need to staff up. And we need to make sure, but we also have to make sure that we're recruiting quality vendors because we have vendors. A lot of them they mean well but they don't have the experience to work with the most significantly disabled population. Because sometimes we don't have, especially in the smaller regions, we do not have(inaudible).

CHRISTINA MARTIN: I ask because it helps me understand how to better regurgitate that to the community. But also them understand that it is a work in progress and there is a backlog and there will be more options available to them can we obtain this funding.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: I think we have one more question.

SPEAKER: I'm the LaCAN leader for region three. I'm also a vendor at (inaudible). So I love hearing that y'all want to partner with us because that is something (inaudible). So I am excited to hear that y'all will partner with us because that is something that the CTP programs have gotten some additional money and some of us are looking at hiring individuals specifically to find jobs for our students. So I love that yes, Nichols, on board, let me know.

But one positive I do want to say for LRS especially for our CTP students is at Nichols we are a certified program. So with us being certified that

means that students can apply for financial aid. But they only get a small percentage of that financial aid because they aren't participating in full-time classes. They are (inaudible) a small portion of classes. So that leaves a large chunk of that college tuition left on the table. If it would not be for LRS I would not have the 15 students. I have 15 students in my program and all but maybe a couple of them are in my program through LRS. So I just wanted to share that positive. And then also we will be partnering to find those jobs. That makes me really excited.

MELISSA BAYHAM: And you brought up something just to kind of explain to y'all the complexity of the counselor position. So we have a lot more students in post-secondary education. For each of our students each semester we have to-- it's like a big math thing. We have to know what the tuition is. What the comparable benefits is. How much Pell they're getting. How much TOPS they're getting. We have to calculate that on each one of the students every semester. And if they're meeting our financial need criteria. And then we have to put all this in the case management system. And when they get their degrees and when they get their report cards. It all has to be put in the case management system because we have to report to the federal government. The counselors have a lot on their plates. I just have to say that for them because I know they get a bad rap a lot because they're the ones, you know, I can't get my counselor on the phone. They really are trying. My counselors average caseload is probably around 120 people per counselor.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: Is there anything that could be done through that additional funding to support your rehab counselors better with like technology mechanisms so that they don't have to manually do that?

MELISSA BAYHAM: So a couple things. First of all, hiring more counselors is obviously going to drive the caseload sizes down. I'm also trying to hire more rehab counselor associates. They kind of help with them. They're like their assistants. And then also we are implementing, it's called Sara. I think I've talked about that in this meeting before. It's a communication platform. So one of the struggles that we have our counselors don't have agency cell phones

and that's how people communicate these days is through text messaging. Sara is going to allow us to text clients and email clients. We can already email clients but when you email and text through Sara it automatically puts it into the case management system. Because that's another thing. You have an email thread with the customer then you have to go and stick it in the case management system. So it's going to allow us to communicate a lot better. Any client who gets transportation we have to contact them every month because of a legislative audit many years ago. So we'll be able to send out blasts, texts, emails through the Sara system to get that whereas we were having to manually do that. We have a lot of good things. We're just waiting for it all to come to fruition.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: You have one minute, sir.

BRENTON ANDRUS: One, reminder. You have two hours. Two, I was going to say when we were looking at data to present for this past session we had talked about a return on investment. We obviously focus, for the legislators, looking at for every dollar we put up this is how much we can draw down federally. I know Melissa, you and I had talked about last year trying to get that updated figure. Because while that's important I think it's more impactful for legislators to know how this benefits the state as a population, meaning our pocketbook, and not necessarily just the people we're serving or your department. So we used to have that figure for every dollar. This is what it would be. Maybe it was 9-dollars or something back to the state. Has there been any movement trying to update that figure or trying to get that ROI? That's a very important talking point I feel for legislators.

MELISSA BAYHAM: I'm going to bring that back to the undersecretary's attention. She had tasked that to a person who left and I know they are still trying to fill that economist position so I will see.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Especially with a deficit we can say yeah, we're asking you for money but you're going to get more money back in taxes because when people have money they spend money. I thought I had one more. This is more for you council members. When I was on my soapbox earlier about you should talk about education stuff in the committee. This is another thing as far

as it sounds like in addition to funding we have a very big vendor problem. It might be something y'all want to start discussing within committee because that can be something maybe we could work out in a future plan. In March we're going to be looking at what we're going to be doing next year in our plan. Is there something we can work with directly LRS, or not even directly, whatever, but starting to have that conversation to fix the vendor problem. And funding LRS may not necessarily fix the vendor problem in a direct way so there might be other things we can do as a council to partner and come up with an idea on how to address that issue. So keep that in the back of your mind so maybe we can tackle the financial side here and we can also start working on the vendor side. That's all I have.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: That was over two minutes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I had my hand up for a really long time.

EBONY HAVEN: I just want to ask real quick, Melissa, because I'm interested. It seems like the problem you're having with your VR counselors is similar to like our support coordination problem, right. And so I know I've talked to support coordination agencies and they relay like if we didn't have to have a bachelor's degree that would help so much. What are the qualifications that the VR counselors have to have?

MELISSA BAYHAM: That's a federal regulation. And so they do have to have a bachelor's degree in a rehabilitation counselor related field. Which could also include business, things like that. Pretty much anything that can support helping people with disabilities we could justify. But they do have to have a bachelor's degree. Technically to be a qualified rehabilitation counselor per the federal regulations you have to have a bachelor's degree in one of those fields and one year of experience working with people with disabilities. Sometimes we hire entry level counselors who don't have that one year of experience but they are working directly under a district supervisor while they're getting that one year of experience so that's kind of how we get around that. But that's a federal regulation required. At one point in VR prior to 2014 was when the Rehab Act was

reauthorized as the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act you actually had to have a plan in place, which is how I have a master's degree, to get counselors master's degrees. So while I think definitely I understand that there could potentially be talent out there without bachelor's degrees who could help this population it is very complex.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: So in saying that, and I know the answer but I want it on record, if we are able to advocate and fully fund LRS with the intention to give the rehabilitation counselors equitable rates, because in my opinion if I go to school and pay 50,000-dollars to get a bachelor's degree and then in today's society you offer me 21-dollars an hour where I could make that at Wal-Mart, I would probably choose the path of least resistance.

MELISSA BAYHAM: So all our positions are classified state. The way our salaries can get adjusted is through civil service. And so that's how we got the adjustment to 21.04 was through civil service. If we continue to see a problem with retention our HR department has said they will try to help us again with civil service to increase that special entrance rate. And one more thing because you made me think about it. We are working on, they call it a reclassification plan, with our HR department but civil service ultimately has to approve it. We're trying to get our position bumped up in the classification so that they could get additional pay.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: You're asking somebody to have a bachelor's and only offer 21.04.

MELISSA BAYHAM: I can put years, time flies by, but maybe two years ago it was 14.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Ms. Pierce has a question.

JACKI PIERCE: So would you be able to, and I'm not sure because of all the federal guidelines you have to follow, would you be able to hire people without bachelor's degrees on a supervisory level to help with those caseloads, help those counselors as they're working towards obtaining--

CHRISTINA MARTIN: Associates.

JACKI PIERCE: I'm not even talking about associates. Like they might be working towards obtaining a bachelor's degree. But just to kind of

help spread the workload in providing assistance to more folks.

MELISSA BAYHAM: The way we have the system set up right now the longest a counselor's not going to be qualified is a year because then you get into a new issue. Another issue I have is I don't have enough district supervisors and those are the individuals who serve as supervisors to counselors. And I'll give you an example. In terms of recruitment and retention the most difficult region has been for us, Shreveport. Right now we're having to recruit because I didn't even have a qualified candidate for that position in the Shreveport region. Lake Charles, same thing. Lake Charles hasn't had a supervisor in months and we're having to recruit a counselor from a different region to supervise that particular region. Because we had this gap and we've been like on this roller coaster ride for a good ten plus years hiring we have this knowledge where we don't have people in line to be promoted to positions needed to supervise people in that capacity.

Now we were meeting with region six and I was talking to Arkansas and Texas. Texas is actually talking about part of their plan in VR we always want master's degrees because they have hard jobs. But now they're looking at micro credentials. So I need to research that to see what kind of credentialing and training. So if a counselor doesn't-- so instead of having a counselor get a master’s degree to get to that last level maybe there's just specific training or credentials that they have to get to get to that. So that's something new I heard about last week.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Brenton you have something?

BRENTON ANDRUS: It's not a question or anything. I do have more questions but I won't ask them because I think y'all are getting a little bit in the weeds. The question is at this point are you going to ask for the funding or not. Again, a lot of what we're talking about now is committee work that the education and employment committee can handle and figure out ways to address some of the other internal things that we can help support. So I would recommend for time sake y'all move on to another yellow issue and if you have more time at the end.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: You read my mind. That was fantastic. Thank you. Now we're going to move to adding adult vision services to Medicaid.

JACKI PIERCE: So it's my understanding, and I'm not entirely sure, that there are some Medicaid waiver insurances that do provide vision services.

EBONY HAVEN: Brian is still on the call so he can answer some questions. I hate to put him on the spot.

JACKI PIERCE: I'm so sorry Brian. Take it away.

BRIAN BENNETT: So what's the question? Just do we offer this currently?

JACKI PIERCE: Yes.

BRIAN BENNETT: So under the waivers we do not. We don't offer vision services as a distinct service. But I do want to mention that for those individuals that are enrolled with an MCO, so they get all of their care through an MCO, each of the plans offer what's called a value-added benefit. And all of the plans do offer vision services and I think money towards eyeglasses to their members. So I just wanted to throw that out. Of course if you're in legacy or fee for service Medicaid those are not available to you but if you get all of your services through an MCO each of the plans offer that. We call it value added benefit. We don't specifically pay for it as a Medicaid service but the plans do offer it as an additional benefit to their members. But if we wanted to talk about offering it as a distinct service under the waivers we could also have that conversation if y'all had any questions about that.

JACKI PIERCE: Well, would that be covered through an IFS request through waivers, do you know?

BRIAN BENNETT: It wouldn't be a Medicaid waiver service. Are you talking about individual and family support IFS?

JACKI PIERCE: Yes.

BRIAN BENNETT: Not that I'm aware of.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Your waiver or through the LGE?

JACKI PIERCE: The LGE.

BRENTON ANDRUS: You can put in a request through their IFS.

BRIAN BENNETT: So it might be available through the LGE because I know they have some funds available that are not Medicaid funds. But as a Medicaid waiver

service it's not available at least for adults.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I don't see any hands raised but I'm just curious. I would assume whoever provided this input is, I don't know, maybe they are on legacy and so they don't have the option. They're not with an MCO. What would that path look like if we were trying to get it as a service in the waivers?

BRIAN BENNETT: So I think much like we did for dental a few years ago we would just have to get the appropriation of course. But once we receive that funding we can amend our waivers to add that service into whichever of the waivers we wanted to offer that as a service.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Got you.

BRIAN BENNETT: I don't think it would be too difficult because we could just use the existing providers we already have. Of course Medicaid providers that are set up. So it wouldn't be setting up a new service from scratch. It would just be offering that coverage for adults in those waiver programs.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I guess the big question so to get dental I'm not going to say it was an easy lift because it kind of seemed easy once you went to the legislature but there was a lot of work done on the front end. There was a task force that met for gosh, I don't know how long, maybe a couple of years or something with the help of the department of course and the state advisory committee had pulled in a lot of data and a lot of information that made the request to the legislature very easy and kind of laid it out and had all the facts. And so I guess for this committee, I mean keep in mind if that's something you want to do we don't have that sort of path laid out for us. We would have to try to figure out where we could get some of this data. I know we could probably see what data we could pull from MCOs about needs there. That's kind of a difference from what was done with the task force for dental because they did have that task force. So keep that in mind if you're considering this issue as well. How much was dental?

SPEAKER: Pretty pricy.

BRENTON ANDRUS: And there was a lot of information about emergency room visits and stuff that really

helped build the case for dental. I'm not saying you wouldn't have that for vision. Medicaid is going to cover an eye issue. It's not going to cover that you need glasses or something but it is going to address those major health concerns that might impact your eyes if I'm not mistaken. I don't know how much those annual eye exams can tie into the health aspect like dental did. There was even information about how it impacts your heart.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: All the preventive care, things like that, yeah.

BRENTON ANDRUS: So it was 5.3-million that first year in state general fund. That was a few years back so I don't know what it would be now. We would have to try to figure that out. So we don't have a number for you. But if it's under Medicaid I think it would in a way be a funding issue because obviously you would have to have the money to start.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Anymore questions, comments, concerns? Ms. Sandra you have the floor.

SANDRA TRAMMELL: Hi, I'm Sandra. I chair the RAC, regional advisory committee for OIDD for capitol area. I am also the IDD administrator for the MCOs. We are finding with our weekly IFS meetings that some of the providers will not cover the anesthesia so they're coming to IFS committee meetings to find that. So I don't know if you're finding that throughout the region?

CHRISTINA MARTIN: I chair JP's DD RAC but we have not heard that yet.

SANDRA TRAMMELL: It's not frequent but we had several cases.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: I will ask at our next meeting coming up.

SANDRA TRAMMELL: Okay. It's not a lot but it's a few that we're noticing that Medicaid's denying it so they're going to IFS to help with the cost.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: I didn't even think about the sedation portion.

SANDRA TRAMMELL: Yeah, when they go into the hospital. Not the eyes, the teeth.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: Oh, I thought you were talking about eyes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Thanks, Sandra.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: That is an issue though. We only have one place in my area. Everybody got to go to children's if you need sedation for pediatric dentist.

KAREN XU: I just have one question about Medicaid. (Inaudible).

BRIAN BENNETT: That might be a question for OIDD. I'm not sure about that. You're talking about an annual review for ICF residents?

KAREN XU: I mean the people with no waiver services usually (inaudible).

BRIAN BENNETT: Oh, as far as their Medicaid eligibility are we still doing those annual renewals, is that the question?

KAREN XU: Right. (Inaudible).

EBONY HAVEN: Yeah, I think that is the question Brian.

BRIAN BENNETT: Yes, that is correct. They're still doing those annual renewals. Even for those that are in settings like ICFs or nursing homes.

KAREN XU: (Inaudible).

BRIAN BENNETT: I'm not sure about that. I would have to look into that if it's the facility that submits the application or the information and back to Medicaid on behalf of the resident. That's what I would assume it is but at least for nursing homes. But I'll double check on that and let you know at the council meeting or beforehand.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Thank you so much, Mr. Bennett. Appreciate it. Now we have five more topics to go. We can do this.

JACKI PIERCE: This is another implementation issue. There are processes that go into place. Once the child turns three they transition out of Early Steps and into the local education agency and there is an evaluation that's done through the LEA where they make a determination whether or not a child qualifies for services through the school. The issue and confusion that surrounds that a lot of times is whenever you're in Early Steps that is family centered so that's how can we help this child be successful in the family unit. Once they hit that age of three and they're moving into the LEA it becomes more academically focused so your eligibility criteria changes dramatically. I, again, Jacki's personal

opinion, I don't feel that there is a legislative fix. I think that this is more of an implementation issue again. And this would be something that we would have to go to BESE to the Department of Education to communicate these concerns.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Thank you.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: I just want to second that. That's all.

EBONY HAVEN: I just want to piggyback off of what Brenton has been saying this entire time. The council is so useful because you guys have representatives who sit in those committees on the council that you can bring these issues up and make sure they're aware so there is accountability being taken from those agency reps. Dr. Lauren Wells is on our education and employment committee and she needs to hear about these types of things just because I don't know if they're aware. And if they are aware what are they doing about it. So it's all about accountability and that's stuff that council members can ask and I encourage you guys to ask. I don't know how many people on this committee sit on the education and employment committee but I would encourage y'all to ask her these questions. Even about the accountability act and the things that we were talking about earlier about the absences, school districts just dismissing kids and not being held accountable for those things. Because that's something that they should be doing but are they. What guidance are they giving the school districts when this is happening. So I think that they definitely need to be aware and this is something that you guys can talk about in the upcoming education and employment committee that's going to happen on October 20th at 12.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Ms. Burns you have the floor.

ADRIANNE BURNS: I don't understand why in the education world they can't honor the medical diagnosis. I understand that implementation of the classroom needs verses medical needs and what not. But I wanted to say like for autism I don't understand why it can't just be included in their file. For instance, they don't really include it. They say they will but often times they don't honor having it in there and actually documenting it because if it's not something where it's in the school system but that they're accommodating

they don't want the extra paperwork or I don't know. But like my son is about to be out of his IEP but he's autistic and I don't understand why they can't honor the medical diagnosis. Especially because for autism I was asking them about dad's ADHD and we were talking about a diagnosis and I was confused and they're like oh, we're not doctors. We can't diagnose. But then they don't honor it. Like they can't diagnose. I don't know. I wish that wouldn't be a thing. And not for any services, just for them to literally have it on their IEP. Thank you. Sorry.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Yes, ma'am.

JACKI PIERCE: So a lot of times whenever there is a medical diagnosis and the schools are not just taking that medical diagnosis it's because they have to evaluate how that diagnosis is going to affect the academic success of the student. So what types of supports do they need to put in place to help that student become successful based on that diagnosis. There are some students with autism who are very highly intelligent that they don't need any academic supports but they might have a 504 plan in place because they might need breaks which might cause extended time. Some of them might need to have a fidget so they would just require having an IAP or the individualized accommodations plan verses an individualized education plan. And there are some students with a diagnosis that they don't require any type of accommodations because their diagnosis is not affecting their academics. And that's unfortunately how the schools are looking at that because they are not medical professionals.

ADRIANNE BURNS: I suppose for my son it is clearly affecting his education. He gets board because he is very intelligent and he already is doing multiplication so he's like oh, this is boring to me so he wants to go explore. And the fact that he doesn't have autism on his IEP means he'll age out of an IEP because speech he's articulating well now and speech they're about to kick him off the IEP essentially so there won't be any accommodations or what not because they won't honor the diagnosis to have just in case. I guess that's my comment. Sorry. Thank you.

JACKI PIERCE: I would recommend that you send an

email to his school requesting another evaluation based off of those behaviors because then the school would have to put in writing, if they deny an evaluation they would have to put in writing why they're making that denial. And if anything happens down the road they will have prior knowledge that he has an autism diagnosis from a medical physician so that would give him some protections down the road if anything should happen as far as his behavior goes or anything.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Yes, ma'am, Ms. Elliot.

MYLINDA ELLIOT: So one of the other things, because you know I'm a curious person and interested in all kind of stuff, is education. My experience with medical diagnosis is that they put it in the general student information or they put it farther down in that area of the IEP where they talk about health and healthcare. Or they might even add, depending on the special education nurse, some individualized healthcare plan till the IEP talks about the diagnosis and the characteristics of the diagnosis. I know they don't put a classification or the exceptionality area. I know how annoying that is but generally dependent on the other parts of an IEP if he has an IEP. Thank y'all.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Anybody else? Okay. More standard uniform policy for ADA services in school.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: So we have ABA in schools. Like Jefferson Parish may not be great at a lot of things but they have ABA in schools. However, Lake Charles Parish and some other parishes, right, the ones that have MOUs. Jacki can probably speak to this because she has to deal with it. I just personally talked to family that I know that happens to live in St. Charles Parish. You can get ABA at school if you agree to their MOU. You have to agree to their MOU. Their MOU might ask that if a teacher punches a kid in the face you don't say a word. But if you don't sign that MOU you don't get into their school. That's kind of the holdup with that.

So this parent that I know went all the way to due process and just got finished seeing the administrative judge on this specific instance. The administrative law judge told her, and I quote, once someone sues for ABA not being in schools then they will have a case law

to reference. Until no one sues for ABA not being in the school that specific administrative law judge was not going to touch it because there's nothing for him to reference as far as like, I'm not a judge so I don't know why he wouldn't be able to reference the law, but that was just like what the excuse was. So I don't think it's that we can't get ABA in schools. We have the law. It's the preventive measures around the MOUs that seem to be the issue. That's my ted talk. Pushing it over to Jacki.

JACKI PIERCE: And not to keep beating the same horse, until there is a lawsuit and there is case law to back this up this is not a legislative issue. This is an implementation issue and this would have to be addressed with BESE or the State Department of Education.

BRENTON ANDRUS: There's one more on the back and that will cover your greens and yellows. But you don't have to discuss. You can also take a minute to look at the ones that weren't highlighted in case there's anything in there that needs to be discussed.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: School supports to address behavior needs or concerns.

JACKI PIERCE: So again, this is not a legislative fix. This is an implementation issue. There are things in place for the schools. We have to address the State Department of Education or BESE to take care of this. This is compliance.

BRENTON ANDRUS: And y'all have a lot of stuff y'all could put on your education committee agenda to start discussing and figure out where the breakdowns are and how you can address it.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: I wish we had a rep today from LDOE.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I agree. All agency folks were invited. We invited all the agency reps that are on the council or a proxy if they had someone else that could attend to answer questions but things happen.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Do we want to discuss the two that are not legislative? Let's move forward. Specialized childcare for children with IDD. Louisiana should create a specialized childcare and respite program for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

SPEAKER: Mine is just a general question but I know in our region we do have (inaudible). I don't know what that's funded by.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: I love this idea. I just think it would be an extreme ask and it would probably tie into the education system that we know is kind of already understaffed and doesn't have the appropriate resources if they were taking that mechanism. Other than that aside from providing funding for programs, like Julie mentioned, that are already in place I don't know how we would necessarily create something.

ALAINA CHACHERE: I have two comments. Where I'm from, Lafayette, we do have Pediatrust which sounds similar to that but it is for medically complex children not necessarily high support need autism diagnosis. (Inaudible) went there but it was when he required oxygen for naps because the daycare would not touch him needing oxygen. It might meet some people's needs but not everybody's. I really like this too. I'm trying to think exactly the name of it. I didn't see this otherwise I would have come mentally prepared. But there was something I heard of almost like it's not palliative care and it's not like a long-term facility but essentially it was a place where if you were a parent or caregiver and you needed respite the individual that you're caring for could go for up to seven days while you receive some kind of respite. Or another example is say I have another child but we weren't able to all travel together you could schedule the respite to there. I forget exactly what it was called. But I thought this was kind of similar or this had a component to it where when I had inquired about it for our state we didn’t have the proper licensing structure basically is what they had said because it's not palliative care. It's not day hab. And it's not a long-term facility.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: So there's no foundation for it?

ALAINA CHACHERE: Yes, so there needed to be a licensing structure built to cover that basically is what I gathered. I don't know if that makes sense. Let me try to find it.

BRENTON ANDRUS: So it starts out with specialized childcare for children with IDD and then other information that's included in there kind of makes it

seem like maybe it's a little more broad than the initial read which is we want a childcare center just for kids with DD that have these needs. What I did want to say though was because some of the conversation does steer that way this is one of those good examples of is it going to fit in with the mission and vision of the council. Because we tend to look at more inclusive practices. So I kind of get the ick when we start labeling things specialized, just for so and so because that typically doesn't fall into our wheelhouse of what we're trying to accomplish.

Now I know some people will be like well, y'all advocated for pediatric day healthcare centers. Yes, because we didn't want them to be defunded but we didn't necessarily create them. Not that they're a bad thing. But when we start looking at our mission and our vision keep in mind what you as a council put in your plan this year which was to find a curriculum that promoted more inclusive practices for daycares and early childcare centers and not specialized centers where you can send certain children that may have greater needs. I would encourage you to look more at how you can create those more inclusive environments rather than trying to figure out a way to start new centers for a select group of people. Just throwing that out there. That was my 2 cents.

JACKI PIERCE: So a suggestion that I have since we're going to be talking to the Department of Education about several issues is maybe talk to them about their early childhood programs. They have Ready Start programs throughout the state. And possibly start off with training their staff on how to work with children with IDD. Because otherwise we would have to go through state licensing programs. We would have to figure out how to make all these trainings mandatory for all childcare givers coming into any of the daycares. Or I mean, if you're going to have a select few what are the criteria. It's a lot to consider in the grand scheme. So I think personally a good start would be talking to the Department of Education who can say all of our early childcare programs are going to receive these trainings.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: I agree and I want to echo what Brenton said. In my personal opinion I would rather

advocate for our kids to be included in their setting if they're going to be in regular daycare because they're going to have to go to a regular LEA, right, even if they're self-contained. So that is just the prerequisite to them being in an inclusive school. And it might actually make the transition process a lot easier because they're already accustomed to being with kids who are neuro-typical as they transition up. So I actually prefer Brenton's idea of being an inclusive setting for daycares, specifically not specialized daycares.

BRENTON ANDRUS: And I will say your plan is very new. That would be a case of we should probably stick with that probably for all five years of your five-year plan because this year's research next year looking at a curriculum maybe a pilot. Maybe those are the kinds of things you need to look at. Again, system's change takes a long time. People want immediate gratification. It's not going to happen. Not in this group. You might have to find a different group that's going to help you but that's what we're moving towards.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: Because we to have things like ABA and pediatric day hab centers that do focus in those specialized areas. A lot of autistic kiddos do (inaudible).

SPEAKER: So I was looking up trying to find there is a program where if the daycare accepted that waiver assistance money that they had to undergo training to accept children with disabilities. And it is the Louisiana type three childcare centers. So that is one option. We can look into getting more funding to broader serve children because it is the accessibility of the center they can serve that child. So that is an option. And then the other option would be expanding respite.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Some waiver screening does not reflect the services people need.

JACKI PIERCE: This, again, is an implementation issue about how the sun waiver is assessed so I'm not sure there's a legislative fix for it.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: Also, I think a lot of the discussion was around in-person screenings and Bernard actually verified for us yesterday you can request an in-person screening and they do have to give it to you.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Actually had quite a detailed conversation about that at our July council meeting that addressed, I'm not going to say it fixed concerns that people had, but a lot of concerns that were brought up and that was one of them. He did say it might take a little bit longer to get to you because it's in person verses a virtual or a phone call but you can request all three options.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Y'all are doing great. Support coordination agency accountability when a bump in waiver services is requested.

JACKI PIERCE: Again, I'm not sure that this is a legislative fix. It's implementation. Is the support coordinator doing their due diligence in getting paperwork, getting information out to the families. I feel evil right now, just saying.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Do we just want to go ahead and go through the finalization or just finish the last two we have?

BRENTON ANDRUS: As far as the ones that are not necessarily highlighted?

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Correct.

BRENTON ANDRUS: That's up to y'all. If you want to focus on the issues that were rated higher priority verses those that weren't. But that being said, it's up to the committee. If any of y'all are really passionate about something that did not reach a priority you're welcome to have that discussion now. The whole purpose of the highlights was to try to help you narrow down your discussion.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: I personally believe the things that we didn't highlight already fell under something that was highlighted. And a lot of it just did simply, like Jacki said, did not have a legislative fix.

ALAINA CHACHERE: I don't know that it has a legislative fix and we may have had initiatives around first responder training in the past. Like a lot of them. But that's all I wanted to say is that I think that looked familiar to me and that we had first responder training so if you want to skip it. And it wasn't a legislative initiative.

BRENTON ANDRUS: We worked with Team Dynamics for a few years. We trained, I want to say a thousand, maybe more first responders over the course of that

three-year program. Part of the program was to not only provide you the training but hope that there would be some policy work that people take back and make sure your policies were adjusted to not only train others but have things in place whenever you have those interactions. I don't know if that was done. After a while we had so many people out of the gate that it started slowing down so we ended up being done with the activity. And it was kind of hard to follow up to figure out if any policy changes happened.

But there is legislation out there as well. It tends to focus more on law enforcement specifically than first responders. I typically hear people with concerns about law enforcement. I don't very often hear people talk about EMS or fire or anything. There is post certification requirements around this. That doesn't mean it's a continuing education. There are a lot of other groups that do this training that's out there. Again, you would voluntarily have to choose for your folks to participate in that training but there are groups that are out there offering that training. We've done trainings on it. There are specific ongoing trainings I think for autism specifically that are in statute. So there's work out there. The fact that there are some organizations that offer this training this might be one of those maybe there is another organization that can pick that torch up and we could help support if they want to bring some legislation and maybe we could help support them in that. But we might not (inaudible) but that's just my opinion.

ALAINA CHACHERE: I've noticed too in region four that a lot of the sheriffs' departments and other like our local police department you can call them, they put out a notice publicly please call us and let us know if you have a child with autism, or a child with a disability, or an adult in the home that way we know if we are responding to your house we are aware of it and we know. Also stickers and stuff. So I think that they are trying. I see the effort that they are trying.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: If you want to know more about it I worked on that bill.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Last year we did Brian's Call. Part of that was a training component. So that's going

to, I'm not going to say address that, but in conversations about having trainings about that particular alert there is going to have to be that the discussion of IDD. I think some of your bases are covered.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: Just side note. I think Brian's Call is great. They had an officer in Lafayette or Lafayette Parish that used what he knew and went in there and saved a young girl who was in a pond from drowning. Early pushing it out made a difference. And they also had bystanders just looking. That kind of upset me. But the officer got in there and got that baby.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I would say back to your point, Mr. Chair, I guess if there are any issues that have not been discussed if y'all want to bring those up being that it's 2:30. If not you can start working on hashing out your final recommendation.

JACKI PIERCE: So it is a law that ABA services are to be made available. It's medically necessary behavioral health services. It is law. However, there are some school districts that are making it difficult through their contracts with ABA providers for them to be able to go into the schools. Some of the school districts have four-page MOUs, the memorandums of understandings with these contractors that literally layout this is the criteria of the law. Here, sign off saying you agree to this. Other ones are 14-page MOUs saying you're going to have to complete our version of all these various trainings, like the mandated reporting trainings which the professionals have to do for their certification to be ABA providers. So it is a law in place. It's more of an implementation issue where some school districts are, I'll say, not fallowing the law appropriately and making it difficult for these students to receive their medically necessary behavioral health services.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: And to reverberate what Jacki's saying the MOU is important because it is a binding contract between the LEA and an outside agency. However, I believe if we were ever to readdress that it should be more so-- and I believe it's already in statute but I could be wrong, that the contract cannot exceed what is reasonable in expectation. So how Jacki

mentioned one has a four-page MOU, the other one might have a 14-page MOU. There needs to be a standard mutual understanding agreement that all districts use that they can't necessarily modify. It's a loophole to their own benefit. That would be my solution.

BRENTON ANDRUS: LDOE for whatever reason does not want one standard policy that they can send. That's why they provide guidance. That's what they always tell us. We provide guidance. So having to run bills with them it's always we don't want to mandate, kind of whatever. So if you're looking at we want a standard policy for this that all school systems have to use that's a different ask than if you're trying to tweak something to maybe specify in greater detail the intent because Louisiana itself is structured around local authority. That's where the money is coming from for schools anyway. And so that's a different conversation that you have to start having when you start thinking about very specific policy. I'm not saying you can't do it. I just don't know if there's any out there.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: Is there a mechanism for us?

BRENTON ANDRUS: There's a mechanism to do anything. The question is do you have (inaudible). But power in numbers. All that jazz. And the right legislator.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Ms. Sandra.

SANDRA TRAMMELL: Thank you so much. Two things. We had a long time ago-- I don't know if y'all know Shelly Hendrix. She used to be the lobbyist for Autism Speaks and she actually tried for the board of education to help get all the ABAs onboard to get into the schools. She worked with Renee Huff with OBH and she said that was so difficult. So that's opening a can of worms because it's so difficult to get all the parishes to go onboard with the ABA.

Number two, with the MCO part even though with Chisholm's Law up to the age of 21 you have to provide ABA services up to the age of 21. The biggest thing with the ABA providers they do not necessarily have to take on older kids. So the MCOs are struggling to find ABA providers for those kids that need ABA who are seven and up. So this is the struggle right now. I mean, it's mandated but they don't necessarily have to take the older kids because there's evidence that show,

evidence-base practice and that's what they follow that the older they are the more harder it is for ABA to be productive. So this is something on the MCO side. We're trying to find ABA services for our kids who are older but there's not that many that's out there. So that has been difficult on the other side just to let y'all know.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: I agree. Most of your facilities, like big facilities, only take until a certain age. It's more the person-centered care from my experience in my region.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Not necessarily a reply to what Sandra was talking about but it just made me think about it when we were having the conversation about the policies and we keep saying things like education committee y'all should come out, we should talk about these things. That's the time to do it because we're talking about a lot of implementation issues. But one thing that I forgot to mention earlier, one great thing that came out of legislation, or could be a great thing that came out of legislation some years back were these special education advisory councils that each LEA should have, each district should have. I know we get calls and complaints of some people don't feel like theirs is effective. Some people like theirs. Whatever it may be. But I think sometimes we're quick to jump to a statewide legislative issue when there really needs to be this advocacy at a local level that I don't want to say is not happening but I don't think it's happening in an organized way like you see at a state level. That is not something for us necessarily to address in this room because we are statewide. But LaCAN will be focused on statewide matters. We're not going to do regional matters in that way. But we always tell the LaCAN leaders when you do have your folks coming to you about these regional issues that you should give them the advice and information and maybe the resources if you can that they need to advocate on that local level. But there needs to be, and I guess this is more for just in your personal lives and those that are listening, much more advocacy at a local level especially around these school issues.

We're seeing it a lot based on things that are happening in St. Tammany for instance. We're seeing a

lot of advocacy especially recently. It's definitely ramped up for various reasons. That needs to happen at a local level and I think we skip local level sometimes maybe because you're getting the runaround at your school, which I get, but you need to get in school board meetings, you need to get into those (inaudible) meetings because those should be public meetings as well that you can go to and respectfully takeover so you can get your point across and have those discussions. Because you will get legislators sometimes that are going to ask you that. What did you do. Even though we may see it as a statewide issue it's still handled locally. For instance, how our education system is structured those LEAs are making a lot of the rules or they're making a lot of their policy based on their lawyers' interpretations. Their lawyers are not the same as LDOE lawyers. Who are also not the same lawyers that drafted the legislation. So there's a lot of different implementation and interpretations. That was my soapbox.

JACKI PIERCE: I recommend we move into making some selections.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: I second that.

JACKI PIERCE: I would like to recommend that we advocate for LRS to receive full funding. To get a return on investment it's very heavily aligned with the DD Council's mission. It's very heavily aligned with that and it's only going to bring wonderful opportunities for people we care about most.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: I would like to recommend that as well.

BRENTON ANDRUS: What I would recommend you do so we don't have to go through this process 13 different times I think y'all should come to an agreement about what you think your top issues are and hash that out and come with your final, however many you want to be recommended to the council, and then just do one motion as opposed to doing a motion by each one. So you can present what you're recommending to the council as a package instead of each individual motion. Sounds like there is LRS, full funding for them. Does everyone agree with that? I guess anyone that doesn't agree? Another thing we did not do, which y'all might want to consider, is how much do you want on your agenda. Like

how many things are you trying to tackle this session.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: If I'm taking my committee hat off and putting my LaCAN leader hat on we prefer three or four. That's how much realistically we can be effective that we felt since I've been a leader.

BRENTON ANDRUS: And also keep in mind there were a few bills that I could think of last session that didn't make it through. That if they come back around you might want to consider more advocacy on this year than last year.

SPEAKER: I would say two or three just because, like Brenton says, there are other issues that circle back that has to be added to the agenda. So we do tend to end up with about four issues, and I know four may seem like a small number, but it's actually a lot. So I would recommend two or three that way whenever other issues come up we can put them on our agenda.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: I agree with you. In total four is about maximum what we find to be the most effective.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Obviously if you're writing a bill that factors into it. So y'all have LRS. Sounds like most of you or at least no one disagrees with that advocacy effort.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: If we're kind of decided on the LRS I would like us to also, I know Bernard said they're doing the new rate study and what have you but this has always been our biggest item and I don't think that it should be put to the wayside. The DSW, the home and community-based service ask for the 45 million-dollars.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Does anyone disagree with that?

CHRISTINA MARTIN: I think it's just proactive with us going in line with the 80/20 rule anyway and staying consistent in getting that full funding.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Anyone else have things y'all would like to consider? Funding issues?

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Going once?

BRENTON ANDRUS: You would be looking at including just two things in your advocacy agenda based on what we have so far. I will put it up on the screen too and let y'all do an official motion of some kind.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: We didn't talk about FHF.

BRENTON ANDRUS: We did earlier.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: I'm saying like as a

recommendation. Knowing that the deficit can potentially be that 250,000-dollars. If the DOA does not put that money in the budget is that something we're considering continuing to advocate for? I know we've done it for quite a few years but the council does consider Families Helping Families one of its greatest resources so I definitely think it's something that we should consider.

BRENTON ANDRUS: You still have exactly a quorum just no one can get off. Well, Angela's the only one left online. Angela cannot leave and no one in this room can leave just to let you know.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: (Inaudible) our agenda as the same thing as it was last year but all of the things that we're discussing are a continuation of things, like Brenton mentioned, as in systems change we may have to address these for a few years before they're done. So I think even though our agenda may still look the same the initiatives are different to continue to get the more funding to continue to fund Families Helping Families and then to make sure that LRS gets their whole funding as well.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I guess is there anyone in disagreement for Families Helping Families funding being on the list? Anything else folks want to recommend?

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Does anybody else have anything they want to consider? If someone has a motion related to the topic. Ms. Jacki.

JACKI PIERCE: I would like to make a motion to include fully funding LRS in our agenda.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: I thought we were doing it as one motion.

BRENTON ANDRUS: I would do it as those three issues. Doing it as a package is just a recommendation. If y'all want to break them up you can break them up. Just when you break them up, like whenever we go through it in council meetings, it gives them the opportunity to start discussing each individual thing and breaking up your recommendation. You're coming up with we think these are the most important issues. The way it's going to come across individually is you can pick and choose these issues. If you do it as a package but you don't have to.

That's up to y'all.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: So essentially if we do it as a package Jacki can't vote but if we don't do it as a package she can vote?

BRENTON ANDRUS: Technically there is no can or can't. I can't tell her to or not.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: That's what I thought. I was just making sure I was understanding my Roberts right. Okay.

BRENTON ANDRUS: If you have any skin in the game for any of these three issues you would not vote.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: So do I have to abstain for all of them?

BRENTON ANDRUS: I cannot tell you what to do but I would recommend an abstention.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: Okay. That's what I thought but I was just making sure.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Just for clarity, the quorum is for you to conduct business but it's not going to impact how you vote. Like this might pass with only two votes and a whole bunch of abstentions and that's okay if it still passed or failed based on that. And you can help with some of the discussion. Based on what you have on there it seems like--

CHRISTINA MARTIN: So we need a council member to draw a motion?

BRENTON ANDRUS: So you have three people that can make the motion and second the motion.

ROBBY SMITH: I would like to move that we bundle the LRS funding item, the DSP/DSW pay rates item and the Families Helping Families funding item and recommend those to the council.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Do we have a second?

ANGELA HARMON: I second it. I put my hand up but I guess nobody saw me. I second.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: So I got a second. That was Ms. Angela. Any more discussion? I think we did plenty of that. Any objections?

REKEESHA BRANCH: No hands raised.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Okay. Any abstentions? Two. Any public comment?

REKEESHA BRANCH: Not at this time.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Okay. Now we're going to do a roll call. Staff would you please explain the vote and

call the roll.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Yes. So a yes means you're voting to recommend to the council—again, they get the final approval. A yes means you're voting to recommend that they advocate for the motion on the screen which is to advocate for LRS funding to draw down the full federal allotment. Continue your advocacy to raise the wage floor. And the home and community-based waiver rates. And then funding to restore the 250,000-dollars to the council's budget for Families Helping Families. A no would mean you do not want to advocate for those. Ms. Allen. Ms. Chachere. Do we know if she joined by phone?

SPEAKER: She did not.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Mr. Doyle I think had to leave. Ms. Harmon.

ANGELA HARMON: Yes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Harmon, yes. Ms. Martin.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: Abstain.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Martin, abstain. Ms. Pierce.

JACKI PIERCE: Abstain.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Pierce, abstain. Mr. Smith.

ROBBY SMITH: Yes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Tanner. I think she had to jump off. Ms. Xu.

KAREN XU: Yes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: That is three yeas, zero nays. Your motion passes. One more motion that we need, if y'all would be so kind, would be to give us, your staff, permission to adjust the wording before the council meeting. We usually try to put things in plain language. Most of what I copy and pasted on there was kind of off of the spread sheet that you have here but we will clean up the language to bear more of what our ask was last year since these are a continuation. So if y'all would be so kind just to give us that permission if someone can make that motion.

ROBBY SMITH: I move to allow you to format the motion in plain language.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Appreciate your vote of confidence. Do we have a second?

ANGELA HARMON: I second it.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Angela seconds.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Is there any discussion? Any

public comment?

REKEESHA BRANCH: Not at this time.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Any objections? Any abstentions? And now we're going to do a roll call for a vote.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Allen. Ms. Chachere. Mr. Doyle. Ms. Harmon.

ANGELA HARMON: Yes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Harmon, yes. Ms. Martin.

CHRISTINA MARTIN: Yes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Martin, yes. Ms. Pierce.

JACKI PIERCE: Yes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Ms. Pierce, yes. Mr. Smith.

ROBBY SMITH: Yes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Mr. Smith, yes. Ms. Tanner. Ms. Xu.

KAREN XU: Yes.

BRENTON ANDRUS: Five yeas and zero nays. The motion passes.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Announcements. Please note our council meeting will be held October 28th through the 29th. It will be at the council office here in Baton Rouge. You can go to the website and register to participate virtually. The link to the meeting will be sent after registration and then everything will be added to the council's website. As a reminder the recommendation from today will go before the council on the second day of the meetings, October 29th. Does anyone on the committee have any announcements to make? Going once. Going twice.

EBONY HAVEN: I don't have announcement but I do want to just thank all the agency reps. I know Brian had to leave but thank you Melissa for attending. Thank Bernard for the short amount of time that he did attend. Thank you guys for just attending. Constance, thank you as well. Just in case the committee had any questions or needed any additional information I do want to just say thank you.

AYDEN BLUNSCHI: Yes, thank you everybody. Everybody has done a great job. Appreciate everybody being here. Does anybody have any other announcements or anything they want to say? Any public comment? If there are no other comments I hereby adjourn the meeting at 3:01.